

# ISSUE #1: LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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## Problem

*The San Diego region has lagged behind other California counties in providing adequate levels of fire protection.*

## Solution

**Fixing the San Diego region's fire problems will take both leadership and accountability from multiple factions, particularly politicians, government administrators, fire chiefs, labor unions, and perhaps most importantly, the public. Since only one of these groups is elected, they should be held accountable for leading the effort to make meaningful change--a change that starts with disclosing the facts about how poorly public safety agencies in this region are funded. It also is incumbent upon the administrators, chiefs, and labor groups to work closely together to seek common solutions. Ultimately, however, it will be public pressure upon the elected officials to force upon them to find and fund the appropriate solutions that will make a meaningful difference.**

## Problem

*Many of the fire agencies within the San Diego Region have tended to work as individual units. Since each one is a separate entity, they tend to focus on their own special needs. Normally this is a reasonable method of operation when fire issues remain within their jurisdictional areas. In cases where the region as a whole is threatened and requires additional assets, however, it lacks a central command and control structure which is capable and responsible for assigning fire assets based on regional needs. This lack of a central command and control point for the county and cities of San Diego resulted in an uncoordinated effort in both the Cedar fire and the more recent 2007 wildfires.*

## Solution

**Leadership and accountability for the successful utilization of all assets in the San Diego region can be improved. This has been a much-discussed subject, and most have agreed that something needs to be done to solve this problem. The problem can be solved with impetus from elected officials, fire professionals, and the public. Key areas that need to be addressed are:**



- 1. Priority One should be to fund a consolidated, regional fire department. This would focus primarily on the under-funded and not-currently-funded areas within the county of San Diego, but eventually could add existing departments via consolidation to better serve our communities while saving lives and property.**
- 2. Once funding is in place to create a central consolidated fire department, all training, prevention strategies, communications, and operating procedures should be established. This would provide a fully functional agency of firefighters that would operate in any area of San Diego when the need arises.**
- 3. Develop and implement a standard of coverage that could be used by all fire departments in the region. There may be a possibility that two standards could emerge (one urban and one rural), but they would be fully understood by the key operational fire professionals.**
- 4. Develop an interactive and ongoing relationship with city and county officials which will allow for a dialog on fire safety strengths and weaknesses, as well as organizational and funding requirements.**

## Sustainability

A significant barrier to fire service consolidation has been in defining the costs, and then determining funding sources for those projected costs. Either existing tax revenues need to be reallocated, or a new revenue stream needs to be created so that San Diego, as a region, has a fire safety program that is suitable for all areas.