

**LOCAL OPERATIONAL PLAN BETWEEN
THE SAN MATEO- SANTA CRUZ UNIT OF
THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION
AND THE COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ 2014/15 THROUGH 2016/17**

This operational plan between the San Mateo-Santa Cruz Unit of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL-FIRE) and the County of Santa Cruz (County) for the period of July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2017 describes in detail the functions to be completed by CAL FIRE and County staff for fiscal years 2014/15 through 2016/17. This operational plan is incorporated into the current Santa Cruz County Fire Department Master Plan.

The County of Santa Cruz contracts with CAL FIRE to provide administrative and operational management of the County Fire Department. By resolution, the CAL FIRE Unit Chief is delegated the authority by the County Board of Supervisors to act as the County Fire Chief/County Fire Marshal. The responsibilities of the County Fire Chief/County Fire Marshal include delivery of fire protection emergency medical service, fire prevention service and other duties associated with a full service fire department. This program is consistent with statutes and CAL FIRE statewide policies of developing cooperative fire protection programs with local government.

The operational plan identifies requirements for reporting on task/policy completion progress to the Fire Department Advisory Commission (FDAC). The tasks assigned are related to the goals set forth in the County Fire Department Master Plan as follows:

GOALS

FINANCIAL: Continue to provide the highest level of service within the established fiscal parameters; balancing the use of available career and volunteer personnel to operate the County Fire Department in a cost effective and efficient manner. Management will provide fiscal reports to the Fire Department Advisory Commission to ensure that financial goals have been met.

MANAGEMENT: Provide a coordinated management team, including a Unit Chief, Administrative Assistant Chief, and an Operational Deputy Chief in order to effectively serve the needs of the entire County Fire Department. This management team is provided at no cost to the County.

VOLUNTEERS: Strengthen recruitment and retention of an effective force of volunteer firefighters through improved publicity, working relationships, and benefits. Focused recruitment will be initiated in areas of marginal volunteer participation. Retention incentives will be studied for feasibility.

JURISDICTION: Evaluate and make recommendations for alternative service models as needed.

FACILITIES: Maintain existing facilities in a serviceable condition and prepare a recommended minor and major capital outlay plan for all County-owned facilities.

VEHICLES & EQUIPMENT: Operate a comprehensive vehicle and equipment program addressing replacement, maintenance and future purchases within budget parameters.

FIRE PREVENTION: Provide a comprehensive fire prevention program that includes plan review, on-site inspections, educational training for the public and fire department personnel, and safety inspections for schools and care facilities.

TRAINING: Ensure that all personnel are provided with mandated training to carry out their duties and responsibilities and are afforded opportunities to develop skills and abilities beyond the minimum requirements of the department.

DISPATCH SERVICES: Provide enhanced service to both the public and our emergency responders by proficiently dispatching the emergency providers. Strive to process and dispatch 90% of highest priority calls within 90 seconds and provide pre-alerts for 90% of all fire and medical incidents.

FIRE SUPPRESSION: Manage the use of all fire suppression resources including State and County personnel/equipment as well as co-operating fire agencies in the County, to ensure that all fires are provided with an initial attack that is rapid, aggressive and effective.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES: Provide a high level of pre-hospital emergency medical services.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: Ensure that the Department's abilities to respond to major emergencies and disasters are maintained at an effective level.

FINANCIAL

The combined annual County Fire expenditure budgets total for County Fire CSA #48 and CSA #4 is approximately 5.7 million dollars while annual revenue totals close to 4 million dollars. Departmental expenditures include all items contained in the current County Fire contract. The County Fire Department is financed through the Fire Fund which is funded primarily through property taxes and county service area fees. County Fire reserves have somewhat stabilized due to cost cutting measures such as decreased staffing and suspension of the Mobile Equipment Replacement Plan (MERP). The majority of County Fire's fleet has been in service for 20 or more years. Major fleet repairs and a catastrophic engine failure in recent years necessitated the budgeting of a new engine purchase in 2013-14 and again in 2014-15 for minimum emergency response capability. As the fleet continues to age and deteriorate, critical equipment purchases will become unavoidable. Additional revenue is needed to maintain the current level of service and fund the vehicle replacement plan and facility maintenance that has been deferred over the past several years.

County Fire will strive to provide an acceptable level of service by operating the County Fire Department in a cost effective and efficient manner, with great reliance continuing to be placed on volunteers. County Fire will identify short and long term potential changes that could affect the Department's funding. County Fire will evaluate opportunities to increase revenues from other sources such as grants, taxes, and reimbursement from the state for use of county vehicles.

