



**CODE  
OF THE  
WEST**

**CHAFFEE  
COUNTY,  
COLORADO**

## Chaffee County Government Phone Number List

<b>EMERGENCY NUMBER (Ambulance, Fire, Police)</b> .....	<b>911</b>
<b>OFFICE</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>
Administrative Office (Land Use and Commissioners).....	539-2218
Fax for Offices in the Administrative Building .....	539-7442
Airport (Harriet Alexander Field) .....	539-3720
Ambulance (Business Office).....	539-1914
Assessor (Property Tax Evaluations).....	539-4016
Building Inspector (Zoning, Sanitation and Building Inspections) .....	539-2124
Fax .....	530-9208
Civil Defense (Disaster Planning and Mitigation) .....	539-7459
Combined Courts .....	539-2561
County Clerk (Motor Vehicle and Title Recordings) .....	539-4004
Elections.....	539-6913
Buena Vista Office .....	395-8296
County Commissioners .....	539-2218
County Court.....	539-6031
Coroner's Office .....	539-3001
CSU Cooperative Extension (Ag. Information, 4H, Consumer Info.).....	539-6447
District Attorney (Investigates /Prosecutes Criminal Cases) .....	539-3563
Fairgrounds (Facility Use/ Rental, County Fair) .....	539-6151
Finance / Personnel Office.....	539-3463
Landfill .....	539-3738
Probation Department.....	539-2855
Public Defender .....	539-3521
Public Health Nurse (Immunizations, Well Child, EPSDT).....	539-4510
Buena Vista Office .....	395-8493
Road and Bridge Department (Road Cuts, Plowing).....	539-6961
Superintendent.....	539-4591
Buena Vista Shop .....	395-6640
Sheriff's Office (non-emergency and Animal Control).....	539-2596
Administration / Records .....	539-2814
Jail.....	539-7150
Road Conditions (Recording).....	539-6688
Victim's Assistance .....	539-7969
Social Services (Food Stamps, Medicaid, etc.).....	539-6627
Treasurer / Public Trustee .....	539-6808
Veterans' Service Officer .....	539-3803
Weed Department (Control of noxious weeds) .....	539-3445

## Who Do I Call

Question about	Phone Number
Agriculture .....	539-6647
Airport Fees or Fuel .....	539-3720
Ambulance Bills .....	539-1914
Animals (Domestic - loose, dangerous or neglected).....	539-2596
Building Inspections and Permits .....	539-2124
Consumer Information .....	539-6447
County Commissioners .....	539-2218
County Fair .....	539-6447
County Road Maintenance .....	539-6961
Court Items (Jury Duty, Summons, Subpoena, etc).....	539-2561
Courthouse Grounds and Buildings .....	539-2218
Crimestoppers / Community Watch .....	539-5299
Criminal Prosecution.....	539-3563
Deed Registration .....	539-4004
Deed of Trust Releases .....	539-6808
Elections .....	539-6913
EPSDT .....	539-7290
Fairground Use / Rental.....	539-6151
Fax (Administration Building) .....	539-7442
Food Stamps .....	539-6627
4-H .....	539-6447
Hazardous Materials (Community Right to Know) .....	539-7459
Immunizations.....	539-4510
Jail .....	539-7150
Land Use Administration (rulings, variances, Comp. Plan).....	539-2218
Landfill hours and charges.....	539-3738
Medicaid .....	539-6627
Motor Vehicle Registration (Titles).....	539-4004
Property Tax Evaluations.....	539-4016
Property Tax Payments .....	539-6808
Public Health.....	539-4510
Restaurant Inspections .....	539-2124
Road Conditions (Weather Conditions).....	539-6688
Victims' Rights .....	539-7969
Voter Registration .....	539-6913
Weeds.....	539-3445
Welfare .....	539-6627
Zoning.....	539-2124

*Welcome to what many of us feel is the best part of the West. You will need to adjust to the fact that our air may be thinner and drier than you are used to. We also hope that you will find daytime skies bluer, sunlight brighter, vistas grander and our smiles and handshakes warmer.*



In an effort to help you with the transition, we have prepared this booklet concerning life out where the West was won.

