

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 city limits and some unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County. Other fire prevention services include regulatory enforcement of fire and hazardous materials codes through inspections and construction plan reviews for residents and businesses. The Department provides emergency Advanced Life Support (paramedic) first-response services, and the County of Santa Clara contracts with a private company for emergency ambulance transportation services.

In 2021-22, the Department's operating expenditures totaled \$286 million. This includes personal and non-personal expenditures. The Department was responsible for additional costs including \$1.8 million in Citywide expenses and \$9.5 million for workers' compensation claims. There were 849 authorized positions in the Department in 2021-22.

The Department reports that staff are working to address equity in service delivery and to close performance gaps. Strategies include use of technology to optimize response time performance, improving development services customer experience, and providing multilingual public information and education via social media channels. Additionally, as discussed to the right, the Department has improved resource deployment through new and relocated fire stations with funding from Measure T. In 2018, Measure T was passed to fund public improvements through general obligation bonds.

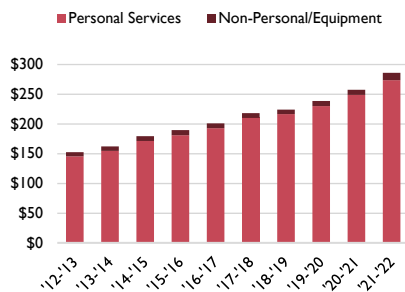


Source: San José Fire Department, photo of Fire Station 37 ribbon cutting

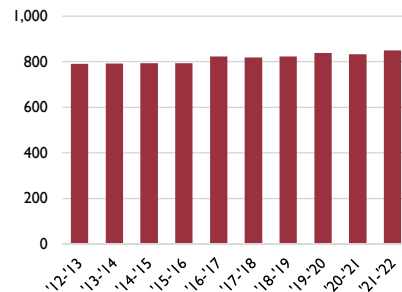
Fire Station Renovation and Construction

The Fire Department is using funds from Measure T for renovation and construction of fire stations. In 2021-22, the Department opened the newly constructed Fire Station 37 and the newly relocated Fire Station 20 at the San José Mineta Airport. The relocation of Fire Station 20 expanded the station's coverage by deploying an Advanced Life Support unit to serve the surrounding residential and business community. Going forward, Measure T funds will support development and construction of new Fire Stations 32 and 36, as well as the replacement of aging Fire Stations 8 and 23.

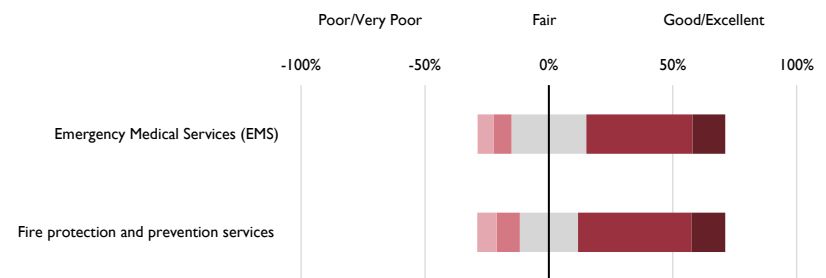
Fire Department Operating Expenditures (\$millions)



