

The mission of the San José Fire Department is to serve the community by protecting life, property, and the environment through prevention and response.

# FIRE

The San José Fire Department provides fire suppression, emergency medical services (EMS), and fire prevention services to residents and visitors within San José's geographic boundaries, totaling approximately 200 square miles (including some unincorporated areas). Other fire prevention services include regulatory enforcement of fire and hazardous materials codes through inspection activities and construction plan reviews for residents and businesses. The Department provides emergency Advanced Life Support first-response services, and the County of Santa Clara contracts with a private company for emergency ambulance services.

In 2019-20, the Department's operating expenditures totaled \$239 million. This includes personal and non-personal expenditures. The Department was responsible for additional costs including \$27.9 million in Citywide and other expenses, of which \$7.9 million was for workers' compensation claims. There were 838 authorized positions in the Department in 2019-20.

Fire Department personnel tested positive for COVID-19 before Santa Clara County issued a shelter in place order. In response, the Department quarantined several front-line firefighters to prevent further spread. Throughout the pandemic, the Department reports that it has maintained daily minimum staffing levels and emergency response capabilities.

In 2019-20, the Department sought to improve service to all areas of the community by adding Public Information Manager and Video/Multimedia Producer positions to expand community outreach and public education efforts. Additionally, messaging for fire and home safety, COVID-19 spread prevention, and recruitments were offered in multiple languages through social media platforms.

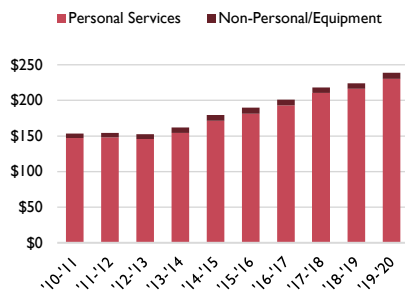


Source: San José Fire Department, photo of Communications staff

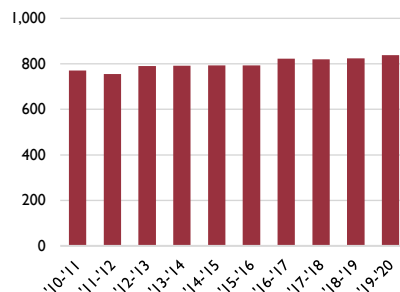


Source: San José Fire Department, photo of Engine 13

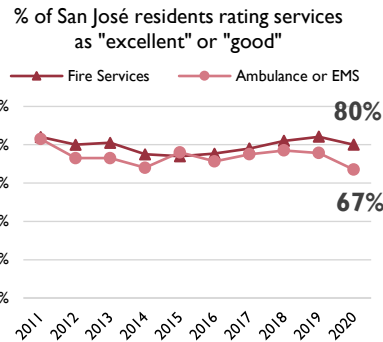
**Fire Department Operating Expenditures (\$millions)**



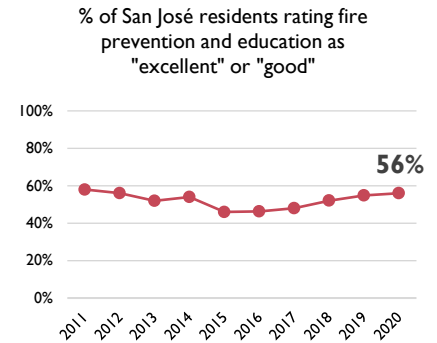
**Fire Department Authorized Positions**



