



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Willie McDonald

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: May 5, 2011

Approved

Date

5/5/11

**SUBJECT: FIRE COMPANY FLEXIBLE BROWN-OUT PLAN FACT SHEET AND
FAQ'S**

INFORMATION

The purpose of this Information Memo is to share with the City Council a Flexible Brown-Out Fact Sheet and a FAQ Sheet that was developed in order to inform City Council members and residents about the proposed flexible brown-out strategy. As a part of the Department's Fire sustainability plan, we have proposed a Flexible Brown-Out plan that ultimately keeps all Fire Stations open in fiscal year 2011-2012. A Flexible Brown-Out is when a fire station temporarily reduces its number of assigned on-duty companies (this includes apparatus and crew). This plan is in lieu of eliminating additional fire companies.

We have prepared informational material that addresses facts and frequently asked questions on the Department's proposed Flexible Brown-Out plan for the purpose of informing community members on the key concepts of this strategy. At this time, we would like to make this information available for broader distribution.

/s/

Willie McDonald
Fire Chief

Attachments: Flexible Brown-Out Plan Fact Sheet
Flexible Brown-Out Plan FAQ





FIRE COMPANY FLEXIBLE BROWN-OUT PLAN

ALL STATIONS REMAIN OPEN

The Fire Department proposes to implement a "Fire Company Flexible Brown-Out" Plan (Plan) effective July 1, 2011 to save more than \$3.5 million during FY 2011-2012 as a part of closing the General Fund shortfall of \$115 million. The Plan will mitigate the impact and effect of eliminating fire companies and reduce the number of employee lay-offs.

DEFINITIONS

Fire Engine – A type of fire apparatus staffed with a Captain, Firefighters and a Paramedic that carries a fire hose, has a large capacity water tank and is equipped with a fire pump.

Fire Truck – A fire apparatus staffed with a Captain, Firefighters and a Paramedic, is equipped with an aerial ladder and carries a large inventory of tools such as extrication, ventilation and forcible entry equipment and rescue systems.

Flexible Brown-Out – When a fire station temporarily reduces its number of assigned on-duty companies (apparatus and crew).

BACKGROUND

The City of San Jose has 33 fire stations:

- 26 fire stations have one assigned emergency response company (a fire engine or truck)
- 7 fire stations have two in-service fire companies (one engine and one truck)

All in-service engine and truck companies are staffed with a four-person crew (1 Captain, Firefighters and 1 Paramedic). These crews are dispatched to fires, rescues, hazardous material spills, traffic accidents and emergency medical incidents. In addition, all in-service fire companies are capable of providing advanced life support services.

FLEXIBLE BROWN-OUT PLAN

When a station reduces its number of assigned on-duty companies from 2 to 1, this is known as a flexible brown-out. Under the plan, the 7 fire stations with 2 assigned emergency response companies will no longer have both companies staffed, in-service and available to respond to emergencies at all times.

It is anticipated in this scenario that up to 2 fire companies will be subject to a brown-out each day based upon available on-duty staffing; however, all of the City's two company fire stations will participate in the flexible brown-out plan.

The Firefighters reassigned from a browned-out fire company will be utilized elsewhere in the City to work in-place of absent personnel or to fill other Department needs. This pool of available, reassigned Firefighters eliminates the need to bring

in off-duty Firefighters on overtime and will save over \$3.5 million dollars. Under this plan, all fire stations will remain open.

Department staff considered the following factors to prioritize and identify which of the 7 companies that would be browned-out each day:

- Company staffing and type in adjacent fire districts
- Response time differential for the second due unit
- Average number of emergency calls at each station
- Impact of browning-out neighboring fire companies
- Time of the year. (i.e., fire season, production activities, school year, employment and vacation cycles, etc.)
- Relative hazards in the first due area

The following fire stations will be included in the flexible brown-out plan:

- **Station 1**, Downtown and surrounding areas
- **Station 2**, Alum Rock and surrounding areas, Grant Ranch
- **Station 9**, Camden, Cambrian, West San Jose and surrounding areas
- **Station 13**, Blossom Valley and surrounding areas
- **Station 14**, San Tomas Aquino, West Valley and surrounding areas
- **Station 16**, Eastside, Cunningham Park, Prusch Park and surrounding areas
- **Station 29**, North San Jose, River Oaks, Innovation Business Park area

EVALUATION

Bureau of Field Operations staff will monitor the plan daily and evaluate impacts and outcomes of our response to emergencies. The plan may be suspended at any time by the Fire Chief if the experienced service delivery impacts are deemed unacceptable or if emergency conditions warrant. The Fire Department will provide monthly operational reports to the City Council that will measure the plan's compliance to our response performance standard and incident activity levels. Additionally, the overall emergency response deployment system capacity (total available on-duty firefighters and fire companies) will be significantly reduced, resulting in a much lower ability to respond to larger

EVALUATION (CONTINUED)

emergencies or multiple emergencies occurring during the same period of time. In both cases, it will take longer to assemble needed resources at the scene of emergencies given the reduced staffing and limited amount of available in-service resources. Longer response times may result in poor patient outcomes, increased fire spread and greater potential for property loss and fire casualties.

