

ISSUE #2: STAFFING AND APPARATUS NEEDS

www.sdfiresafety.org

Problem

San Diego has failed to provide adequate fire protection as a region. San Diego County has no fire department and currently funds only \$8 million annually for fire equipment. The existing fire agencies in San Diego County are generally understaffed. Individual jurisdictions, which may have had adequate resources in the past, have failed to keep up with the growth in their jurisdictions since the implementation of Prop 13. This has resulted in decreasing capabilities as populations have increased.

As an example, using national benchmarks, San Diego City needs 22 additional stations and 300 additional firefighting personnel to meet national response time recommendations to handle day-to-day incidents.

Solution

Create a regional fire protection agency to provide a seamless emergency response delivery system throughout the County. In addition, every existing agency should maintain a current standards of coverage document that clearly identifies response time shortcomings. The results of these studies should be presented to the governing body of each jurisdiction, and a plan adopted to address the required improvements.

County responsibility

In the absence of County-funded fire services, San Diego County should immediately purchase fifty reserve apparatus to be utilized for this purpose. These units should be deployed to existing professional fire departments with the capability to staff them within the four hour notification window.

Since two-thirds of every fire department's suppression staff are off-duty at any given time, a plan needs to be created to equip an off duty division with apparatus to deploy in the event of a major incident.

This would create a surge capacity to double the effective fire force within four hours of notification, thereby providing hundreds of additional firefighting resources to be used within the county of San Diego. This surge capacity would bridge the gap of the typical 48 hour delay in response of available firefighting resources via the state mutual aid system.



Local agency responsibilities

Each agency within San Diego County should have reserve apparatus on a one to one ratio with first line units for this concept to be effective. At a minimum, each agency should seek to bolster its reserve apparatus capability.

Sustainability

An on-going funding mechanism needs to be identified and supported by elected officials which adjusts for inflation and population growth.

Problem

Since government has not funded fire services appropriately, interim solutions must be implemented to bolster firefighting resources.

Solution

All San Diego fire agencies should jointly develop and deliver classes to train citizens and organize retired professional firefighters to assist in the protection of neighborhoods. This cadre could be named the San Diego Fire Corps, and could be coordinated by the Training Officers Section of the San Diego Fire Chiefs Association.

References:

NFPA Documents 1710 and 1720, staffing career and volunteer fire departments.

Commission on Fire Accreditation International, benchmarking documents.