MANAGEMENT

Santa Cruz County currently contracts with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL-FIRE) for the administration of the County Fire Department including operational oversight and supervision of all career and volunteer firefighters. CAL FIRE provides administration, access to state resources, training, vehicle and equipment maintenance, purchasing specifications and recommendations, structural maintenance and administration of volunteer firefighter benefits and worker's compensation programs. During the non-wildland fire season months (winter), CAL-FIRE currently provides 24 hour/7days per week coverage in five state fire stations that would normally be closed, by way of a "Amador" contract with the State.

County Fire staff is responsible for maintaining the Volunteer Handbook which sets forth department policy and procedures for volunteers. The handbook is an essential tool to ensure good communication and promote teamwork between paid CAL FIRE staff and the volunteer firefighters. Ongoing updates to the handbook are required to maintain a cooperative process to operate efficiently.

County Fire will provide a coordinated management program in order to effectively serve the needs of the entire County Fire Department. County Fire has established

and will maintain an effective records management system for each component of the department's operations.

VOLUNTEERS

The County Fire Department could not provide an effective level of fire protection and emergency response without volunteer firefighters. The volunteer companies allow for a level of staffing and distribution of fire stations and equipment that could not otherwise be accomplished. Volunteer recruitment and retention support must be a priority in management of the County Fire Department. County Fire will continue to explore and implement ways to increase benefit programs for volunteers.

JURISDICTION

As development occurs and infrastructure conditions improve within the County Fire's jurisdiction, developed areas may be annexed by adjacent fire agencies or form separate service areas in order to pursue a more urban level of service. It is recommended that the department continue to identify possible annexations and develop budgetary contingency plans that minimize overall operational impacts. County Fire will maintain appropriate auto aid and mutual aid agreement with our cooperators. County Fire will annually review potential annexations and development projects and their resulting effects on revenues and service demand. County Fire will develop contingency plans to maintain appropriate levels of service as needed.

FACILITIES

The County Fire Department has an adequate distribution of facilities, given its resources. The five full-time State fire stations are Big Creek, Fall Creek, Saratoga Summit, Burrell, and Corralitos and are maintained by the State under the County contract with CAL-FIRE. The five volunteer stations are maintained with county funding.

Volunteer stations are in Loma Prieta, South Skyline (Las Cumbres privately owned), and Davenport (leased to the County) and two in Bonny Doon (Martin and McDermott). They provide equipment, training and meeting space for County Fire volunteers.

County Fire Department will explore ways to enhance facilities where fiscally feasible, as well as a program to ensure routine facility inspections and maintenance.

FIRE PREVENTION

Fire prevention is a top priority of County Fire protection services. In 1995 the Office of the County Fire Marshall was consolidated into the County Fire Department enhancing services to the public and coordination between County Fire, County departments and state and local agencies. Subsequently, through the cooperative agreement with CAL-FIRE, the County Fire Department gained access to a full time law enforcement/fire investigation staff, further increasing the level of service to the community.

The County Fire Department addresses fire prevention through a number of effective programs and activities:

- Inspections and plan checks as part of the building permit process
- Response to fire hazard complaints
- Public education programs and Fire Safe Councils

In order to reduce County Fire costs, the Street naming/Addressing function returned to the County Planning Department in FY 2012/13 and one Deputy Fire Marshal position was eliminated.

TRAINING

An effective training program is critical to a successful fire department, particularly when that Department depends heavily on volunteer personnel. The fire and emergency response service has evolved into a very complex discipline with numerous training and certification requirements imposed by different regulatory entities.

Volunteer personnel are required to complete over 190 hours of training in their first year and at least two three-hour sessions per month thereafter. The Candidate Physical Ability Test (**CPAT**) and LiveScan (background check) must be completed prior to submitting an application.

In a cooperative effort with other Santa Cruz County fire agencies, County Fire installed a live structure fire simulator at the CAL-FIRE Ben Lomond Training Center. The simulator provides career and volunteer staff the opportunity to experience interior structure fire conditions in a controlled, non-polluting environment. County Fire will continue to develop the CAL FIRE Ben Lomond Training Center in order to provide additional training courses.

County Fire will monitor the current training program in order to ensure maintenance of all County Fire personnel's compliance with Federal, State, and Cal/OSHA mandates. Ensure that all personnel are provided with sufficient training to keep up with advances in safety as well as to carry out all of their duties and responsibilities

and, additionally, are afforded opportunities to develop skills and abilities beyond the minimum requirements of the department.

County Fire will participate in a coordinated effort with other agencies to provide an expanded training schedule to enable volunteers to fulfill training requirements.

DISPATCH SERVICES

The efficiency of the dispatch function is critical to the success of emergency response. It is recommended that specific performance standards are maintained and implemented to ensure that the public receives the highest possible level of service.

The current Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system at the Felton Emergency Command Center is able to produce statistics or other helpful management data, such as the number of responses by each station and the types of incidents.