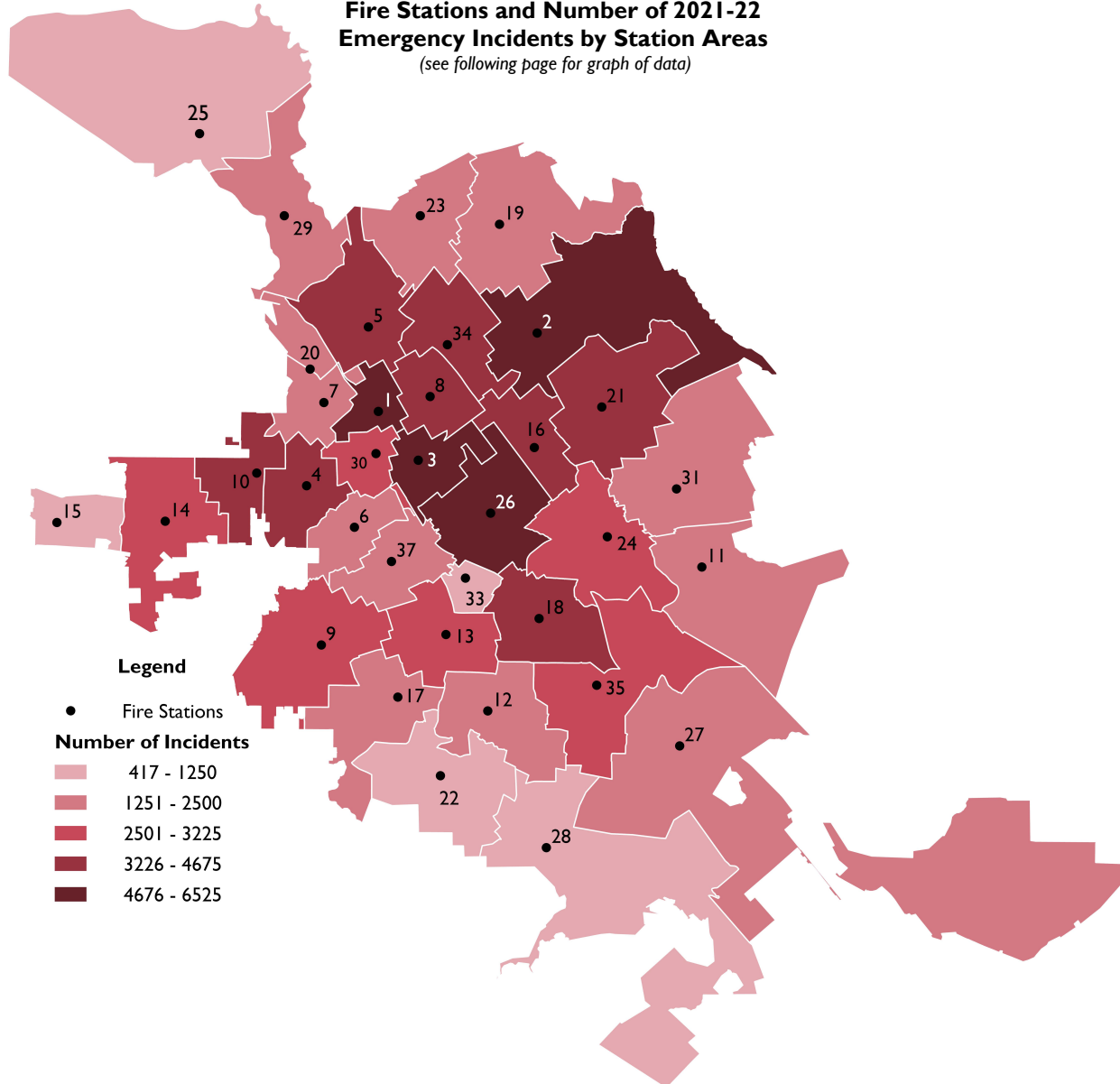
Fire Department Authorized Positions



Community Survey 2022 Ratings of Services



**Fire Stations and Number of 2021-22
Emergency Incidents by Station Areas**
(see following page for graph of data)



KEY FACTS (2021-22)

Fire stations	34
Engine companies	44
Truck companies	9
Rescue Medic units	3
Aircraft Rescue Firefighting companies	2
Urban Search and Rescue companies	3
Emergency incidents	
Emergency medical incidents	63,100
Fires	4,900
Rescue, haz mat, and non-fire hazards	6,000
Other	29,100
Total	103,100

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



Source: San José Fire Department, photo of new Fire Station 37

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 is 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 and #36 for future use.