The Code of the West was first chronicled by western writer Zane Grey. The men and women who came to this part of the country during the westward expansion of the United States were bound by an unwritten code of conduct. The values of honesty, integrity and self-reliance guided their decisions, actions and interactions. In keeping with that spirit, we offer this information to help the citizens who wish to follow in the footsteps of those rugged individuals by living outside municipalities.

### **Introduction**

It is important for you to know that life in the country is different from life in the city. County governments are not able to provide the same level of service that city governments provide. We are providing you with the following information to help you make an educated and informed decision about purchasing rural land because of those differences.



### **Access**

The fact that you can drive to your property does not necessarily guarantee that you, your guests and emergency service vehicles can achieve that same level of access at all times. Please consider:

1.1 - Emergency response times (sheriff, fire suppression, medical care, etc.) cannot be guaranteed. Under some extreme conditions, you may find that emergency response is extremely slow and expensive.

1. 2 - Some services are provided by volunteers who respond when paged.

1. 3 - If you gain access across property belonging to others there can be problems with the legal aspects of access. It is wise to obtain legal advice and understand the easements that may be necessary when these questions arise.

1. 4 - You can experience problems with the maintenance and cost of maintenance of your road. Chaffee County maintains 510 miles of roads, but many rural properties are served by private and public roads which are maintained by private road associations. There are some county roads that are not maintained by the County (no grading or snow plowing). There are even some public roads that are not maintained by anyone! Make sure you know what type of maintenance to expect and who will provide that maintenance.

1. 5 - Extreme weather conditions can destroy roads. It is wise to determine if your road was properly engineered and constructed.

1. 6 - Many large construction vehicles cannot navigate small, narrow roads. If you plan to build, be prudent. Check out construction access.

1. 7 - School buses travel only on maintained county roads that have been designated as school bus routes by the school district. You may need to drive your children to the nearest school bus stop so they can get to school.

1. 8 - In extreme weather, even county maintained roads can become impassable. You may need a four-wheel drive vehicle with chains for all four tires to travel during these episodes. They could last for several days.

1.9 - Natural Disasters, especially floods, destroy roads. Chaffee

County will repair and maintain county roads, however, subdivision roads are the responsibility of the landowners who use those roads. A dry creek bed can become a raging torrent and wash out roads, bridges and culverts. Residents served by private roads and/or bridges have been hit with large bills for repairs and/or reconstruction after floods.

1.10 - Unpaved roads generate dust. When traffic reaches specific levels, Chaffee County treats a few county system roads to suppress the dust. Dust is still a fact of life for most rural residents.

1.11 - If your road is unpaved, it is highly unlikely that Chaffee County will pave it in the foreseeable future. Check carefully with the Chaffee County Road and Bridge Department when any statement is made by the seller of any property that indicates any unpaved roads will be paved!

1.12 - Unpaved roads are not always smooth. They are often slippery when wet. You will experience an increase in vehicle maintenance costs when you travel on rural roads regularly.

1.13 - Residential mail delivery is not available to all areas of the county. Ask the postmaster to describe the system for your area.

1.14 - Newspaper delivery, similarly, is not always available to rural areas. Check with the newspaper of your choice before assuming you can get delivery. 1.15 - Standard parcel and overnight package delivery can be a problem for those who live in the country. Confer with service providers about your status.

1.16 - It may be more expensive and time consuming to build a rural residence because of delivery times and fees.

### Utility Services



Water, sewer, electric, telephone and other services may not be

available or may not operate at urban standards. Repairs and installation can often take much longer than in towns and cities. Please review your options from the partial list below.

2. 1 - Telephone communications can be a problem, especially in the mountain areas of Chaffee County. Sometimes the only phone service available has been a party line. If you have a private line, it may be difficult to obtain another line for fax or computer modem uses. There are areas where cellular phones will not work.

2. 2 - If sewer service is available to your property, it may be expensive to attach to the system. It also may be expensive to maintain the system you use.