County Fire will explore new technology that will enhance dispatching and communications.

FIRE SUPPRESSION

The County Fire Department operates with limited revenues and consequently seeks practical, low cost, service delivery programs. Additionally, regulations requiring a minimum of four personnel at a structure fire scene before firefighters can enter a burning building have increased the need for innovative and creative solutions to staffing challenges. County Fire management recommends that career engine staffing return to three personnel per engine when finances once again allow, accomplishing the following operational objectives:

1. Compliance with the CAL OSHA requirement to have a minimum of four personnel on the scene of a structure fire prior to beginning interior attack. County Fire incidents currently receive an average response of 1.27 volunteers per dispatch. If enough funds were available County Fire could staff three firefighters on the career engine, instead of the current two firefighters, and a response of only one volunteer would be sufficient to begin to fight the fire effectively and be prepared to affect a rescue of the inhabitants.
2. Compliance with the Santa Cruz County fire services mutual aid plan. The fire services mutual aid policy requires that fire engines responding to mutual aid requests be staffed with a minimum of three personnel. County Fire is a frequent user of mutual aid; it is important that the department be capable of providing mutual aid in return.

Providing reliable and effective fire suppression and emergency response service is dependent upon response time (defined as the time between receipt of call and arrival

on scene) and the capability of the response complement. In an effort to reduce response time, the County Fire Department has developed and implemented automatic response agreements with neighboring agencies to ensure that the closest appropriate resources are sent to incidents. However, the current trend within the County of Santa Cruz is diminishing auto aid agreements with County Fire due to County Fires current 2 firefighter engine staffing.

County Fire works toward providing a high level of structural fire suppression services within the resources available to the department.

County Fire is evaluating the structural fire potential within the jurisdiction for the County Fire Department to develop and maintain specific Target Hazard Plans for those locations that pose a particular or unusual operational problem for the Department's fire suppression efforts.

The goal of the Department is to return to 3 person engine staffing to comply with Cal/OSHA "two in two out" regulations; to improve fire engine crew safety and effectiveness and to come into compliance with the Santa Cruz County fire services mutual aid plan.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

County Fire provides basic life support (BLS) and defibrillator services throughout its jurisdiction. County Fire responded to 1,902 emergency calls during 2013, of which 617 were medical emergencies. Paid and volunteer staff are trained to a minimum level of Emergency Medical Services First Responder, and over 50% of the personnel are certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT I).

County Fire will strive to provide a highest level possible within budgetary constraints of pre-hospital emergency medical services by: exploring new technologies to improve emergency medical services delivery including a new expanded scope EMT program implemented in 2014, examine equipment needs in relation to improving the effectiveness of emergency medical service delivery, and to encourage all responders to become Emergency Medical Technicians.

MOBILE EQUIPMENT

The objective of this plan is to identify and replace mobile equipment that have met or exceeded their serviceable life and replace them with emergency response apparatus, which meet the following criteria:

- Maintains or improves the current level of service
- Cost effective to the citizens of Santa Cruz County
- Incorporates modern fire service technologies
- Safe to operate

This plan will integrate the rotation of select apparatus over the life of the plan to maximize serviceable life.

The goal of the 2012-2015 MERP contained in the Master Plan is to maintain a fleet of first line engines that are no older than 20 years to meet NFPA requirements, and maintain an average engine age of less than 10 years. The current budgetary situation precludes implementation of this goal.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

The County Fire Department, like other fire agencies in the County and elsewhere, are “first response” organizations. As part of its mission, the department maintains a capability to respond to incidents independently or in concert with multiple agencies and jurisdictions.

As a member of the Santa Cruz County Fire Chiefs Association, the County Fire Department participates in the Operations Group to work on issues related to mutual aid, standardized fire service training, and standardized operations. The Operations Group also advises the County Fire Chiefs Association and the Area Fire Coordinator who is the CAL FIRE/County Fire Chief regarding disaster planning and preparedness. The Area Fire Coordinator represents fire and rescue services at the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) whenever the fire section is activated.

It is necessary that the Department continue to incorporate current information and directives from state and federal authorities regarding non-fire emergency response requirements, such as crisis and consequence management, into its planning and training programs.

The Santa Cruz County Fire Chiefs Association recommended that County Fire continue to participate in this planning process and support solutions that maintain response capability.

The goal of the Department is to maintain our ability to respond to major emergencies and disasters at an effective level. County Fire participates in County-wide disaster drills involving tactical units and/or command and control function. Ensure law enforcement and other applicable public safety agencies are afforded the opportunity to participate in fire/rescue mutual aid training as necessary

This plan is effective July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2017

County of Santa Cruz
Director of General Services

CAL FIRE
Unit Chief