FIRE

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

In 2021-22, the Fire Department responded to about 103,100 emergency incidents.* The Department reports that there was an increase in incidents in 2021-22 due to COVID-19 related medical calls.

There were 82,500 Priority 1 incidents (red lights and sirens) and 20,700 Priority 2 incidents (no red lights or sirens). Of the total incidents:

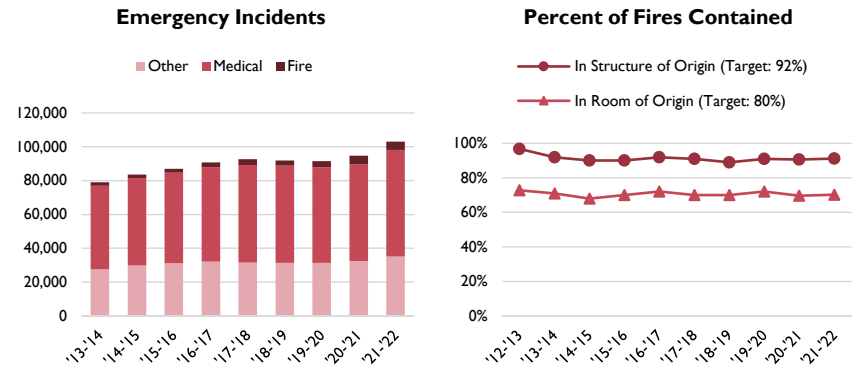
- 61 percent were medical emergencies (63,100 total)
- 34 percent were other types of incidents, including good intent calls, rescues, and false alarms (35,100 total)
- 5 percent were fires (4,900 total). Of these, 470 were structure fires, 390 were vehicle/aircraft fires, and 720 were vegetation fires. The remaining were categorized as other fires, which could include rubbish fires or fires in dumpsters or encampments.

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

In 2021-22, 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: 80 percent, down from a target of 85 percent last year).

There were 28 civilian fire injuries and eight civilian fire deaths in 2021-22.

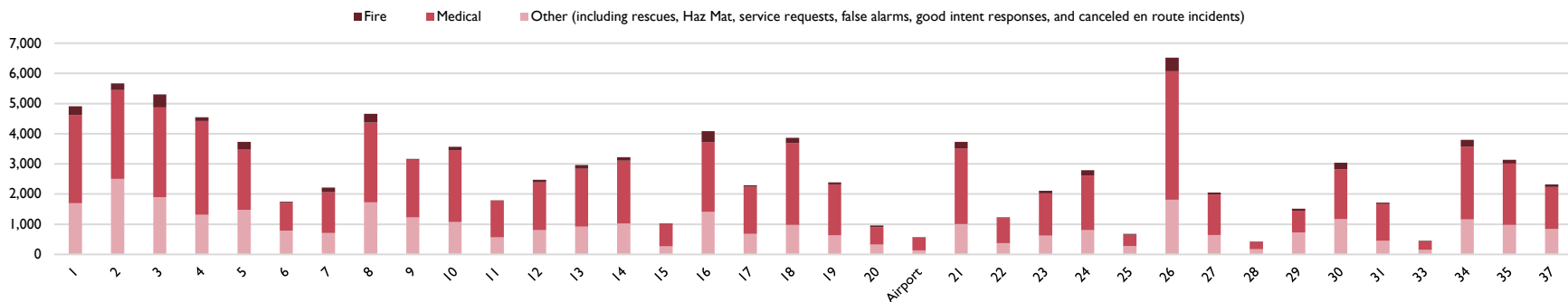
*May not add to incident subtotals due to rounding.



Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

The San José Fire Department provides Advanced Life Support (paramedic) first-response services under an 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 EMS calls, and include adjustments (such as during times of high call volume). In 2021-22, the Department met the County EMS performance standard requirements of 90 percent for 12 months (after adjustments).