2. 3 - If sewer service is not available, you will need to use an approved individual sewage disposal system. The type of soil you have available for a leach field will be very important in determining the cost and function of your system. Have the system checked by a reliable sanitation firm and ask for assistance from the Chaffee County Building and Sanitation Department.

2. 4 - If you have access to a supply of treated domestic water, the tap fees can be expensive. You may also find that your monthly cost of service can be high when compared to municipal systems.

2. 5 - If you do not have access to a supply of treated domestic water, you will have to locate an alternate supply. The most common method is use of a water well. Permits for wells are granted by the state engineer and the cost for drilling and pumping can be considerable. A permit does not guarantee that water will be found. The quality and quantity of well water can vary considerably from location to location and from season to season. We strongly advise you to research this issue very carefully.

2. 6 - Not all wells can be used for watering lawns, landscaping and/or livestock. Permits from the state engineer may restrict water use to that which is used inside of a home. If you have other needs, make certain that you have the proper approvals before you invest. It may

also be difficult to find enough water to provide for your needs even if you can secure the proper permit.

2. 7 - Electric service is not available to every area of Chaffee County. It is important to determine the proximity of electrical power. It can be very expensive to extend power lines to remote areas.

2. 8 - It may be necessary to cross property owned by others to extend electric service to your property in the most cost efficient manner. It is important to make sure that the proper easements are in place to allow lines to be extended to your property.

2. 9 - Electric power may not be available in two phase and three phase service configurations. If you have special power requirements, you need to know what type of service can be provided to your property.

2.10 - If you purchase land planning to build at a future date, there is a possibility that electric lines (and other utilities) may not be adequate to accommodate you if others connect during the time you wait to build.

2.11 - The cost of electric service is usually divided into a fee to hook into the system and then a monthly charge for energy consumed. It is important to know both costs before making a decision to purchase a specific piece of property.

2.12 - Power outages occur in outlying areas more frequently than in more developed areas. A loss of electric power can also interrupt your supply of water from a well. You may also lose food in freezers or refrigerators. Power outages can cause problems with computers as well. It is important to be able to survive for up to a week in severe cold with no utilities if you live in the country.

2.13 - Trash removal can be much more expensive in a rural area than in a city. Your trash dumpster may even be some distance from your home. It is illegal to create a trash dump, even on your own land. It is good to know the cost for trash removal as you make the



decision to move into the country. In some cases, your only option may be to haul your trash to the landfill yourself. Recycling is more difficult because of the distance to pick-up locations.

## **The Property**



There are many issues that can affect your property. It is important to research these items before purchasing land.

3.1 - Chaffee County land use is managed through zoning and before you begin construction a building permit is required.

3.2 - Not all lots can be built on. The Chaffee County Assessor lists many parcels that are separate for the purpose of taxation but are not legal lots in the sense that a building permit can be issued. You must check with the Chaffee County Building Department to find out if you may build on a piece of land.

3.3 - Easements may require you to allow construction of roads, power lines, water lines, sewer lines, etc. across your land. There may be easements that are not of record. Check these issues carefully.

3.4 - Many property owners do not own the mineral rights under their property. Owners of mineral rights have the ability to change the surface characteristics to extract their minerals. It is very important to know what minerals may be located under the land and who owns them. Much of the rural land in Chaffee County can be used for mining, however, a special review by the County Commissioners is usually required. Be aware that adjacent mining uses can expand and have negative impacts.

3.5 - You may be provided with a plat of your property. Do not assume that the plat is accurate unless the land has been surveyed and pins placed by a licensed surveyor.

3.6 - Fences that separate properties are often not aligned with the

property lines. A survey of the land is the only way to confirm the location of your property lines.

3.7 - Many subdivisions and planned unit developments have covenants that limit the use of the property. It is important to obtain a copy of the covenants (or confirm that there are none) and make sure that you can live with those rules. NOTE: A lack of covenants may cause problems between neighbors. Covenants are contracts between property owners and cannot be enforced by Law Enforcement Officers

3.8 - Homeowners' associations (HOAs) are required to take care of common elements; roads, open space, etc. A dysfunctional homeowners' association or poor covenants can cause problems for you and even involve you in expensive litigation.

