

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 2020-21, the Department's operating expenditures totaled \$257.7 million. This includes personal and non-personal expenditures. The Department was responsible for additional costs including \$1.9 million in Citywide expenses and \$7.8 million for workers' compensation claims. There were 833 authorized positions in the Department in 2020-21.

The Department reports that staff are developing strategies to address equity in service delivery, including balancing resources across the city and addressing bilingual needs across response areas. Similar to last year, messaging for fire and home safety, how to stay healthy, and recruitments were offered in multiple languages through social media platforms. This included emergency kit preparation guidance, annual flu shot messaging, and education about the dangers of fireworks.

The Fire Department's newest fire station, Fire Station 37, is under construction with opening planned for early 2022.



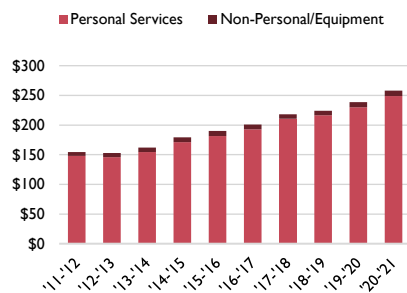
Source: San José Fire Department, photo of Communications staff

Impact of COVID-19

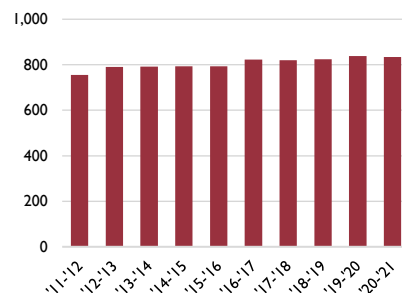
Increases in COVID-19 cases in winter 2020-21 impacted the Department's response times. The Department reported that ambulance resource availability was reduced. This caused fire fighters to have longer time on-scene, affecting response time for other calls. The Department saw an increase in calls during December 2020 and January 2021.

Additionally, Fire Department personnel assisted in providing COVID-19 vaccinations to essential employees and community members.

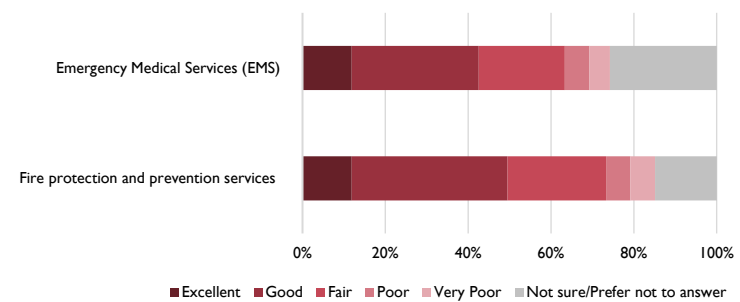
Fire Department Operating Expenditures (\$millions)



