

DATE ISSUED: January 10, 2003

REPORT NO. 03-009

ATTENTION: Public Safety & Neighborhood Services Committee  
Agenda of January 15, 2003

SUBJECT: Fire & Life Safety Services Reorganization Proposal

### SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

### BACKGROUND

Under the direction of the new Fire Chief, a comprehensive review and assessment of all service groups within Fire & Life Safety Services (F&LSS) has been conducted. This review and assessment process had three primary objectives:

- to become familiar with the current organizational structure and its leaders and managers;
- to identify areas for fiscal and organizational efficiencies and effectiveness in all service groups of the department; and
- to evaluate and identify improvements to overall communications and decision making processes.

This reorganization proposal was developed at the conclusion of a comprehensive ten-week organizational review and assessment of all service areas within F&LSS. The process included interviews with each Deputy level manager, meetings with all Battalion Chiefs and Lifeguard Lieutenants as well as general work force meetings.

Labor organizations were notified that the organizational review was being conducted, and briefings were held with each labor group after the proposal received conceptual approval by the Assistant City Manager. Presentations of the reorganization proposal were provided to all members of F&LSS. The work force and labor organizations were provided a minimum two-week period within which to review and comment on the reorganization proposal prior to preparation of the final report. Comments and recommendations submitted during this period were reviewed and incorporated where possible. Staff continues to work with labor organizations and various work groups within the department to ensure that all issues and concerns are discussed and necessary changes made prior to reorganization implementation. This process of adjustment will continue throughout the reorganization process. At this point in the process, the reorganization is supported by all labor organizations.

### DISCUSSION

The proposed reorganization of F&LSS will be the foundation for development of the departmental

strategic plan and provides the necessary support and structure to lead the organization and its employees into the future. A few of the major recommended changes include:

Hiring of professional civilian managers for: Human Resources, Fire Communications, Fleet Services, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor, and Project Officer

Civilianization of the Fire Communications Center personnel

Improved service delivery through a Special Operations and Services Section

Improved recruitment and community education through an Outreach, Recruitment and Community Education Section

Improved training, safety and personnel development through an expanded Training Division.

Improved staff support in the Lifeguard Division with centralization of currently duplicated services between F&LSS and the Lifeguard Division.

During the evaluation phase of this process, recurring themes were identified. These included funding, organizational structure, communications and operational issues. A few of the key issues identified were:

Additional funding for capital improvements is essential. Although the department has been funded for capital improvements via the first phase Facilities Bond program, there is a need for a second phase of bond funding to support other necessary projects. These projects include relocating Fire Stations 39 (Tierrasanta) and 28 (Kearny Mesa), developing the Equipment Repair and Facilities Maintenance Center in Kearny Mesa, renovation of Lifeguard Headquarters and replacement of the Lifeguard boat dock. The Facilities Bond program will require 2.0 additional Facilities Maintenance Officers to ensure projects are kept on track and on budget. Funding has been identified within the bond budget and F&LSS is working with Engineering and Capital Projects to assign persons to this function.

Key service areas such as Fire Communications, Personnel Services, Fleet and Facilities Maintenance need consistent and professional management and leadership, especially given the changes in law and specialized expertise required in these positions. Chief fire officers generally rotate through these positions every two to three years. This rotation results in a loss of efficiency, effectiveness and institutional knowledge. Professional managers identified in this reorganization will provide stability and expertise through their education, experience, leadership and long term tenure in these positions. Further, expanded career options now exist for civilian staff to reach the level of Deputy Director, thereby increasing opportunities for internal promotions.

Several functions and tasks have been identified that are currently performed by similar staff positions in the Lifeguard Division and various other divisions within F&LSS. These include workloads related to human resources, training, communications, equipment inventory, and facilities maintenance. The reorganization will centralize many of these functions and improve accountability and efficiency.

An operational structure utilizing four Operations Deputy Chiefs to manage emergency operations is not conducive to consistent decision making or effective communications within the department. Each operational area is currently managed with a variety of interpretations of policies and procedures resulting in ineffective departmental operations, training, discipline and direction. This reorganization identifies one Operations Deputy Chief to manage all emergency operations with the assistance of two Division Chiefs to ensure consistent direction and leadership.

Succession Planning is a critical gap within the department. Approximately 154 personnel will be retiring, including most of current Senior Staff, between FY 2003 and FY 2007. Development of the next generation of leaders and managers within the department is essential to the future success of this organization and it must be incorporated into daily operations. Staff are reviewing options to fill vacancies created by these retirements as a way to address near term new hire needs in a cost effective manner. Such options could include Lateral Transfers of existing firefighters from other jurisdictions. The enhancement of the Training Division through this reorganization will provide the staff to develop and implement focused Succession Planning and Mentoring programs at all levels of the organization from firefighter to chief officer.

The department currently has no Strategic Plan. There is no central vision, and no defined goals and objectives guiding the department into the future. Crisis management can cause organizational stress and frustration; therefore, it is my intention to begin a Team Building/Strategic Planning process in the Spring to create a vision for the department.

Departmental training is severely under supported and under staffed. Safety training and wellness and injury reduction programs do not currently exist. Across the department, fire and rescue skill development is inconsistent and not meeting the basic needs of a high- incident volume metropolitan emergency service organization. The reorganization increases full-time training officers and support staff to address these issues with quality and consistent policies and training programs.

The City of San Diego is ranked last in the ratio of fire fighters to population of all Metropolitan Cities in the United States. This cannot be addressed via the reorganization.

Up to ten apparatus are out of service at any one time during each weekday. This is caused by several factors including an aging fleet and an In-Service-Training program that requires centralized training at the department's training facility. Training alternatives have been presented and will developed and implemented as part of the reorganization, once new training staff is in place.

In order for F&LSS to ensure that appropriate numbers of emergency responders are equipped, trained and available to respond to the citizens' and visitors' needs, it is necessary for this reorganization plan to move forward to the implementation phase. The goal of implementing improved departmental operations, communications and employee recruitment and development will not be possible without the ability to improve efficiencies and effectiveness of F&LSS through reorganization.

#### FISCAL IMPACT

In summary, this proposal provides an additional 10.5 support staff positions with a net budget reduction of \$30,000 annually. This is accomplished by replacing some uniformed fire officers with civilian managers and support staff, updating staffing and classification needs, and having the San Diego Medical Services Enterprise fund 5.6 EMS support positions that have historically been General Fund obligations. The additional 10.5 support positions include the following:

- Assistant Fire Chief (1)
- Supervising Public Information Officer (1)
- Division Chiefs (2)
- Captains, Training (2.5)
- Building Maintenance Supervisor (1)
- Fire Communications Training Coordinator (1)
- Clerical II (2)

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeff Bowman

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Approved: P. Lamont Ewell  
Fire Chief

Assistant City Manager

BOWMAN/AG

Note: The attachment is not available in electronic format. A copy is available for review in the Office of the City Clerk.

Attachments: 1) Proposed F&LSS Reorganization Organization Chart