

2013-2014

ANNUAL
REPORT

VI. APPENDIX

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Ruben Torres

SUBJECT: 2013-2014 FIRE DEPARTMENT
VACANCY AND ABSENCE RATES
AND THEIR IMPACT ON OVERTIME

DATE: September 30, 2014

Approved



Date 9/26/14

INFORMATION ONLY

PURPOSE

This annual report on year-end overtime, absence rates and vacancy hours in the Fire Department is prepared in response to the City Auditor's April 2001 "Audit of the City of San José Fire Department's Overtime Expenditures" (Overtime Audit). Overtime funding and relief staffing levels are reviewed annually to ensure they are appropriately measured, funded, and managed. This 2013-2014 report presents absence and vacancy data for the Fire Department, outlines current staffing levels and projected attrition, and provides a discussion of relief staffing based on five years of data (2008-2009 through 2013-2014).

SUMMARY

Total absence hours in 2013-2014 of 363,280 increased by 4% from 348,277 in 2012-2013. This increase absence hours was largely due to increase in modified duty and vacation hours. Although overall vacancy rates remained at the same level¹, there were up to 20 sworn line vacancies in May and June 2014. Filling these vacancies was reprioritized until 2014-2015 to allow the completion of recruiting efforts². A Firefighter Recruit Academy with 25 recruits will start on September 15, 2014. In 2013-2014, the combined absence and vacancy rate was 21.1%, requiring 390,608 duty hours to be backfilled³.

¹ Vacancy rate in 2013-2014 was 1.5%; in 2012-2013 was 1.4%

² Recruitment efforts included outreach program and nationwide testing process to create a new Firefighter recruit list. The last Firefighter recruit list was established in 2008-2009 and updating the list would provide the Department with a larger candidate pool that would be representative of the communities the Department serves.

³ In 2012-2013, combined impact of absences and vacancy hours required 374,821 hours of backfill.

BACKGROUND

Concern regarding the Fire Department's over-expenditures in its overtime budget led to the release of a 2001 Overtime Audit. Prior to 2005-2006, the Fire Department was unable to bring overtime expenditures within its annual overtime budget allocation. From 2006-2007 through 2013-2014, the Fire Department's overtime year-end expenditures were lower than budgeted estimates. Through 2011-2012, the Fire Department has reported on its annual vacancy and absence rates and their impact on overtime to the Public Safety, Finance and Strategic Support (PSFSS) Committee. At the PSFSS Committee meeting on March 21, 2013, the Administration's recommendation to incorporate the Fire Department's annual vacancy and absence rates and their impact on overtime into the Annual Report was approved.

ANALYSIS

In 2013-2014, the Department had 180 daily duty positions⁴. When absences or vacancies occurred, relief personnel and/or off-duty personnel were brought back to work on overtime to backfill duty positions to the extent overtime funding was available. When funding was not available, however, certain stations were temporarily closed, otherwise known as "browned out" per previous approved budget balancing actions. For most of 2013-2014, one engine company⁵ was browned out when staffing was not available. Through diligent analysis of operational impacts and overtime usage, the Fire Department, with the support of the City Manager's Budget Office, continued to successfully manage its overtime budget. The Fire Department's 2013-2014 total modified overtime budget was \$6.5 million. Total overtime expenditures were \$6.3 million, with the balance of about \$165,000 rebudgeted to 2014-2015 for special operations training and Fire Engineer and Firefighter academies not completed in 2013-2014.

Absence Rates

The Fire Department analyzes absence and vacancy rates to determine the most efficient relief and overtime complement to meet daily minimum staffing. The following table displays the 2013-2014 absence hours by type of absences and by rank. Absence hours are hours where assigned personnel were not available to fill daily staffing slots due to vacation, illness, disability, modified duty, compensatory time, funeral leave, jury duty, and administrative assignments. For 2013-2014, the Fire Department's absence hours for sworn line personnel in the ranks of Battalion Chief, Fire Captain, Fire Engineer, and Firefighters totaled 363,280 hours.

