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JAN 4 2013

City Managers

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: William McDonald

SUBJECT: San José Fire Department
Response Time Performance
Reporting

DATE: January 4, 2013

Approved

Date

1/4/13

INFORMATION

The Fire Department's goal is to respond timely to critical emergencies, including fire and priority emergency medical calls. Specifically for San José, the first emergency response vehicle should arrive on the scene within 8 minutes, 80% of the time. The Department's response-time performance measure is the standard that was adopted by the City Council following fire service industry standards and recommendations to provide the greatest potential for the provision of excellent services and desired outcomes. The standard response time performance measure adopted by the National Fire Protection Association is for the first company to arrive at the scene of a reported emergency within 6 minutes, 90% of the time.

We recently discovered that the Department's response-time measures have been inconsistently reported since 2009. In general, some data used in the calculation of the response-time measure were excluded in error. Data from emergencies where a fire company responded to a call within its assigned area (closest neighborhood fire station) were included in the citywide response-time calculation, but data from emergencies where a fire company responded to a priority call outside of its assigned area were not. By using the correct methodology for data collection and reporting, the Fire Department expects that its overall response-time rate (percentage at which the response-time goal is achieved) will be lower than what has been reported previously. It is very important to state that even though response-time performance has been reported inconsistently during this period, our firefighters and employees have provided and continue to provide excellent emergency services to our residents and community.

The Department has researched improved methods for collecting data, and new reporting methodology will provide a more accurate measure for emergency response-times. The new reporting procedures are being implemented in January 2013. Once established, comparative data for the current fiscal year can be provided and can potentially be used to reevaluate prior years' performance in order to develop accurate historical information for better trend analysis. Additionally, the Department is continuing to research and implement opportunities to lower response-time performance.

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The Department is confident that outcomes remain very good in terms of protecting the lives and property of the community. It is also the Department's position that the response-time performance standard (arrive within 8 minutes, 80% of the time) must be maintained to continue to ensure good emergency incident outcomes. The Fire Department will continue to evaluate and implement operational improvements to achieve this response goal, and will bring forward resource recommendations to the City Council as indicated.

A full report on this issue will be delivered in January 2013, at the meeting of the Public Safety, Finance, and Strategic Support Committee.

/s/

WILLIAM MCDONALD, Fire Chief

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