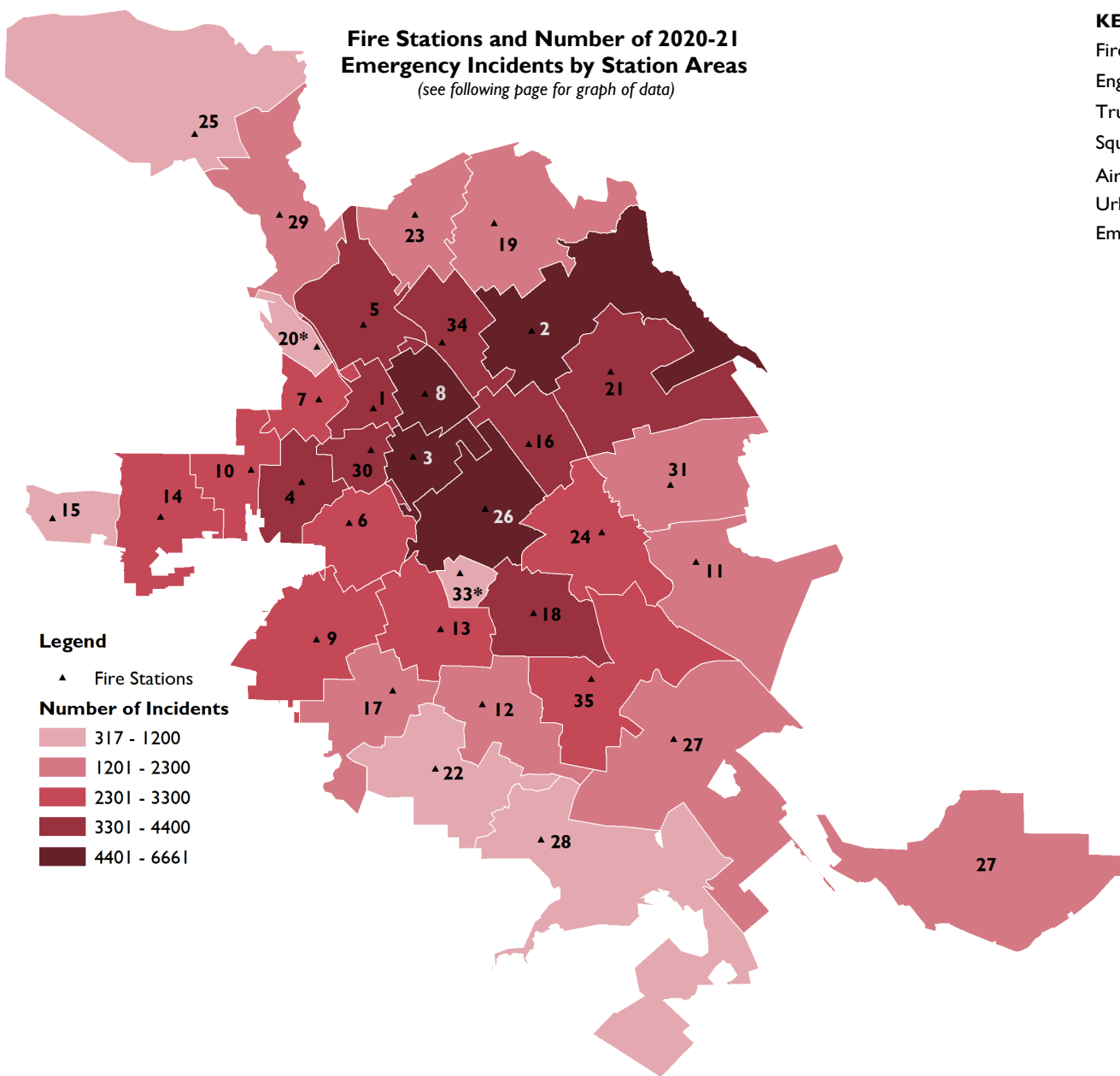
Fire Department Authorized Positions



Community Survey 2021 Ratings of Services



**Fire Stations and Number of 2020-21
Emergency Incidents by Station Areas**
(see following page for graph of data)



Legend

- ▲ Fire Stations

Number of Incidents

- 317 - 1200
- 1201 - 2300
- 2301 - 3300
- 3301 - 4400
- 4401 - 6661

KEY FACTS (2020-21)

Fire stations	33
Engine companies	32
Truck companies	9
Squad units	3
Aircraft Rescue Firefighting company	1
Urban Search and Rescue company	1
Emergency incidents	
Emergency medical incidents	57,100
Fires	5,100
Rescue, Haz Mat, and non-fire hazards	5,800
Other	26,800
Total	94,800

Other category includes service requests, false alarms, good intent responses, and canceled en route incidents

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 were handled by other stations. The Department has reserved the numbering of Fire Station #32 for future use.

FIRE

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

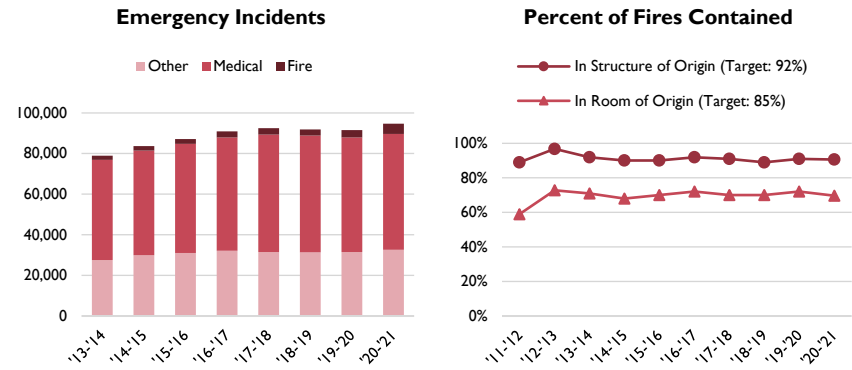
In 2020-21, the Fire Department responded to about 94,800 emergency incidents. There were 76,800 Priority 1 incidents (red lights and sirens) and 17,900 Priority 2 incidents (no red lights or sirens). Of the total incidents:

- 60 percent were medical emergencies (57,100 total)
- 34 percent were other types of incidents, including good intent calls, rescues, and false alarms (32,600 total)
- 5 percent were fires (5,100 total). Of these, 450 were structure fires, 400 were vehicle/aircraft fires, and 900 were vegetation fires. The remaining were categorized as other fires, which could include rubbish fires or fires in dumpsters or encampments. The number of fires increased by 38 percent in 2020-21, primarily due to an increase in the number of other fires.