Emergency Incidents by Station Area (2021-22)



Note: Fire Station #20 is 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 and #36 for future use.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE (continued)

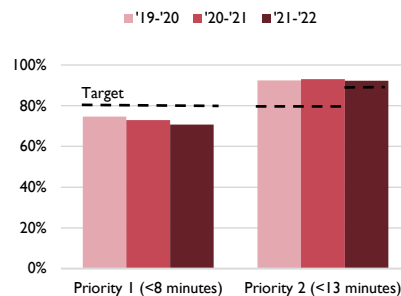
In 2021-22, the Department responded to 71 percent of Priority 1 incidents within its time standard of 8 minutes (target: 80 percent), which is slightly below its performance of the last two years. The Department responded to 92 percent of Priority 2 incidents within 13 minutes (target: 90 percent).

The Department disaggregates Priority 1 response time by three separate time segments: dispatch time, turnout time, and travel time. In 2021-22, the Department nearly met its targets for dispatch time and turnout time (target: 85 percent within 2 minutes). It met its travel time standard for only 43 percent of Priority 1 incidents (target: 50 percent within 4 minutes).

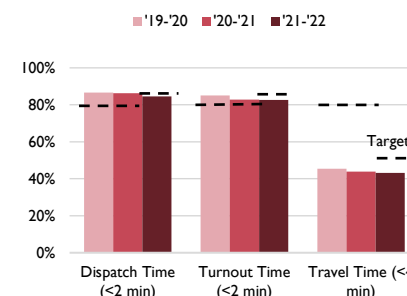
The Department expects that the addition of newly built Fire Stations 20 and 37 will result in improved travel time performance. Staff expect further improvements with the pending construction of Fire Stations 32 and 36, the relocation of Fire Stations 8 and 23, and the planned transition to “closest unit dispatch” procedures, replacing current fire station response area-based dispatch.

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 2021-22, compared to three stations last year.

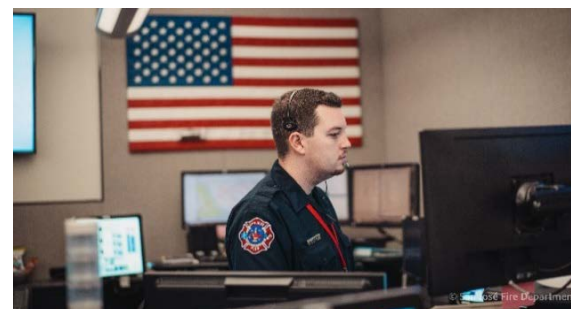
Emergency Response Time Compliance



Time Targets of Priority 1 Response Time

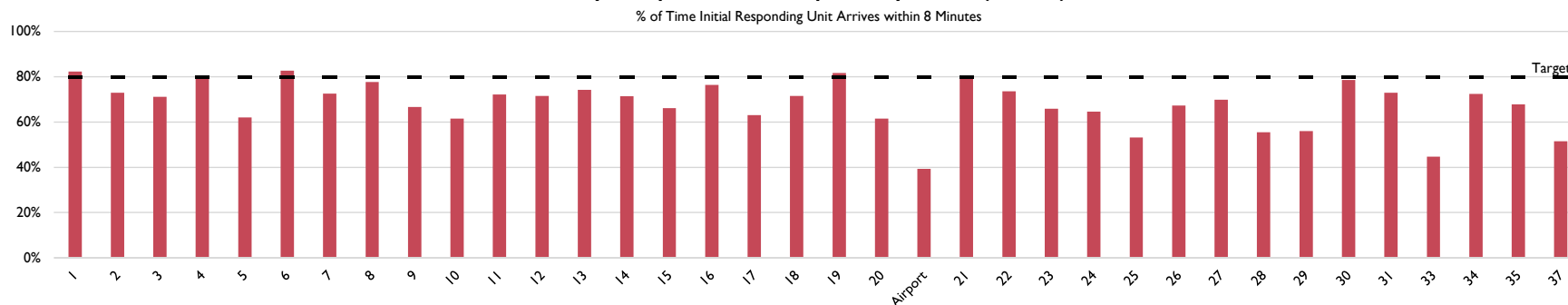


Note: In 2021-22, the target for Priority 2 response time changed from 80 percent to 90 percent of calls within 13 minutes. The targets for Priority 1 dispatch and turnout time increased from 80 percent to 85 percent within 2 minutes. The target for Priority 1 travel time decreased from 80 percent to 50 percent within 4 minutes.



