

DATE ISSUED: September 17, 2003

REPORT NO: 03-191

ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee  
Agenda of September 24, 2003

SUBJECT: Fire-Rescue Deferred Maintenance Update

#### SUMMARY

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

#### BACKGROUND

In 1993, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department assumed responsibility for maintaining Fire facilities from the General Services Department. At that time, limited funding for facilities maintenance was transferred to Fire-Rescue; i.e., actual prior year expenditures for Fire facilities were \$600,000 and \$300,000 was transferred as a base budget allocation. At that time Fire-Rescue maintained forty five facilities. Today the department maintains fifty permanent structures, not including Lifeguard facilities and the Regional Public Safety Training Institute (RPSTI).

In 1995, with the City reorganization effort, the Lifeguard Division was transferred from Park and Recreation Department into Fire-Rescue, but maintenance of their facilities continued to reside with General Services Department. Our long-term goal would be to include maintenance of Lifeguard facilities directly under Fire-Rescue Department.

In 1997, through a very thorough facility assessment program, the deferred maintenance problems within the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department were brought to the attention of City Council. This eventually led to funding of the Fire and Lifeguard Facility Improvements Project. Through this project, tremendous facility improvements are currently being made. The most serious deferred maintenance problems within the fire

stations are being addressed through the \$4.2 million set aside for major components; i.e., replacing roofs, generators, apparatus doors, etc. In addition, the replacement and remodeling of ten fire facilities and seven lifeguard facilities addresses additional deferred maintenance issues currently facing the Department.

Maintenance and repair needs are an ever evolving requirement, and since 1997 many other repair or replacement issues continue to surface. Since FY 1999, Fire-Rescue was budgeted \$338,919 for maintenance and repair of facilities. Actual expenditures for FY 1999 were \$513,559 to address mandated health and safety issues. In FY 2004, this budget allocation has dwindled to \$282,102, making routine maintenance of fifty facilities a significant challenge.

## DISCUSSION

The most effective method of addressing ongoing maintenance needs is through an adequate and consistent annual maintenance budget. Without this allocation, the workforce is required to deal with extreme surges of repair activity, as well as periods of reduced or minimal repair activity based on fluctuating budget allocations. Having made great strides through the Fire and Lifeguard Facility Improvements Project, Fire-Rescue's goal going forward is to plan for and address routine maintenance issues in a timely manner to avoid facilities falling into a critical state of disrepair. When routine maintenance is deferred, the problem often escalates to a need for replacement requiring significant levels of funding; i.e., replace entire structures that could have been handled through annual routine maintenance.

## FIRE FACILITIES

Many of the ongoing repair needs in the fire stations are cyclic in nature; i.e., roof and kitchen replacement at twenty years, station apparatus door replacement at fifteen years, HVAC replacement at ten years, interior and exterior painting at ten years, asphalt surface replacement at ten years, carpet replacement at ten years, and vehicle exhaust extraction system replacement at seven years. Other needs such as plumbing, concrete driveways, and electrical repairs have a much less predictable lifespan.

Fire-Rescue staff estimates that each year two to three roofs and kitchens need to be replaced, five buildings need painting, five facilities need new HVAC systems, and seven structures require carpet. Combine these with the recurring need for exhaust extraction systems, asphalt and concrete repair, termite treatments, new stucco, and other maintenance needs and the actual annual cost is not overwhelming. However, when repair issues are ignored or deferred, they quickly grow beyond our ability to address with an annual maintenance schedule and basic budget allocation.

A consistent facility maintenance budget is the most practical solution to address our facility needs. Given consistent resources, Fire-Rescue would have the ability to appropriately manage projects with existing repair staff. Knowing that an annual budget allocation will be provided, there will be no rush to replace components early because

funding may not be available the following year. Although events like the Fire and Lifeguard Facilities Improvement Project provide a much needed funding source and serve to reduce a backlog of deferred maintenance, they are a great strain on the general fund budget and the ability to manage the process with existing staff. A consistent budget, scheduled workload, and appropriately sized staff will produce better quality products and ensure timing is optimized to get the most from each system.

In addition since 1995, Fire-Rescue has been faced with more stringent environmental standards that mandate repair or replacement of underground diesel fuel tanks. The practical long-term fuel tank resolution is to place all tanks above ground. Two-thirds of our fire stations still have below ground fuel tanks. With the assistance of Environmental Services, seven underground fuel tanks are currently in the process of being converted to above ground tanks. Six other tanks, that are expected to become more problematic, are targeted for replacement as soon as funding is made available.

The Fire-Rescue Repair Facility was built in 1966, and was well designed to meet the department's needs at that time. Since then we have added eleven new fire stations, with at least five more coming in the next seven years. Our fleet has aged and the repair bays are not adequate to meet today's need. This site is being included in the feasibility study to partner with an apparatus fleet manufacturer to consider leasing fire apparatus and potentially building a joint fire apparatus repair and warranty center.

## **LIFEGUARD FACILITIES**

Lifeguard facilities consist of ten permanent facilities, twenty-seven seasonal towers and four office trailers all currently maintained by the General Services Department. One of Fire-Rescue's long range goals is to take responsibility for routine maintenance of Lifeguard facilities. This would be one more step in the true integration of Lifeguards into our Department. If Fire-Rescue oversees and plans for routine maintenance of Lifeguard facilities, we will be better able to manage and project our budget requirements. One additional construction estimator would be required to takeover this additional workload.

The current Lifeguard Headquarters at 2581 Quivira Court was built in 1960. Funds were to be allocated from a private redevelopment of a hotel project in Quivira Basin to allow for the construction of a new Lifeguard Headquarters facility. Due to the current economic state, it is unknown when or if this development would occur. Therefore, major repairs and extensive refurbishing of this facility are needed.

The Lifeguard Headquarters Boat Operations Dock was built in 1960. It is in a constant state of repair and several dock sections have been closed numerous times over the years due to employee safety concerns. It is now in a condition that is beyond economical repair and needs to be replaced immediately.

There are currently twenty-seven seasonal (portable) lifeguard towers. The six seasonal towers at Ocean Beach are beyond economical repair and need immediate replacement.

Providing a consistent budget allocation, dedicated for yearly preventative maintenance and repairs, would ensure the City receives the optimum life span from the seasonal towers; i.e., a full twenty years.

There are currently four portable lifeguard office trailers. One trailer is in excess of thirty years of age and the others are three years of age. A yearly preventative maintenance and repair budget is required to keep the trailers in operable condition.

CONCLUSION:

The above information is provided as an overview of the current state of deferred facilities maintenance issues for San Diego Fire-Rescue Department. In the future, a methodology needs to be identified to retire ongoing deferred maintenance not covered under the Fire and Lifeguard Facility Improvements Project (see attachment). To avoid significant and costly deterioration of Fire and Lifeguard facilities, the Department's goal is to establish an appropriate budget allocation for repair and maintenance of facilities that is consistently maintained from year to year. Fire-Rescue will continue to work with General Services to assess the feasibility of transitioning maintenance of Lifeguard facilities directly under the Fire-Rescue Department.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeff Bowman  
Fire Chief

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bruce Herring  
Deputy City Manager

TKJ/rms

Attachment: [1. Outstanding Deferred Maintenance Projects, September 2, 2003](#)