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

In 2020-21, the Department contained 91 percent of fires to the *structure* of origin (target: 92 percent). The Department contained 70 percent of fires to the *room* of origin (target: 85 percent).

There were 10 civilian fire injuries and seven civilian fire deaths in 2020-21.

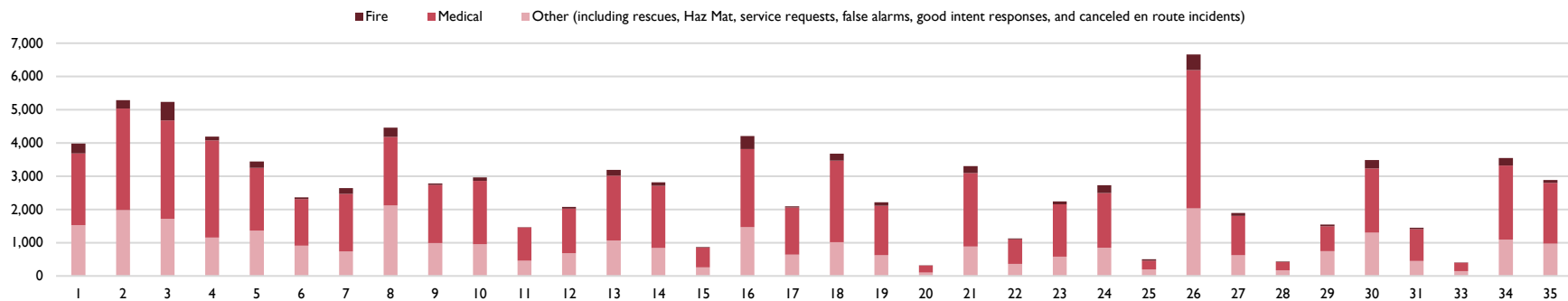


Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

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 2020-21, the Department met the County EMS Code 3 performance standard requirements of 90 percent for 12 months (after reconciliation).

Emergency Incidents by Station Area (2020-21)



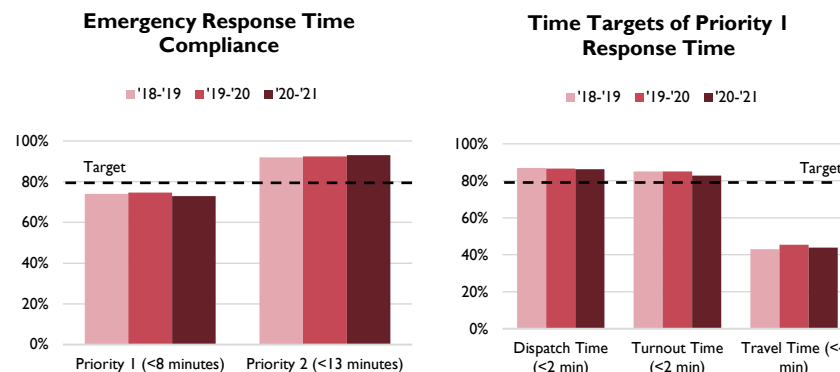
Note: Fire Station #20 dedicated to Mineta San José International Airport. Fire Station #33 closed in August 2010. Incidents within the district of Station #33 were handled by other stations. The Department has reserved the numbering of Fire Station #32 for future use.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE (continued)

In 2020-21, the Department responded to 73 percent of Priority 1 incidents within its time standard of 8 minutes (target: 80 percent), which is slightly below its performance of the last two years. The Department responded to 93 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 2020-21, the Department met its targets for dispatch time and turnout time (target: 80 percent within 2 minutes). It met its travel time standard for only 44 percent of Priority 1 incidents (target: 80 percent within 4 minutes). The Department has continued its efforts to improve response times following its response time work plan. This includes filling vacancies in Fire Communications and refining resource deployment, such as dispatching units based on proximity to the incident rather than station location to address travel time.