3.9 - Dues are almost always a requirement in those areas with an HOA. The bylaws of the HOA will tell you how the organization operates and how the dues are set.

3.10 - The surrounding properties will probably not remain as they are indefinitely. You can check with the Chaffee County Building Department to find out how the properties are zoned and to see what future developments may be in the planning stages. The view from your property may change.

3.11 - Irrigation ditches need to be maintained and the law provides for a maintenance easement. If you have a ditch running across your property there is a good possibility that the owners of the ditch have the right to come onto your property with heavy equipment to maintain the ditch. This may damage your landscaping. They may also have the right to remove specific trees.

3.12 - Water rights that are sold with the property may not give you the right to use water from any ditches crossing your land without coordinating with a neighbor who also uses the water. Other users may have senior rights to the water that can limit your use or require you to pay for the maintenance over sizing or other improvements to the ditch.

3.13 - It is important to make sure that any water rights you purchase with the land will provide enough water to maintain lawns, trees, pastures, gardens or livestock.

3.14 - The water flowing in irrigation ditches belongs to someone. You cannot assume that because the water flows across your property, you can use it.

3.15 - Flowing water can be a hazard, especially to young children. Before you decide to locate your home near an active ditch, consider the possible danger to your family.

### **Mother Nature**



Residents of the country usually experience more problems when the elements and earth turn unfriendly. Here are some thoughts for you to consider.

4. 1 - The physical characteristics of your property can be positive and negative. Trees are a wonderful environmental amenity, but can also involve your home in a forest fire. Building at the top of a forested draw should be considered as dangerous as building in a flash flood area. Defensible perimeters are very helpful in protecting buildings from forest fire and can protect the forest from igniting if your house catches on fire. If you start a forest fire, you are responsible for paying the cost of extinguishing that fire. For further information, you can contact the Chaffee County Sheriffs Office (the Sheriff is the County Fire Marshall).

4.2 - Steep slopes can slide in unusually wet weather or in heavy snow. Large rocks can also roll down steep slopes and present a great danger to people and property.

4.3 - Expansive soils, like Bentonite Clay, can buckle concrete foundations and twist steel I-beams. You can find out the soil conditions on your property by having a soil test performed.

4.4 - North facing slopes or canyons rarely see direct sunlight in the

winter. It is possible for snow to accumulate and not melt all winter.

4.5 - The topography of the land can tell you where the water will go in the case of heavy precipitation. When property owners fill in ravines, they have found that the water that drained through that ravine now drains through their house.

4.6 - A flash flood can occur, especially during the summer months. A dry gully can turn into a river. It is wise to take this possibility into consideration when building.

4.7 - Spring runoff can cause a very small creek to become a major river. Many residents use sand bags to protect their homes. The county does not provide sand bags, equipment or people to protect private property from flooding.

4.8 - Nature can provide you with some wonderful neighbors. Most, like elk, antelope, deer and eagles are positive additions to the environment. However, even "harmless" animals like deer can cross the road unexpectedly and cause traffic accidents. Rural development encroaches on the traditional habitat of elk, deer, antelope, coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, rattlesnakes, prairie dogs, bears and other animals that can be dangerous. You need to know how to deal with them. In general, it is best to enjoy wildlife from a distance and know that if you do not handle your pets and trash properly, it could cause some problems for you and the wildlife. Dogs which molest wildlife (or livestock) may be dealt with in the most severe manner. The Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Service are wonderful sources of information. They have many free publications to help educate you about living in the wild.

## Recreation



Life in Colorado provides a wealth of outdoor activities and magnificent landscapes. There are more risks and differences in outdoor activities here than in other areas of the country.

5.1 - High altitude may cause serious (and possibly life threatening) reactions in some people.

5.2 - Weather may change very rapidly in any season. Be prepared for those changes.

