

ISSUE #4: MUTUAL AID RECOMMENDATIONS

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Problem #1

San Diego County generally has a lack of firefighting resources and no County Fire Agency, so when the 2007 fires occurred, the region relied on a system that was basically ineffective during the first several days. Because San Diego is located in a geographical cul-de-sac, mutual aid requests, when filled, often come from great distances. Multiple fires in the southern California region also significantly impact resource availability. California fire service leaders are growing frustrated by being asked to continually help San Diego when San Diego has not provided adequate fire protection resources on its own.

Solution

Since professional fire agencies are called to extinguish fires that typically start in the unincorporated areas, a minimum of 50 fire apparatus should be purchased by the County and assigned to existing paid professional Fire Departments for deployment to fires located only in San Diego County. This program should be managed using criteria similar to the state OES program. The reserve apparatus will be staffed within four hours with recalled off-duty firefighters, and assigned immediately to support initial attack resources (refer to Staffing/Apparatus Summary).

Problem #2

Fire Mutual Aid resources requested from areas outside of San Diego County were not adequate to respond to the priority areas of the fires. As an example, no mutual aid resources were assigned to the communities of Rancho Bernardo or Scripps Ranch in the City of San Diego during the first several days of the fires in 2003 or 2007. Those communities suffered the loss of hundreds of structures.

Solution

The development of an interim regional fire resource oversight organization, sanctioned by local government and empowered with the responsibility and authority to coordinate the fire



prevention and protection efforts of San Diego County, needs to be a top priority. This Fire organization needs to secure a seat at the Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS) in Riverside, California to represent San Diego County in mutual aid deployment decisions. This will ensure appropriate representation on the status of wildfires and resource priorities for the San Diego Region.

Further, this regional fire organization should establish a San Diego County MACS to provide improved control of resources in San Diego County during major emergency incidents. (MACS is a body of Southern California Fire Professionals representing various agencies and is charged with several responsibilities including determining “the best allocation and assignment of resources to meet individual incident needs.”)