⁴ Daily duty positions included 5 Battalion Chiefs, 42 Fire Captains, 65 Fire Engineers, and 68 Firefighters

⁵ In May 2014, the engine company browned out (E29) was replaced by browning out two squad companies in response to an analysis of service gaps. Companies with poor response times were in Battalion 29's area. Furthermore, to meet water requirements and address the suppression gap along the First Street Corridor (distance between FS25 and FS1), activation of E29 was necessary.

ANALYSIS*Chart 1: Absence Hours by Type & Rank: 2013-2014*

Rank	# of Budgeted Positions⁶	Vacation	Sick Leave	Disability	Modified Duty	Misc[*]	Total Absence Hours
Battalion Chief	18	5,182	2,471	4,420	379	215	12,666
Fire Captain	151	40,642	19,029	30,066	14,512	1,449	105,697
Fire Engineer	214	40,026	22,692	31,538	21,805	1,669	117,730
Firefighter	255	39,527	30,429	29,566	24,968	2,697	127,186
	Total Absence Hours (2013-14)	125,377	74,619	95,590	61,665	6,029	363,280
	Total Absence Hours (2012-13)	112,953	78,246	103,469	46,466	6,383	348,277

* Miscellaneous absence hours due to compensatory time off, funeral leave, witness, military, administrative

From Chart 1, total absence hours of 363,280 in 2013-2014 (including absences due to temporary administrative assignments) increased by 15,003 hours (4%) from 348,277 hours in 2012-2013. This increase was driven primarily by increases in absence hours due to modified duty and vacation (partially offset by decreases in absence hours due to sick leave and disability).

With 638 line positions in 2013-2014, total absence hours were equivalent to 569 absence hours per line person (compared to 548 in 2012-2013). Although these absence hours are not always taken in full-shift (24-hour) increments, the 2013-2014 absence level was equivalent to about 23.7 shifts per line person (compared to 2012-2013's 22.7 shifts).

Vacancy Rates

Vacancies in sworn ranks occur due to retirement from the organization or separations from employment. In 2013-2014, the Fire Department's emergency response line positions were vacant for a total of 27,328 hours, or 1.5% vacancy rate. As previously discussed, sworn line vacancies in May and June 2014 remained unfilled pending completion of Firefighter recruitment efforts. A fully staffed 18-week Firefighter Recruit Academy will begin on September 15, with 25 recruits expected to be on line assignments by mid-January 2015.

Backfill for Duty Positions

On a daily basis, absences and vacancies in duty positions are supplemented with relief personnel and/or off-duty personnel who are brought back on overtime to backfill duty positions to meet minimum staffing requirements. Total absence and vacancy rate of 21.0% in 2013-2014 required 390,608 hours of backfill. In 2012-2013, the combined absence and vacancy rate of 20.1% requiring 374,821 hours of backfill.

⁶ No change in budgeted positions from 2012-2013

ANALYSIS*Chart 2: Absence and Vacancy by Rank: 2013-2014 vs 2012-2013*

Rank	2013-2014 Total Hours	2013-2014 Absence Hours	2013-2014 Vacancy Hours	2013-2014 Hours Requiring Backfill	2013-2014 Total Absence & Vacancy Rate	2012-2013 Absence & Vacancy Rate
Battalion Chief	52,560	12,666	1,904	14,570	27.7%	17.2%
Fire Captain	440,920	105,697	4,816	110,513	25.1%	25.4%
Fire Engineer	624,880	117,730	8,512	126,242	20.2%	19.3%
Firefighter	744,600	127,186	12,096	139,282	18.7%	17.9%
Total	1,862,960	363,280	27,328	390,608	21.0%	20.1%

Staffing Levels and Anticipated Retirements

In preparing projections of near-term and long-range vacancies, staff analyzes sworn personnel's years of service and age ranges and, based on various retirement eligibility scenarios⁷, prepares staffing projections. For 2014-2015, staff projects approximately 20 sworn retirements. One recruit academy class would be sufficient to meet this number of projected sworn retirements (an academy could consist of up to 30 recruits).