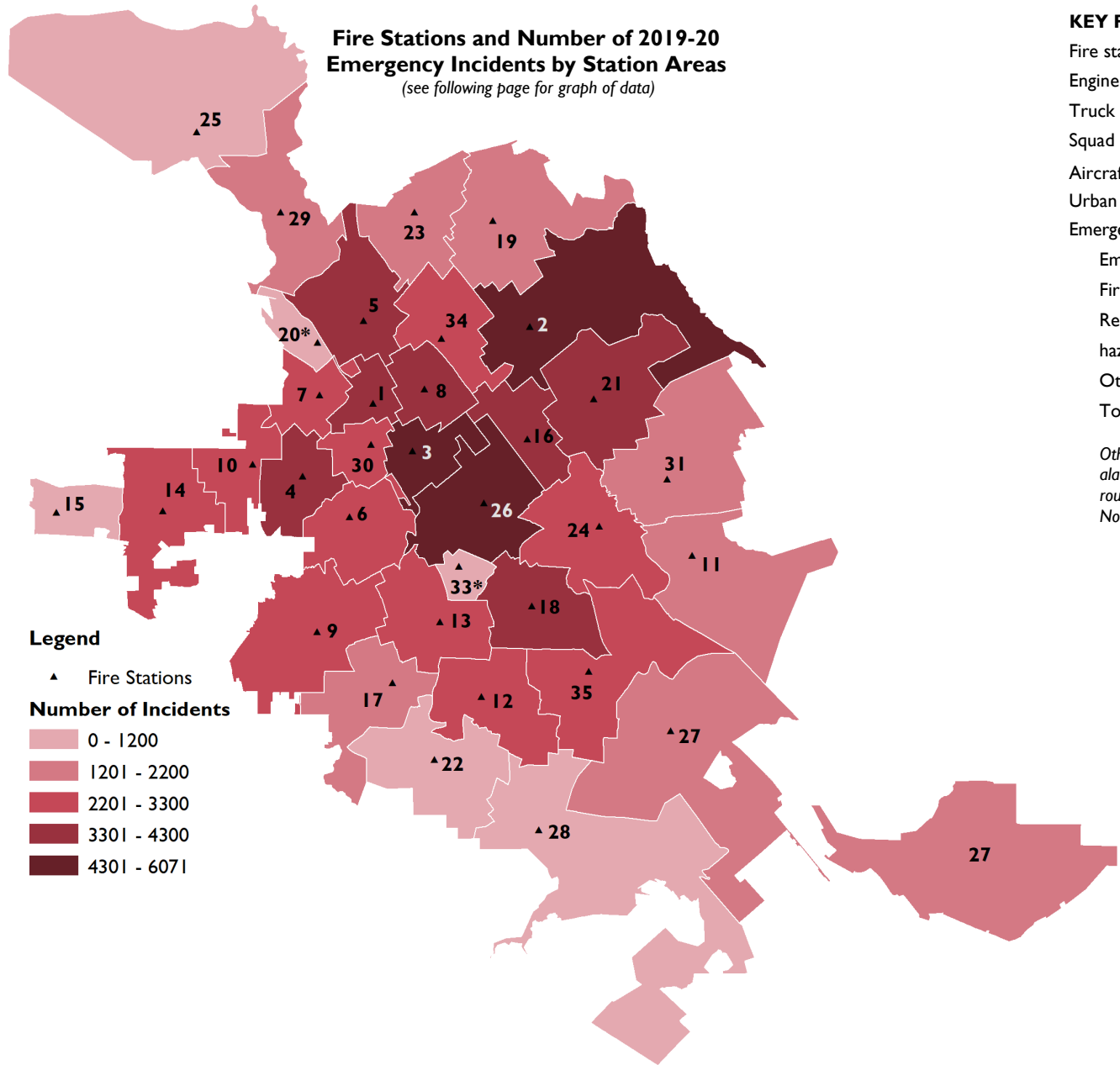
**RESIDENT SURVEY**



**RESIDENT SURVEY**



**Fire Stations and Number of 2019-20  
Emergency Incidents by Station Areas**  
*(see following page for graph of data)*



**Legend**

- ▲ Fire Stations
- Number of Incidents**
- 0 - 1200
- 1201 - 2200
- 2201 - 3300
- 3301 - 4300
- 4301 - 6071

**KEY FACTS (2019-20)**

Fire stations	33
Engine companies	32
Truck companies	9
Squad units	3
Aircraft Rescue Firefighting company	1
Urban Search and Rescue company	1
<b>Emergency incidents</b>	
Emergency medical incidents	56,500
Fires	3,700
Rescue, Haz Mat, and non-fire hazards	6,600
Other	24,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>91,600</b>

*Other category includes service requests, false alarms, good intent responses, and canceled en route incidents*  
*Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.*

Source: Auditor analysis based on incident data provided by Fire Department. Note: Data shows incidents by geographic area, not by responding unit.  
\* Fire Station #20 dedicated to Mineta San José International Airport. Fire Station #33 closed in August 2010. Incidents within the district of Station #33 handled by other stations. The Department has reserved the numbering of Fire Station #32 for future use.

