

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Curtis P. Jacobson
Kim Becker

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: May 28, 2015

Approved

D. D. S. L.

Date

5/29/15

INFORMATION

**SUBJECT: SAN JOSE FIRE DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY COVERAGE AT
MINETA SAN JOSE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

This Information Memorandum responds to points presented on May 19, 2015, by the NBC Bay Area Investigative Unit and explains that the San José Fire Department (SJFD) has fully operational response plans in place to ensure sufficient emergency coverage at Mineta San José International Airport (SJC).

DISCUSSION

Although the Federal Aviation Administration sets and enforces industry-wide safety standards for emergency preparedness and response, every airport is unique in terms of its airfield configuration, nature and number of flight operations, size of property, location, and other emergency response and mutual aid resources. It is not possible to meaningfully compare airports because of these wide-ranging differences. However, SJC and SJFD work very closely together to apply FAA safety standards and regularly evaluate operational plans and resources in order to ensure adequate emergency coverage at SJC, protect passengers and aircraft, and comply with all FAA safety standards for emergency response, equipment, staffing, and training.

FAA regulations set index ratings for Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) personnel and equipment at US airports. Index ratings are based on the length of commercial passenger aircraft and the number of scheduled daily passenger flights. SJC was at Index D for many years while American Airlines operated Boeing 777 service to Tokyo. When American discontinued this flight in October 2006, SJC chose to continue operating at the Index D level as staff worked to restore this nonstop service for our community.

The Airport reevaluated all service levels and delivery models during the 2009-2010 budget process. At that time, SJC was experiencing a significant reduction in flights, aircraft and passenger traffic due to the Great Recession. Also, Tokyo service on American or another carrier had not been restored. Due to severe financial constraints and in order to maintain a cost-competitive position for airlines operating at SJC while also providing the highest level of public

May 28, 2015

Subject: San José Fire Department Emergency Coverage at Mineta San José International Airport

Page 2

safety, the review resulted in eliminating SJFD staffing for one ARFF apparatus at Station 20 located at the Airport.

This change was consistent with FAA regulations, and SJFD and SJC have continued to meet all FAA standards despite these reductions in ARFF resources. This ongoing commitment ensures that Fire Station 20 frontline and relief personnel are fully trained in ARFF operations. To this end, SJFD currently plans to send 32 members of the Fire Department to Utah for specialized and certified annual ARFF training in October. This will ensure SJFD personnel continue to meet FAA-required annual training and have updated their essential skills for aircraft rescue and firefighting.

Additionally, SJFD has been evaluating a number of alternatives to deploy additional resources to Station 20 at SJC to serve both ARFF and EMS response needs. One consideration is the temporary redeployment of Squad 34 (Las Plumas) to Fire Station 5 (North 10th Street), which would ensure personnel and equipment resources are in closer proximity to the Airport. This potential pilot program is still under consideration by SJFD, with the subsequent need for further evaluation, review of potential budgetary impacts, and coordination with SJC.

Airline flight activity now has been steadily increasing over the past two years. Given the increased volume of aircraft and passengers, SJC is increasing San José Police Department service hours at the Airport in the 2015-2016 budget cycle. Likewise, SJFD and SJC have discussed plans to increase SJFD personnel and ARFF apparatus once flight operations reach the appropriate criteria.

SJFD and the City Manager's Office also are working with Citygate Associates, a management consulting firm specializing in public safety services, to conduct an organizational review of the Fire Department. This study includes an analysis of SJFD's current service levels and a review of staffing and resource deployment options. The final consultant report will be completed this summer, but the Fire Department also is continuing to evaluate deployment options that might improve delivery of fire services throughout the community.

SJFD and SJC both are confident that the Fire Department is prepared to handle major emergencies at the Airport through a combination of ARFF resources, including equipment and staff deployed at the Airport, firefighting and EMT resources at neighboring fire stations (Fire Stations 1 and 5), and the availability of Citywide and regional mutual aid resources from other departments. Both the Fire Department and the Airport work closely with the FAA for the regular review and updating of emergency response plans, emergency exercises, and federal safety evaluations to ensure that the City continues to serve and protect our passengers, aircraft, and community.

/s/

KIM BECKER
Director of Aviation

/s/

CURTIS P. JACOBSON
Interim Fire Chief

For more information, contact Curtis Jacobson, Interim Fire Chief, at 408-794-7000

