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 City Manager's Office

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Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
 AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: William McDonald
 Fire Chief

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: December 15, 2010

Approved

Date

12/17/10

SUBJECT: NOVEMBER 2010 SAN JOSE FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE DATA

This Informational Memorandum is intended to provide the San Jose City Council with the operational performance of the San Jose Fire Department for the month of November. This period was significant as it is the first full month that the Department did not meet its emergency response time performance standard of arriving at the scene of an emergency within eight (8) minutes, 80% of the time. The monthly emergency response time performance was 79.39% with more than one-third of the month's daily performance falling below the standard. There has been a greater incidence of concurrent and near simultaneously dispatched emergencies resulting in out-of-district or "second-due" companies responding to incidents from a greater distance. While there may be several factors contributing to this and we are reviewing a limited amount of data, the increasing number of second-due responses is suggesting that the capacity of our emergency response deployment system is being challenged. More analysis will be conducted to determine the root cause of the experience and a comprehensive deployment system evaluation, scheduled to begin January 2011, should assist staff in identifying potential improvements that will address response performance.

OPERATIONAL SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

November Emergency Performance Data	
Response Time Performance ¹	79.39%
Number of Fires	
Fire Incidents	95
Structure Responses	33
Medical Responses	3,526
Multiple Alarm Incidents ²	5
Total Incidents	4,998
Dispatched Emergency Incidents	
Highest Number	192 on 11/15/2010
Average Number	167
Move-ups ³	
Highest Number	11 on 11/9/2010
Average Number	2

¹ Response Time Performance Goal is 80%

² Includes 2nd alarm or greater, large wildland and hi-rise responses.

³ 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

Emergency response time performance and the capacity of the emergency response deployment system are the primary focus of our efforts as we approach the end of the calendar year and the beginning of FY 2011/2012 operating budget development process. It will be important for staff to remain objective and open in terms of understanding the data and ensuring that all deficiencies have been clearly identified. We will allow information and our knowledge to guide us towards viable options and solutions as we consider alternative approaches to providing emergency services. This is critical in that the emergency response operation is our core service and the primary method in which the Department provides services to the community. Ensuring that emergency resources are being utilized optimally and in the most effective and responsible way will be the measurement of success and this evaluation will provide opportunities for staff to develop the best practices necessary to deliver public safety services to our citizens.

Performance results indicate that improvements and new approaches to service delivery are needed to continue to serve the community in an acceptable way. While response time performance fell just below the standard, the higher incidence of responses by second-due companies is an indicator that improvements are likely needed. The reliability of a company is defined by a calculation of the number of incidents that a company, assigned to a first-due area, is available to respond within its district, divided by the total number of reported emergencies in the district. First-due companies may be unavailable to respond due to a prior emergency, out of service training, being moved into another district or their apparatus is out of service for repair. Generally higher incident call volume in an assigned area will result in lower company reliability. The impact is that an available company from a greater distance must respond to incidents, thereby increasing response times. In our case, emergency call volume in the City is similar to incident call volume last year at this time however, fewer resources exist to respond to those incidents. Other factors (i.e., call processing, turnout time) may also be impacting the performance, so it is clear that additional analysis is needed.

It should be noted that one factor of poor response performance during the month was anticipated. On November 6th, the CAD System was unavailable to Dispatchers while improvements were being made at the Communications Center. Therefore, all incidents were dispatched manually, which caused longer than acceptable call processing times. Some CAD and technology related resources were also unavailable to responding companies contributing to delays.

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS AND ACTIVITY

A full alarm assignment (3 Engines, 2 Trucks and 2 Battalion Chiefs) responded to a reported commercial building fire located at 120 San Jose Avenue on November 9, 2010. First arriving companies reported smoke and flames visible through the roof of a metal clad building. The fire ultimately escalated to a third alarm requiring a total of nine (9) Engine Companies, four (4) Truck Companies and three (3) Chief Officers to bring it under control. There were no injuries reported to civilian or firefighters.

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Fifteen patients were transported to local hospital as a result of a hazardous material release at the DACA Swim School on November 20th at approximately 1:52 P.M. A malfunctioning valve mixed chlorine gas and muriatic acid which created off gassing and caused swimmers to become symptomatic and in need of medical treatment. Engine 15 arrived and received an initial report of multiple sick patients and requested a full first alarm assignment, initiated a Multiple Patient Medical Protocol (MPMP) activation (hospital notification of a significant incident and multiple patients), SJFD Hazmat Task Force and mutual aid for the County Fire Hazmat Team. San Jose Police Department assisted with traffic and crowd control and all appropriate notifications were made. The incident was brought under control at 3:16 P.M.

A rescue response with the Hazardous Incident Team (a total of 2 Engines, 1 Truck, 1 HIT, 1 Urban Search and Rescue Team and 1 Battalion Chief) was sent to a report of an overturned liquid nitrogen tanker on CA-237 East west of First Street. Upon arrival, Engine 25 found the driver trapped inside the cab with the vehicle's diesel tank leaking, while liquid nitrogen escaped from the relief valve. CA-237 East was completely shut down with traffic in the West Bound lanes unaffected. During the incident, a subsequent multi-vehicle crash occurred behind the tanker truck emergency as a result of the freeway backup. Crews from the scene also managed that incident with the support of the Sunnyvale Fire Department and our Department Safety Officer. A recovery vehicle was sent to offload the product and make the damaged tank truck safe for removal from the freeway.

COMMENTS

The Department's Hazardous Incident Team (HIT) was evaluated by the California Emergency Management Agency (CALEMA) on December 7th in order to assess the capability of our personnel, apparatus and equipment to respond to hazardous releases, leaks and spills. Crew members with the assistance of the Special Operations Section worked collaboratively to prepare for the "Typing Process" and were available during the inspection to respond to any questions asked by CALEMA representatives. Evaluators found our HIT to be the best in the State; successfully earning certification to respond to the highest category of hazardous releases anticipated (Type 1) based upon established criteria. CALEMA representatives also digitally recorded the inspection and requested authorization of its use in assisting other agencies to achieve certification. The excellent work and dedication of the personnel assigned to the HIT and all Station 29 crew members, as well as the Special Operations Section are to be commended for this significant achievement and for continuing to provide an outstanding level of critical resource to the community.

/s/

WILLIAM MCDONALD

Fire Chief

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