# FIRE

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

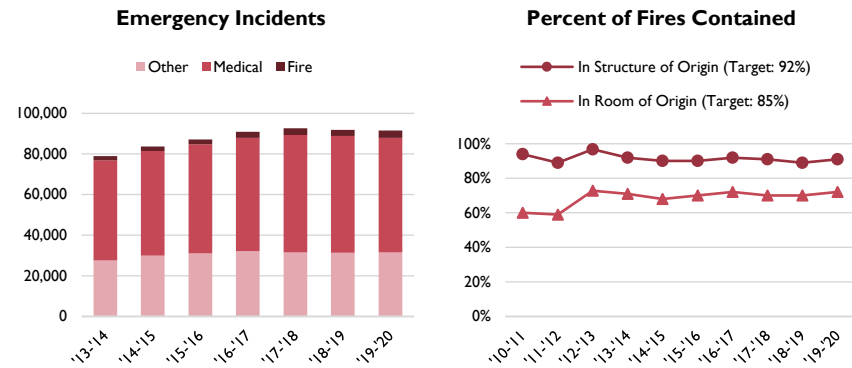
In 2019-20, the Fire Department responded to about 91,600 emergency incidents. There were 73,300 Priority 1 incidents (red lights and sirens) and 18,300 Priority 2 incidents (no red lights or sirens). Of the total incidents:

- 4 percent were fires (3,700 total)
- 62 percent were medical emergencies (56,500 total)
- 34 percent were other types of incidents, including good intent calls, rescues, and false alarms (31,500 total).

A breakdown of all incidents by fire station is provided below.

In 2019-20, the Department contained 91 percent of fires to the *structure* of origin (target: 92 percent). The Department contained 72 percent of fires to the *room* of origin (target: 85 percent).

There were 18 civilian fire injuries and four civilian fire deaths in 2019-20.

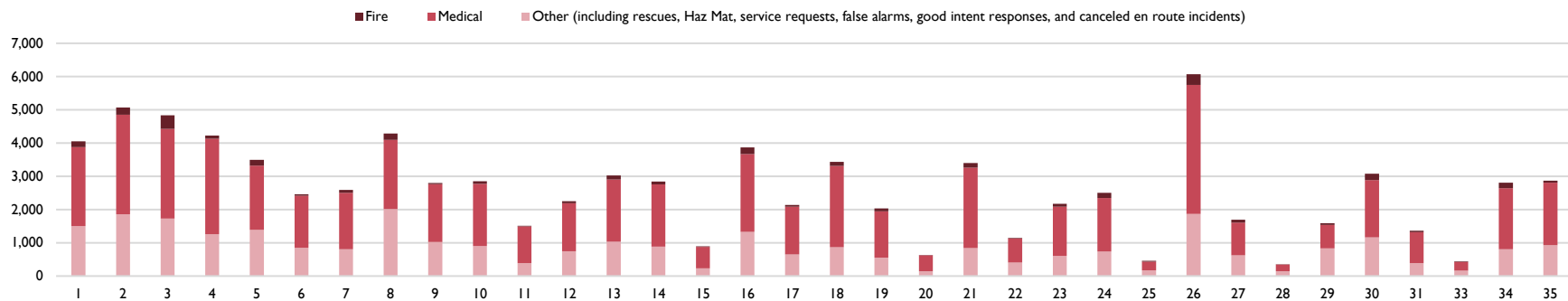


## Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

The County of Santa Clara contracts with a private company to provide emergency ambulance transportation services to all County areas except Palo Alto. The San José Fire Department provides Advanced Life Support (paramedic) first-response services primarily within the incorporated City limits through a direct agreement with the County of Santa Clara Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency.

The agreement performance requirements specify that the Department must arrive on-scene within eight minutes 90 percent of the time to qualify for funding and arrive within eight minutes 95 percent of the time to receive maximum funding. These requirements apply to qualifying Code 3 EMS calls. In 2019-20, the Department met the County EMS Code 3 performance standard requirements of 90 percent for all 12 months.

