



SENT TO COUNCIL:

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City Manager's Office

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: William McDonald
Fire Chief

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: June 27, 2011

Approved

Date

6/28/11

SUBJECT: MONTHLY OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE DATA, MAY 2011

This memo provides the operational performance data of the San Jose Fire Department for the month of May 2011. As shown in the table below, emergency response time performance for May was above the standard for arriving at the scene of a reported emergency within eight (8) minutes, 80 percent of the time. Emergency response experience during the month recorded a performance of 85 percent or greater on 11 days while falling below the performance standard on six (6) days. The Department recorded its lowest response performance for the month, 74 percent, on May 1st. Move up experience for the month was very low averaging 1.6 move ups per day with the highest volume day reaching eight move-ups in a 24 hour period (May 23).

I would like to thank the City Council on behalf of the Department and our community for supporting the acceptance of the SAFER Grant. I appreciate the policy considerations that were necessary in making the decision and thank the City Council for having the patience with staff to allow us to work through the issues and concerns. Staff is fully engaged in accomplishing the projects and activities that will be required for Grant implementation. Offer letters have been sent to our former Firefighters and they are scheduled to return to the City on July 18, 2011. The resources that the grant reinstates will assist the Department in providing a higher level of emergency services to the City and create opportunities for addressing concerns regarding response time performance to medical emergencies.

OPERATIONAL SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

May Emergency Performance Data	
Response Time Performance ¹	82.75%
Number of Fires	
Fire Incidents	141
Structure Responses	41
Medical Responses	3,965
Multiple Alarm Incidents ²	4
Total Incidents	5,207
Dispatched Emergency Incidents	
Highest Number	195 on 5/5/2011
Average Number	167
Move-ups ³	

Highest Number	8 on 5/23/2011
Average Number	1.6

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

The Department is currently engaged in the implementation of the Fiscal Year 2011/2012 FD Operating Budget that includes reduced truck company and on-duty daily staffing, rolling brown-outs and the reduction of resources assigned to the Hazardous Incident Team. The Department is fortunate that we were able to avoid laying off any employees (sworn or civilian) as a result of employee concessions, retirements, administrative reassignments and internal cost reduction strategies. Several deployment and operational changes will occur over the next few weeks and months and the Department (as well as the County of Santa Clara) will welcome in a new ambulance provider on July 1st.

The Department also responded to two notable major incidents during the month of May, one (double homicide at San Jose State University) with a very tragic outcome as detailed below. Incident volume for the fiscal year period through May 31st continues to be ahead of last year's experience by approximately five (5) percent (Fiscal Year 2009/2010 – 54,681, Fiscal Year 2010/2011 – 57,303).

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS AND ACTIVITY

A report of a structure fire at a fast food restaurant was received at Fire Communications at 6:38 A.M. on May 9th. Three (3) engines, two (2) truck companies and two (2) Battalion Chiefs were dispatched with the first company arriving within three (3) minutes and reporting heavy, black smoke coming from the single-story business. The incident escalated to a second alarm given the building involvement and concern for nearby exposure buildings but was brought under control by 7:20 A.M. There were no reported injuries on the incident and no one was displaced.

Within a few minutes of the incident occurring above, the Department responded to a fully involved structure fire at 498 S. 5th Street in Downtown San Jose. Engine 3 (Martha Street) arrived at 7:00 A.M. to find the second story of a two (2) story Victorian home (multi-family structure) engulfed in flames and requested a second alarm assignment. Occupant rescue and exposure protection were immediate priorities which resulted in a near immediate request for a second and then a third alarm assignment of resources. Ultimately the incident required eight (8) engines, four (4) trucks and two (2) Battalion Chiefs to bring the incident under control. Amazingly, given the potential of this incident, there were no injuries to civilians or Firefighters and adjacent exposure buildings were undamaged as a result of the very aggressive and effective actions of the on-scene crews. Excellent firefighting and a very strong and effective response by involved personnel.

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A murder/suicide on the campus of San Jose State University on May 10th just after 8:30 P.M. called for a major response from both San Jose Police and Fire Departments. A total of three (3) victims, all with life threatening gun shot wounds were treated and attended to in a very tense and stressful crime scene environment. Three (3) fire companies, three (3) ambulances and one (1) Battalion Chief who managed the medical scene were dispatched to the incident that ultimately resulted in the loss of three lives.

On May 24th at 5:13 P.M. the Department responded to a second alarm structure fire in a single family dwelling on the corner of Junewood Avenue and Capewood Lane near Fire Station 23. Responding companies reported a column of smoke visible from approximately ½ mile away and arrived finding a single story home with flames coming from windows on two sides of the building. An excellent initial report, very rapid attack and assignment of fire personnel resulted in limiting the damage to the structure and protection of adjacent exposure buildings.

COMMENTS

The City Council approved a new agreement with the County of Santa Clara for the provision of first responder advanced life support services (ALS – paramedics) that Department Staff and many others in the City (City Attorney's Office, City Manager's Office) had been working with County Staff on to ensure enhanced services to City of San Jose communities. The agreement converts the sub-contractor relationship for the City from a "level of effort" (defining resources that must be involved in providing services) contract with the outgoing ambulance provider to a direct relationship with the County of Santa Clara through a "performance based" agreement. The City's ability to control our first responder resources has been greatly increased as a result and we have restored flexibility to Department staff in utilizing our resources. Additionally, the new contract with the County and potential formal operational and financial integration with the new ambulance provider may also increase system efficiency and effectiveness generally in the County of Santa Clara and specifically within the City of San Jose.

The City Council approved application for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant proposed to staff three (3) engine companies that had been cut through the Fiscal Year 2010/2011 Operating Budget process. Staff recommended the approval of the Grant proposing to provide Airport fire protection with a grant funded company to assist in making the operation more affordable while retaining emergency response resources for the rest of the City. At this time, consideration is being given to alternative response options that will provide a more representative response to lower priority emergencies and increase the potential that needed resources will be available for larger, more significant emergencies. Additionally, seasonal considerations will be incorporated into recommendations in implementing SAFER Grant funded resources.

The County of Santa Clara Grand Jury Report "Fighting Fire or Fighting Change" was published recently that presents a number of findings and recommendations that will be evaluated and considered by Staff as a response is developed. It should be noted that some discrepancies are apparent in the report that will be included in Staff's response to the City Council which include the suggestion that none of the Fire Chiefs interviewed were considering modifying responses to medical emergencies, that none of the County Fire unions were willing

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to discuss alternative staffing models and most concerning was the comment that Firefighters were more concerned about themselves than the residents of the communities that they serve. I am proud to report to the City Council that discussions on alternative staffing models and scaling responses based upon the reported emergency have been occurring within the Department at least since June 2010 and the City of San Jose Firefighters demonstrate their complete commitment and dedication to serving our community on a daily basis. I know that that you as City Council members are aware of these facts however I felt that it was important to state it here.

/s/

WILLIAM MCDONALD, Fire Chief

For questions, please contact William McDonald, Fire Chief, at 408-794-6951.

