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City Manager's Office



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** William McDonald  
Fire Chief

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** November 12, 2010

Approved

Date

11/15/10

**SUBJECT: OCTOBER 2010 SAN JOSE FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE DATA**

This Informational Memorandum is intended to provide the City Council with the operational performance of the San Jose Fire Department over the period October 1 - 31, 2010. An upgrade at the Public Safety Dispatch Center was initiated in October, which required Fire Dispatchers to relocate into Fire Station 29 and support Fire Department response systems without the assistance of computer aided dispatching software for approximately 12 hours.

In addition, Fire crews responded to a large wildland fire (TIER III), two 3<sup>rd</sup> alarm and two 4<sup>th</sup> alarm incidents during the month and were involved in a significant building evacuation at the Santa Clara County Hall of Justice.

## OPERATIONAL SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

| October Emergency Performance Data     |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Response Time Performance <sup>1</sup> | 81.39%            |
| Number of Fires                        |                   |
| Fire Incidents                         | 111               |
| Structure Responses                    | 30                |
| Medical Responses                      | 3,822             |
| Multiple Alarm Incidents <sup>2</sup>  | 14                |
| Total Incidents                        | 5,248             |
|  |                   |
| Dispatched Emergency Incidents         |                   |
| Highest Number                         | 213 on 10-31-2010 |
| Average Number                         | 169               |
|  |                   |
| Move-ups <sup>3</sup>                  |                   |
| Highest Number                         | 19 on 10-09-2010  |
| Average Number                         | 7                 |

<sup>1</sup> Response Time Performance Goal is 80%

<sup>2</sup> Includes 2<sup>nd</sup> alarm or greater, large wildland and hi-rise responses.

<sup>3</sup> A move-up is defined as the temporary re-assignment of an available fire company and the return trip to their home fire station. Data is based on a day or shift, which begins at 8 a.m. and ends the next morning at 7:59 a.m.

**SUMMARY**

Response time performance for the month was compliant with the minimum standard of arriving at the scene of a reported emergency within eight (8) minutes, 80% of the time. But on the three days noted below, response time performance failed to meet the standard for that 24 hour period.

| October | Performance | Comments   |
|---------|-------------|--|
| 10th    | 64.28%      | Communications Center electrical upgrade<br>Incident volume of 178, slightly above daily |
| 27th    | 71.42%      | average  |
| 31st    | 78.35%      | Fourth alarm fire  |

Although performance was lowest on October 10<sup>th</sup>, incident volume that day was generally moderate. Additionally, the Public Safety Dispatch Center underwent an electrical upgrade for most of that day, which displaced Fire Dispatchers and required them to complete their duties manually (without computer assistance). Furthermore, the average number of move-ups per day increased from 5 to 7 this month.

The Department additionally responded to a number of suspicious fire incidents on October 31<sup>st</sup> - all at or near the same address over a 24-hour period. The final incident in that series involved an apparent maliciously set fire against the outside wall of a business that spread into the inside of the building and ultimately an adjacent business very late that night. The fires are currently under investigation.

**SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS AND ACTIVITY**

The Fire Department operates five Supplement Transport Ambulance Resource (STAR) Cars that support the County emergency ambulance system and are placed into service as a "system resource" upon request. This request occurs when American Medical Response (AMR) resources fall below the minimum required level of available ambulance resources within the County and most often lasts for a short period of time; usually five hours or less. During the request or query, STAR Cars are dispatched to incidents anywhere in the County as the only transport unit and until such time that the County provider's resource availability returns to an acceptable level. AMR pays the City for the use of City resource(s) based upon the actual patients transported to a hospital by the Fire Department.

AMR generally requests Fire Department units an average of five times per month. However, it is notable that the number of requests in October was nine and that two requests were made on three different days. Fire Department staff will continue to monitor STAR Car requests closely as AMR prepares to end its provision of services to the County on June 30, 2011.

Firefighters responded to the Santa Clara County Hall of Justice and assisted in evacuating approximately 1,000 occupants from the building as smoke was reported coming from the basement of the high rise building. Evacuees included judges, prisoners, County staff and jurors. A total of six engine companies, four truck companies and one Urban Search and Rescue Unit

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responded to the incident and determined the cause of the smoke to be a burnt out pump located in the basement. Crews removed the smoke from the building and returned it to County staff.

On October 21<sup>st</sup>, Truck 30 (Auzerais St) responded to a reported natural gas leak near Willis Avenue and West Virginia Street at 9:25 a.m. The crew identified the source of the leak as a natural gas supply line under the street. The incident was upgraded to a full alarm response and Firefighters quickly evacuated 15 homes in the immediate area and a nearby elementary school that was in session at the time. PG&E was successful in capping the leak without further incident and residents were allowed to return to their homes by 12:10 p.m.

Companies responded to a series of reported small fires near the intersection of 10<sup>th</sup> and Horning Street during the afternoon of October 31<sup>st</sup>. During early morning hours, a structure fire of suspicious origin was reported at the same address as a fire previously that day. The incident resulted in the destruction of two businesses and required a 4<sup>th</sup> alarm assignment to bring the fire under control and extinguish.

### **COMMENTS**

A fast burning Wildland fire along Mt. Hamilton Road at Clayton Road endangered five homes and a trapped an elderly resident on October 19<sup>th</sup>. A large wildland fire (TIER II) response was dispatched and companies arrived to find flames racing up a steep canyon towards the homes at the crest. Cal Fire also dispatched a full grass fire response to the scene and collectively San Jose Firefighters collaborated on a strategy to hold the fire at the top of the grade and to affect a rescue of a resident unable to evacuate on his own. The incident was upgraded given the potential for structure losses and threatened neighborhood beyond the head of the fire. Very aggressive measures taken by two San Jose Fire Captains and their crews prevented the spread of the fire and resulted in the successful containment of the fire and protection of the exposures. This fire was particularly challenging given the difficult access, steep hillside and wind driving the flames. Excellent work by all firefighters from both San Jose and Cal Fire in bringing this very difficult and significant incident under control.

/s/

WILLIAM MCDONALD, Fire Chief

For questions, please contact William McDonald, Fire Chief, at 408-277-5488.