## Emergency Incidents by Station Area (2019-20)



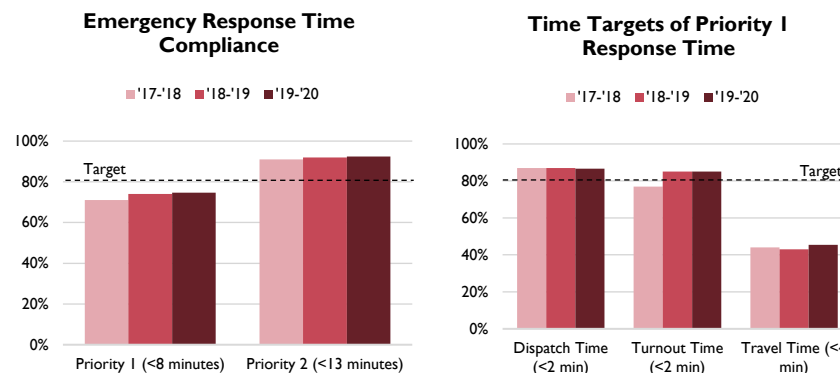
Note: Fire Station #20 dedicated to Mineta San José International Airport. Fire Station #33 closed in August 2010. Incidents within the district of Station #33 handled by other stations. The Department has reserved the numbering of Fire Station #32 for future use. Breakdowns of incidents and response times city-wide and by fire station are also available on the [SJFD Statistics Website](#).

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE** (continued)

In 2019-20, the Department responded to 75 percent of Priority 1 incidents within its time standard of 8 minutes (target: 80 percent), which is a slight improvement from the last two years. The Department responded to 92 percent of Priority 2 incidents within 13 minutes (target: 80 percent).

The Department disaggregates Priority 1 response time by three separate time segments: dispatch time, turnout time, and travel time. In 2019-20, the Department met its targets for dispatch time and turnout time (target: 80 percent within 2 minutes). The Department reports that continued messaging during training sessions has contributed to the improvement in turnout time. It met its travel time standard for only 45 percent of Priority 1 incidents (target: 80 percent within 4 minutes).

A breakdown of Priority 1 response times by fire station is shown below. Four fire stations met the Priority 1 response standard of 8 minutes for 80 percent of incidents in 2019-20, as compared to five stations last year.



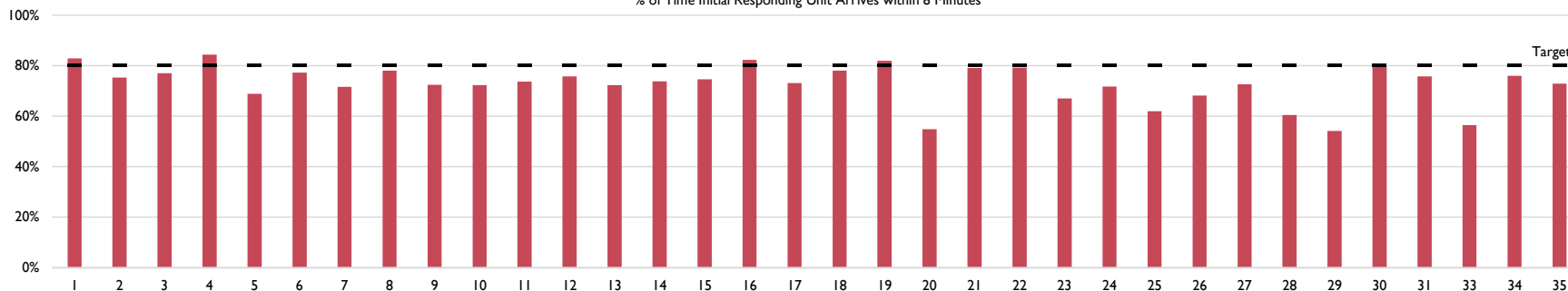
**Improving Emergency Response**

The Department developed a response time work plan which includes strategies to further improve response time performance. The Department deployed a business intelligence platform to improve data analysis and performance monitoring, and to provide Department leadership operational data for quality assurance and decision-making.

Additionally, the Fire and Police Communication Center launched Text to 9-1-1 to improve emergency services for the hearing-impaired community and to provide an alternate method of reporting emergencies when voice communication is unsafe or otherwise disrupted. Following the [Audit of 9-1-1 and 3-1-1](#), the Department implemented new call-taking procedures at the Fire Communications Center.