IMPACT

Browning-out or temporarily closing fire companies results in a reduction in the City's daily firefighting and emergency response force. This means that fewer fire companies will be available to respond to the same number of emergency requests for service. While all stations will remain staffed, daily emergency response resource levels will vary city-wide resulting in a fluctuating number of in-service companies available to respond to incidents. This may result in longer response times in areas impacted by the flexible brown-outs, particularly in first-in response districts with higher incident volumes.

Additional impacts of flexible brown-outs include less time for personnel training, performing fire inspections, equipment maintenance or pre-incident planning of target hazards. Staff will also closely monitor our personnel injury rate and modify emergency scene protocols and practices accordingly.

KEY MILESTONES/TIMELINE

May 2	Proposed Operating Budget Released
May 11-19	City Council Budget Study Sessions
May 17 & June 13	Public Budget Hearings (Evening Meetings)
June 3	Mayor's June Budget Message Released
June 14	Council Review/Approval of Mayor's June Budget Message
June 21	City Council Adoption of the 2011-2012 Budget and Fees and Charges

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Call 911 immediately in an emergency*
- Learn CPR*
- Know the warning signs of heart attack and stroke*
- Practice your Home Escape Plan*
- Check your smoke alarm battery monthly*
- Never re-enter a fire involved building*
- Keep informed and stay involved*



FIRE COMPANY FLEXIBLE BROWN-OUT PLAN

ALL STATIONS REMAIN OPEN

SUMMARY & FAQs

SUMMARY

Currently 7 of the City's 33 fire stations house at least 2 fire companies each day. Under the flexible brown-out plan, these 7 stations will no longer house multiple crews permanently. When a station goes from 2 to 1 crew or company, this is known as a flexible brown-out. Brown-outs will be based upon daily absences. The number of Firefighters that are available (available = scheduled to work, less employees on vacation, injured, sick, military leave, or other type of leave) on any given day, will determine the number of companies that will be temporarily closed for a 24-hour period. Under this plan, **no fire stations will be closed**. Of the 7 companies subject to a flexible brown-out each day, it is anticipated that up to 2 fire companies will be affected. The Firefighters that will be re-assigned from these browned-out companies will be used to work in place of other Firefighters who are absent from duty for any reason. The pool of re-assigned Firefighters will eliminate the need to backfill with overtime to fill the vacancies. This plan will result in a General Fund savings of approximately \$3.5 million.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1: When will the plan be implemented?

The plan will be implemented after the City Council approval of the flexible brown-out recommendation and no later than July 1, 2011.

Q2: Why is a flexible brown-out plan being implemented?

The flexible brown-out plan is designed to achieve \$3.5 million in General Fund savings as a part of a city-wide reduction goal of more than \$115 million in 2011-2012 (July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012).

Q3: Which fire stations are included in the flexible brown-out plan and will any fire station be closed?

No fire station will be closed as a result of the flexible brown-out plan. Only fire stations which have more than one emergency response company assigned have been included in the plan. Seven of the City's 33 fire stations have more than a single company assigned to their station. Only 1 of the 2 companies assigned to a fire station will be browned-out on any single day keeping all fire stations open. Impacted Stations will be:

- **Station 1**, Downtown and surrounding areas
- **Station 2**, Alum Rock and surrounding areas, Grant Ranch
- **Station 9**, Camden, Cambrian, West San Jose and surrounding areas
- **Station 13**, Blossom Valley and surrounding area
- **Station 14**, San Tomas Aquino, West Valley and surrounding areas
- **Station 16**, Eastside, Cunningham Park, Prusch Park and surrounding areas
- **Station 29**, North San Jose, River Oaks, Innovation Business Park area

Q4: How will the flexible brown-out plan achieve budgetary savings?

Up to 7 companies will be subject to a flexible brown-out (temporary closure) each day. The Firefighters reassigned from these browned-out companies will be used to work in place of other Firefighters who are absent from duty for any reason. The pool of reassigned Firefighters will eliminate the need to backfill vacancies with overtime. This plan will result in General Fund savings of approximately \$3.5 million due to a reduction of overtime expenditures.