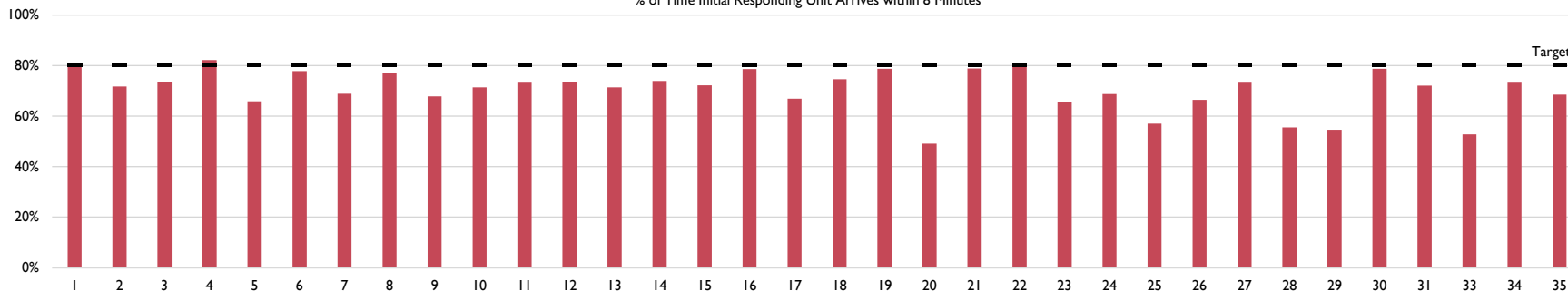
A breakdown of Priority 1 response times by fire station is shown below. Three fire stations met the Priority 1 response standard of 8 minutes for 80 percent of incidents in 2020-21, as compared to four stations last year.



Source: San José Fire Department, photo of Engine 13

Priority 1 Response Time Compliance by Station (2020-21)

% 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 2020-21, the Department performed 13,000 initial fire inspections. Fire fighters conducted 5,600 of these initial inspections and fire prevention inspectors conducted the remaining. About 86 percent of initial inspections conducted were code compliant, and therefore did not require a follow-up inspection.

The Bureau of Fire Prevention also conducts investigations based on complaints received from residents or businesses. In 2020-21, 92 complaints were investigated. In addition, the Department conducted about 100 plan reviews for special events. There were fewer special events than in prior years due to COVID-19. Inspectors used the additional time to conduct more non-mandated inspections.

In 2020-21, arson investigators conducted almost 500 investigations and were able to determine that 245 of those investigations were caused by arson. The Department reports that 2020-21 increases in investigations conducted by the Arson Unit were partly driven by high numbers of suspicious vegetation fires and an increase in suspicious fires in vacant buildings.

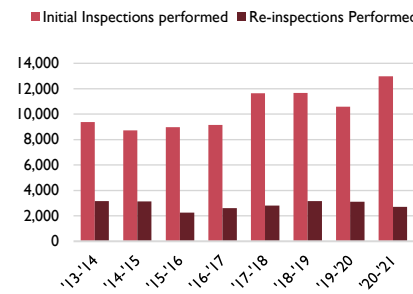
FIRE SAFETY CODE COMPLIANCE (DEVELOPMENT SERVICES)

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 2020-21, Fire Code Compliance civilian and sworn staff performed 6,000 fire plan checks and 6,800 inspections for Development Services customers. Fire plan reviews were conducted within established time targets for 86 percent of projects in 2020-21. Following the 2020 [Audit of Fire Development Services](#), the Department is reviewing the methodology for calculating these performance measures.

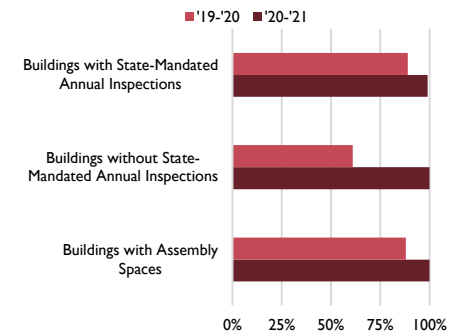
Fire Safety Inspections

The Department inspects existing buildings and newly constructed buildings to ensure compliance with the fire code. As of June 2021, San José had approximately 12,000 buildings that were eligible for a fire inspection, including 87 high-rises, 650 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 2020-21, the Department completed 99 percent of state-mandated inspections.

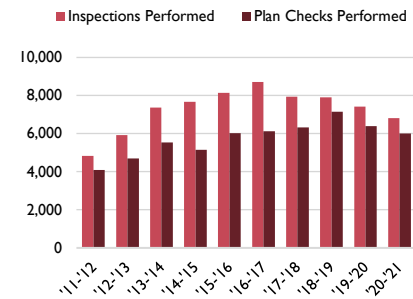
Fire Prevention Inspections (on existing buildings)



Completion of Initial Fire Inspections



Fire Safety Code Compliance - Workload (Development Services)



Arson Investigations