5.3 - Be ready to spend the night. A member of your party may be injured or darkness may catch you in a location where it will be dangerous to move.

5.4 - Always leave an itinerary with someone so they know where you are going, the route you are taking and when you will leave and return.

5.5 - First Aid skills will serve you well during recreational activities.

## **Agriculture**



The people who tamed this wild land brought water to the barren, arid valleys of the Rockies through an ingenious system of water allocation. This water has allowed agriculture to become an important part of our environment. Owning rural land means knowing how to care for it. There are a few things you need to know.

6.1 - Farmers often work around the clock, especially during planting and harvest time. Dairy operators sometimes milk without stopping, and hay is often swathed or baled at night. It is possible that adjoining agriculture uses can disturb your peace and quiet.

6.2 - Land preparation and other operations can cause dust, especially during windy and dry weather.

6.3 - Farmers occasionally burn their ditches to keep them clean of debris., weeds and other obstructions. This burning creates smoke that you may find objectionable.

6.4 - Chemicals (mainly fertilizers and herbicides) are often used in growing crops. You may be sensitive to these substances and some people may have severe allergic reactions. Some of these substances may be applied by airplanes that fly early in the morning.

6.5 - Animals and manure have odors. What else can we say?

6.6 - Agriculture is an important business in Chaffee County. If you choose to live among the farms and ranches of our rural countryside, do not expect county government to intervene in the normal day-to-day operations of your agribusiness neighbors.

6.7 - Colorado has "Right to Farm" legislation that protects farmers and ranchers from nuisance and liability lawsuits. It enables them to continue producing food and fiber.

6.8 - Colorado has an open range law. If you do not want cattle, sheep or other livestock on your property, you must fence them out. It is not the responsibility of the rancher to keep his/her livestock off your property. When public roads pass through open range, livestock has the right of way and vehicles must yield.

6.9 - Before buying land you should know if it has noxious weeds that may be expensive to control and you will be required to control. Some plants are poisonous to horses and other livestock.

6.10 - Animals can be dangerous. Bulls, stallions, rams, boars, etc. can attack human beings. Children need to know that it is not safe to enter pens, pastures and meadows where animals are kept.

6.11 - Livestock can cross fences and be difficult to see on or near roads.

6.12 - Much of Chaffee County receives less than 15 inches (38 cm) of precipitation per year. As a result, we have a problem with overgrazing, and fugitive dust. Without irrigation, grass does not grow very well. There is a limit to the amount of grazing the land can support. The Chaffee County Cooperative Extension Office can help you with these issues.

## **The Right to Farm**



Chaffee County has intensive agricultural operations within its boundaries. The rural areas of the county may seem open and spacious but they are intensively used for farming and ranching operations. Most of the people who move into this valley do so for the beautiful surroundings and the quieter, simpler, yet high quality of life that is available. People moving into a rural area must also recognize there are adjustments to be made regarding the availability and timeliness of services. In addition there are long-standing agricultural practices that must be adhered to.

Agricultural users of the land cannot change their long-established agricultural practices to accommodate the relocation of urban residents into a rural area. Agricultural activities will generate off-site impacts. Some of these impacts include: noise, dust, lights from tractors and equipment, dust and noise from livestock in corrals or pastures, field work, harvest and gravel roads, odors from cattle confinement, silage and manure. Smoke from burning ditch banks is routine in the spring. Flies and mosquitos may also be present. The use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizer in the fields are common. Ditches, ponds and reservoirs simply cannot be "moved out of the way" of residential development without threatening the efficient delivery of irrigation water to fields and meadows, which is essential to farm and ranch production. Ranchers and farmers have a right to maintain and repair their ditches on private property.

In rural areas, children may be exposed to different hazards and risks than they would in an urban or suburban environment. Farm and ranch equipment, ponds, lakes, ditches, electrical power for center pivot operations, high speed traffic, weeds, ranch dogs and livestock may present real threats to children. Monitoring children's activities is important, not only for their safety, but for the protection of the farmers' livelihood. Parents and guardians must be responsible for their children.

**CHAFFEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

## **In conclusion**

Although you pay property taxes to the county, the amount of tax collected does not cover the cost of the services provided to rural residents. Generally, those living in municipalities subsidize the lifestyle of those who live in the country by making up the shortfall between the cost of services and the revenues received from rural dwellers.

This information is by no means complete. There are other issues that you may encounter that we have overlooked and we encourage you to be vigilant in your duties to explore and examine those things that could cause your move to be less than you expect. We have offered these comments in the sincere hope that it can help you enjoy your decision to reside in the country. It is not our intent to dissuade you, only inform you.

Chaffee County  
P.O. Box 699  
Salida, Colorado 81201-0699  
Courthouse - (719)539-2218  
Fax - (719)539-7442



## 72 Hour Survival Kit Content

Items needed in an evacuation are marked with an asterisk (\*). We suggest you have a carrier of adequate size nearby and ready.

---

---

- Water** - 1 gallon per day per person (3 day minimum).
- 
- 

### *Non-perishable food (needs no cooking, water or preparation)*

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables
  - Canned juices, milk, soup (if dry store more water)
  - Staples - sugar, salt pepper
  - High energy foods - peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, trail mix.
  - Vitamins
  - Special foods (infants, elderly, restricted diets)
  - Comfort/ stress foods - Cookies, hard candy, sweetened cereals, lollipops, instant coffee, tea bags
- 

### **First Aid Kit**

- Sterile adhesive bandages (assorted sizes)
  - 2-inch sterile gauze pads (4 to 6)
  - 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4 to 6)
  - Adhesive tape (Hypoallergenic suggested)
  - Triangular Bandages (3)
  - 2-inch sterile roller bandages (3)
  - 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3)
  - Scissors
  - Tweezers
  - Needle
  - Moistened towelettes
  - Antiseptic
  - Thermometer
  - Tongue Depressor/Tongue Blades (2)
  - Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant
  - Assorted sizes of safety pins
  - Cleansing agent/soap
  - Latex gloves (2 pair)
  - Sunscreen
- 
- 

### **Non Prescription Drugs**

- Aspirin or non aspirin pain reliever
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Syrup of Ipecac (Use when advised by Poison Control Center)
- Activated Charcoal (Use when advised by Poison Control Center)
- Antacid
- Laxative

### ***Tools and Supplies***

- \*Mess Kits, or paper cups, plates and plastic utensils
  - \*Emergency Preparedness manual
  - \*Battery operated radio and extra batteries
  - \*Flashlight and extra batteries
  - \*Cash or traveler's check and change
  - \*Non-electric can opener, or utility pocket knife
  - Fire Extinguisher (small canister ABC type)
  - Matches in waterproof container
  - Aluminum Foil
  - Tube Tent
  - Pliers
  - Tape
  - Compass
  - Signal Flare
  - Paper and pencils
  - Needles and thread
  - Medicine dropper
  - Shut-off wrench to turn off house gas and water
  - Plastic Storage Containers
- 
- 

### ***Sanitation Supplies***

- \*Toilet Paper, towelettes
  - \*Feminine Supplies
  - Plastic garbage bags with ties (for personal sanitation use)
  - \*Soap, liquid detergent
  - \*Personal hygiene items
  - Plastic bucket with tight lid
  - Disinfectant
  - Household chlorine bleach
- 
- 

### ***Clothing and Bedding***

\*Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person.

- \*Sturdy shoes or work boots
  - \*Rain gear
  - \*Blankets or sleeping bags
  - Hat and gloves
  - Thermal underwear
  - Sunglasses
- 
- 

### ***Special Items***

Remember family members with special needs, like infants and elderly or disabled persons.

#### ***Baby\****

- Formula
- Diapers
- Bottles
- Powdered Milk
- Medicine

#### ***Adults\****

- Denture needs
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Extra eyeglasses
- Prescription Medications
- Insulin and diabetic supplies
- Entertainment (games and books)
- Keep your important family documents in a portable waterproof container