Source: San José Fire Department, photo of Fire Communications

Priority 1 Response Time Compliance by Station (2021-22)



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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 inspections to check for compliance with fire codes. In 2021-22, about 85 percent of initial inspections conducted were code compliant, and therefore did not require a follow-up inspection. The Department performed 11,700 initial fire inspections during the fiscal year. Fire fighters conducted 5,600 of these initial inspections and fire prevention inspectors conducted the remaining.

The Bureau of Fire Prevention also conducts investigations based on complaints received from residents or businesses. In 2021-22, 96 complaints were investigated. In addition, the Bureau conducted 220 plan reviews for special events.

In 2021-22, arson investigators conducted 420 investigations and were able to determine that 210 of those investigations were caused by arson. In April 2022, the Fire Department responded to a 5-alarm fire inside a Home Depot store in South San José. Fire crews successfully prevented the fire from extending beyond the business of origin. The ensuing investigation was supported by the Department’s Arson Unit, the Police Department, the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosive National Response Team, and mutual aid support from local fire agency arson investigators. The investigation resulted in a suspect being charged for intentionally lighting the fire.

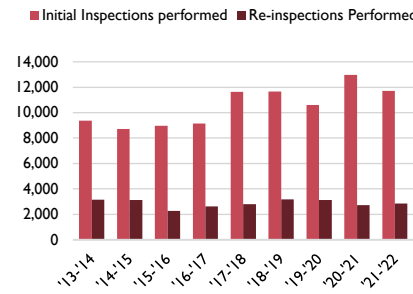
FIRE SAFETY CODE COMPLIANCE (DEVELOPMENT SERVICES)

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 2021-22, Fire Code Compliance civilian and sworn staff performed 5,900 fire plan checks and 5,300 inspections for Development Services customers. Fire plan reviews were conducted within established time targets for 96 percent of projects in 2021-22. Following the 2020 [Audit of Fire Development Services](#), the Department has been reviewing the methodology for calculating these performance measures.

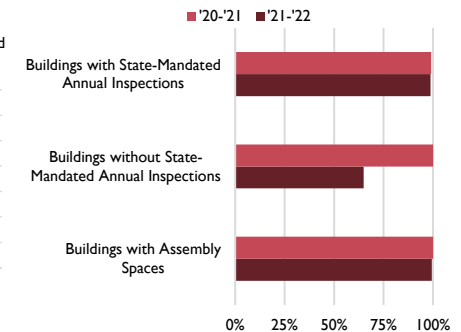
Fire Safety Inspections

The Department inspects existing buildings and newly constructed buildings to ensure compliance with the fire code. As of June 2022, San José had approximately 12,300 buildings that were eligible for a fire inspection, including 88 high-rises, 650 educational facilities, and 5,500 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 2021-22, the Department completed 99 percent of state-mandated inspections.

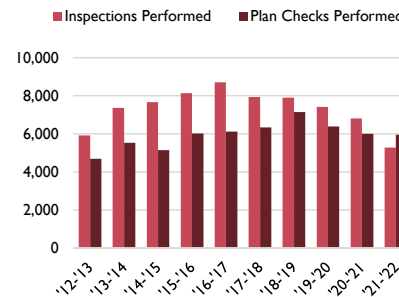
Fire Prevention Inspections (on existing buildings)



Completion of Initial Fire Inspections



Fire Safety Code Compliance - Workload (Development Services)



Arson Investigations