**Priority 1 Response Time Compliance by Station (2019-20)**

% of Time Initial Responding Unit Arrives within 8 Minutes



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# FIRE

## FIRE PREVENTION

The Bureau of Fire Prevention provides regulatory enforcement of fire and hazardous materials codes, investigates fire cause, and educates the community to reduce injuries, loss of life, and property damage from fires and other accidents. Both fire fighters and fire prevention inspectors conduct initial inspections to check for compliance with fire codes. In 2019-20, the Department performed 10,600 initial fire inspections. Fire fighters conducted 4,900 of these initial inspections and fire prevention inspectors conducted the remaining. About 83 percent of initial inspections conducted were code compliant, and therefore did not require a follow-up inspection. The Department reports that the Santa Clara County public health shelter in place order impacted the number of inspections performed.

The Bureau of Fire Prevention also conducts investigations based on complaints received from residents or businesses. In 2019-20, 150 complaints were investigated. In addition, the Department conducted about 270 plan reviews for special events.

In 2019-20, arson investigators conducted over 400 investigations and were able to determine that about 90 of those investigations were caused by arson. The Department reports that 2019-20 increases in investigations conducted by the Arson Unit were partly driven by fires related to civil unrest and suspicious vegetation fires.

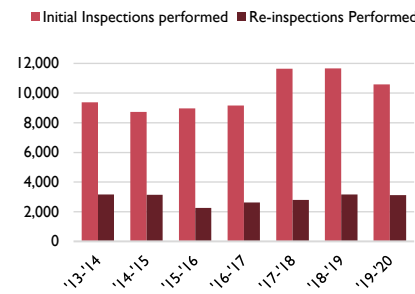
## FIRE SAFETY CODE COMPLIANCE (DEVELOPMENT SERVICES)

Fire Safety Code Compliance enforces the City's Fire and Health and Safety Codes during the development plan review and inspection processes, in coordination with the Development Services partners in the Permit Center (see Planning, Building & Code Enforcement Department chapter). This includes both engineering and hazardous materials reviews. In 2019-20, Fire Code Compliance civilian and sworn staff performed 6,400 fire plan checks and 7,400 inspections for Development Services customers. Fire plan reviews were conducted within established time targets for 79 percent of projects in 2019-20. Following the recent [Audit of Fire Development Services](#), the Department is reviewing the methodology for calculating these performance measures.

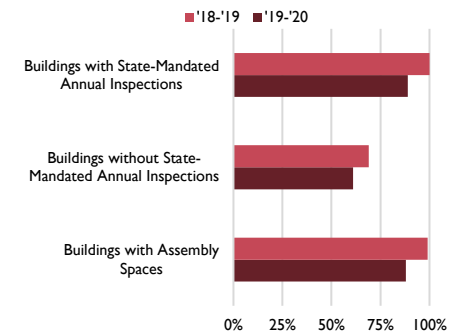
### Fire Safety Inspections

The Department inspects existing buildings and newly constructed buildings to ensure compliance with the fire code. As of June 2020, San José had approximately 12,000 buildings that were eligible for a fire inspection, including 87 high-rises, 660 educational facilities, and 5,400 multi-family residences and hotels/motels. The frequency of the inspection cycle depends on the building use and type. For example, high-rises, schools, and multi-family residences are required by the State Fire Marshal to have annual inspections. In 2019-20, the Department completed 89 percent of state-mandated inspections.

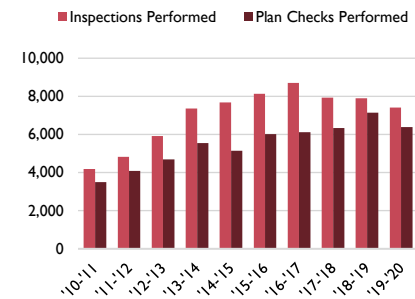
**Fire Prevention Inspections (on existing buildings)**



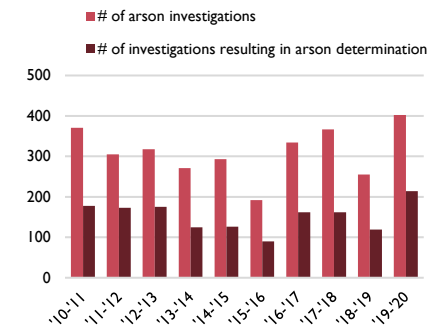
**Completion of Initial Fire Inspections**



**Fire Safety Code Compliance - Workload (Development Services)**



**Arson Investigations**



The **Development Services partners** in the Permit Center are:

- Planning, Building & Code Enforcement Department (see *PBCE* section)
- Fire Department
- Public Works Department (See *Public Works* section)