Q5: What factors will be utilized to determine which of the seven fire companies would be browned-out each day and in what order?

Department staff will consider the following factors to prioritize which of the 7 companies would be browned-out each day:

1. Company staffing and type in adjacent fire districts
2. Response time differential for the second due unit
3. Average number of emergency calls at each station
4. Impact of browning-out neighboring fire companies
5. Time of the year (i.e., season, production activities, school year, employment and vacation cycles, etc.)
6. Relative hazards in the first due area

Q6: Which emergency response companies or units in these fire stations will be subject to flexible brown-outs?

There are 2 principle types of emergency response companies utilized by the San Jose Fire Department—fire engines and fire trucks. Each company plays a vital role in the overall City Emergency Deployment System or the total complement of fire engines and trucks assigned to fire stations strategically located throughout the City. A variety of operational considerations (listed above) will be evaluated to determine whether it is more prudent to brown-out an engine or a truck company. Please see the definitions of each below.

Fire Engine – An apparatus staffed with Firefighters and a Paramedic that carries a hose, has a large capacity water tank and is equipped with a pump.

Fire Truck – An apparatus staffed with Firefighters and a Paramedic is equipped with an aerial ladder and carries a large inventory of tools such as extrication, ventilation and forcible entry equipment and rescue systems.

Both companies are critical to our system, but in some cases have different capabilities. Flexible brown-outs and the companies involved will consider the unique abilities of other browned-out companies, adjacent engine or trucks that are available and any other seasonal and hazard information for that particular day.

Q7: How long will the flexible brown-out plan be in place?

It is not known how long the brown-out plan will continue once implemented. At this time, this plan should be considered on-going. The loss of companies creates a significant impact on our emergency delivery system and our ability to provide an acceptable level of emergency fire, medical and rescue services. At this time, budget reduction measures are necessary, as the City cannot afford to staff the Fire Department at a level recommended by the Fire Chief. It is anticipated that company staffing on a consistent basis will be recommended when the City's fiscal condition improves if other more viable options have not yet been identified.

Q8: What types of service level impacts will occur as a result of the flexible brown-out plan?

The browning-out of fire companies represents a reduction in the City's daily firefighting and emergency response force. This will mean that fewer fire companies will be available to respond to the same number of emergency requests for service. While all stations will remain staffed, daily emergency response resource levels will vary Citywide resulting in a fluctuating number of in-service companies available to respond to incidents. This may result in longer response times in areas impacted by the Brown-outs particularly in first-in response districts with higher incident volumes.

Additionally, the overall emergency response deployment system capacity (total available on-duty firefighters and fire companies) will be significantly reduced which may result in a lower ability to respond to larger emergencies or multiple emergencies occurring during the same period of time. In both cases, it may take longer to assemble needed resources at the scene of emergencies given the reduced staffing and limited amount of available in-service resources. Increased response times may result in poor patient outcomes, increased fire spread and greater potential for property loss and fire casualties. Additional impacts of flexible brown-outs are less time for personnel training, performing fire inspections, equipment maintenance or pre-incident planning of target hazards. Staff will also closely monitor our personnel injury rate and modify emergency scene protocols and practices accordingly. Finally, the larger size and weight of fire apparatus, as related to increased workload, may increase apparatus wear and tear potentially causing a greater need for repairs and apparatus out-of-service time.

Q9: Will the Fire Department be required to report on response time and service level impacts?

Yes. The Fire Department provides a monthly performance report to the City Council and will add additional information specifically related to flexible brown-outs, including performance impacts and other information determined relevant for City Council consideration.

Q10: Does the Fire Chief have the authority to adjust the plan once it is implemented?

Yes. This plan will be reviewed daily and adjustments will be made to ensure operational efficiency and the best use and utilization of our available in-service companies. In addition, the Fire Chief has the authority to suspend the flexible brown-out plan in any district or in total if current or anticipated conditions warrant.

Q11: What will happen if the flexible brown-out plan does not achieve the anticipated savings?

Failure to achieve the anticipated savings will result in the need to identify other sources of budgetary savings within the Fire Department. The flexible brown-out plan was developed to reduce the impact of resource reductions however it is not without significant service delivery impacts. It is considered to be among the least disruptive to our ability to serve the community and has the positive benefits of diffusing response concerns across a greater area and provides the ability to retain very valuable and dedicated employees. Other options will create greater service delivery impacts and will cause much worse outcomes to emergencies.

Q12: Are there any other California cities that have implemented a flexible brown-out plan to achieve budgetary savings?

Fire Departments in the cities of Fremont, Gilroy, Lodi, Los Angeles City, Sacramento, San Diego and Santa Rosa have implemented similar plans. Several others are considering similar plans.