Relief Staffing

To summarize, when a daily staffing position is unfilled, either due to an absence or a vacancy, the position must be backfilled in order for a company to remain in service. There are three ways in which this can occur: overtime, relief personnel, or by providing higher class pay to staff in a lower rank to backfill the position (which also then requires backfill). Staff plans the use of the Department's budgeted overtime funding level based on relief staffing and on assumptions regarding absences and vacancies. (The Department's relief model is described below.) If vacancies exceed staff estimates, a recommendation to reallocate savings from vacant positions to overtime is brought forward for City Council consideration. If absences exceed staff estimates, staff will determine if funding can be reallocated from other budgeted activities. If additional funding to staff units on an overtime basis is not available, a brown out situation would occur, based on previous City Council approval. In 2013-2014, the Department managed its resources to ensure that no more than one engine company or two squad companies were taken out of service each day.

The Department's relief model estimates the number of relief positions needed to backfill absences and vacancies when there are the fewest hours of absence and vacancy during the year (baseline). The baseline is the lowest number of absence and vacancy hours used by the personnel in each rank in the 2013-2014 pay periods. Once the baseline is established based on the actual absence

⁷ Retirement eligibility scenarios include 30 years of service at any age; 50 years of age with 25 years of service; and 55 years of age with 20 years of service

and vacancy data, it can then be determined, by rank, how many relief positions should be staffed. The 2013-2014 baseline hours (lowest absence and vacancy hours that occurred in any pay period) excluding Battalion Chief positions⁸ are as follows:

- Fire Captain = 3,182 hours (in 2012-2013 = 3,314 hours)
- Fire Engineer = 3,875 hours (in 2012-2013 = 3,455 hours)
- Firefighter = 4,429 hours (in 2012-2013 = 4,111 hours)

Consistent with prior years' reports, to determine baseline hours by rank, five years of data by rank on absence and vacancy hours are used to smooth out potential anomalies in any given year. Utilizing this methodology a comparison of the vacancy/absence baseline hours and coverage hours by relief staff is presented in the following table.

Chart 3: Average Five-Year Baseline Data and Relief Personnel (Hours)

	Average Absence and Vacancy Hours Baseline	Coverage by Relief Staff	Coverage by Relief (shortfall)/ surplus	Relief Staff Needed to Cover Average Baseline Absence and Vacancy
Fire Captain	2,935	2,912	(23)	0.21 FTE needed
Fire Engineer	3,525	2,128	(1,397)	12.5 FTE needed
Firefighter	3,563	5,712	2,149	19.2 FTE available
Total	10,023	10,752	729	6.5 FTE available

Utilizing the chart above, five year's baseline analysis could lead to a conclusion that there are approximately six relief positions available to up-staff units (and improve service coverage) or available to higher class and reduce overtime usage. It is important to note however that this five year average model serves as a guide for further analysis of staffing configuration. Prior years' analyses have led to adjustments in relief staffing for Fire Engineers and Firefighters. To continue to more effectively address the relief staffing needs, further adjustments to the relief staffing were incorporated into the 2014-2015 Adopted Budget, including the addition of 12.0 Fire Engineer relief positions and the elimination of 12.0 Firefighter relief positions. Implementation of this relief staffing realignment will provide for a better balance in the Fire Engineer and Firefighter positions.

CONCLUSION

Higher absence hours experienced in 2013-2014, largely attributed to increased modified duty and vacation hours, coupled with higher vacancies experienced in May and June 2014, have resulted in an increase in hours required for backfill through use of relief personnel and overtime. Department staff will continue its analysis of absences, relief staffing, and overtime usage,

⁸ Consistent with prior reports, Battalion Chief positions are excluded from baseline analysis due to the number of duty positions (15 for 3 shifts)

HONORABLE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

September 30, 2014

Subject: 2013-2014 Fire Department Vacancy and Absence Rates and their Impact on Overtime

Page 6 of 6

noted that the Fire Department continues to work with its employees and its partners to improve Firefighter safety and reduce absences and its impact on services to the community.


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Fire Chief