

DATE ISSUED: February 25, 2005 REPORT NO: 05-057

ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
Agenda of March 2, 2005

SUBJECT: San Diego Fire-Rescue FY 2006 Budget Needs

REFERENCE: Comprehensive Public Safety Needs Assessment, Manager's
Report 04-057, dated March 12, 2004
Public Safety Funding Plan, Manager's Report 04-101, dated
May 7, 2004

SUMMARY

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

BACKGROUND

On January 12, 2005 Fire-Rescue provided an overview of department operations to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee. At that time, the committee asked the department to return with a summary of its FY 2006 budget needs and priorities.

Overall department funding needs for FY 2005 were reported to the committee in City Manager Report 04-057 dated March 12, 2004. Reported needs for FY 2005 totaled over \$47 million, with the largest amounts being in the categories of fleet replacement and facilities maintenance. In FY 2005 Council addressed over \$12 million of these needs.

DISCUSSION

For FY 2006, the Fire-Rescue needs list items total approximately \$36.7 million. These needs are part of a long term strategic effort to provide the citizens of San Diego with the level of public safety protection that they should be expecting from their Fire-Rescue Department. In the past, the City's funding of emergency resources has failed to match city growth, resulting in lengthening response times, equipment shortages and difficulty

in effectively responding to major emergencies. Again, the most expensive items include fleet replacement and facilities maintenance.

From a budget priority perspective, the most important requirement is to obtain funding to maintain the current level of service. Additional services, personnel and equipment should only be added to a budget that is adequate to support current operations. As much as Fire-Rescue believes it needs additional personnel and resources to provide a more appropriate level of service to the public, unavoidable FY 2006 expenditure obligations need to be taken care of first and are the department's top priority.

Department budget priorities recognize the need, not only for front line personnel, facilities and resources, but also for the support infrastructure that ensures efficient and effective utilization and management of those resources. Support staffing in Fire-Rescue has been historically inadequate, and even with the recent emphasis on improving department readiness, the need for adequate support staffing has still not been recognized in the budget process. In fact, in some areas, support staffing has even been reduced. For example, in the FY 2005 budget, the department actually lost three clerical support positions.

Attachment 1 represents a list of department needs by category. A brief discussion of the more significant items is given below.

Attachment 2 outlines department needs in general priority order. As indicated previously, the changes required to maintain the current level of service have the highest priority and need to be addressed as a group in order to avoid structural under funding of basic services in FY 2006. Items in the second group, Public Health and Safety Priorities, are those which will have the most significant immediate impact on public safety. Items in the third group, Support Priorities, are considered essential for efficient and effective department management.

Attachment 3 provides a list of every item in the deferred maintenance category along with its cost. It includes both the unfunded items on the needs list as well as items which have potential bond funding from the Fire and Lifeguards Facility Improvement Project.

SALARIES AND WAGES (\$3,332,000)

In general, the items identified here represent unfunded and unavoidable expenditures related to salaries and wages which will occur in FY 2006.

Special Pay (\$1,622,000) – The increase in Special Pay is required primarily to cover the increase in Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) pay given to firefighters, all of whom are certified EMTs. In FY 2006, EMT pay will increase from 7.0% of base salary to 8.5%.

Terminal Annual Leave Payoffs (\$1,000,000) - When employees retire or otherwise leave City employment, they are paid for all their unused sick leave and annual leave. This

obligation has never received line item funding, but the cost has increased significantly in recent years and must be addressed in the budget. For FY 2005, the projected payout will be about \$800,000, and could exceed \$1.0 million for FY 2006. In following years, the level of funding needed will vary based on the number of anticipated retirements.

OPERATIONS STAFFING (\$3,632,000)

Seventh Battalion Management (\$518,000) – Fire-Rescue’s Emergency Operations Division is currently divided into seven battalions; however, Fire-Rescue’s budget only includes staffing for management of six battalions. Therefore, management for the seventh battalion must be covered on a supplemental basis. 3.30 Battalion Chief positions are needed in the budget to support this coverage.

Light and Air Staffing (\$310,000) – Light and Air units are used at major incidents to refill breathing air bottles. Without this capability, firefighters would not be able to safely perform interior firefighting operations on a sustained basis. Because of the potential for major fire incidents in the downtown area which includes many high rise buildings, Fire-Rescue currently staffs the Light and Air unit at Station 1 with one firefighter, eight hours per day on a supplemental basis. The addition of 3.20 Fire Fighter II positions would support full-time staffing for this unit. This 24 hour coverage is becoming more significant as the number of high rise residential structures continues to grow. Without this position, one of the downtown engine companies is compromised by reducing it down to three personnel to fulfill this Light and Air function.

Lifeguard Staffing (\$29,000) – Management staffing for the Lifeguard Service is extremely thin. In addition to the Lifeguard Chief, there are only five Marine Safety Lieutenants who must focus primarily on beach and water operations. The current proposal is to convert one vacant Marine Safety Lieutenant position to a Marine Safety Captain position that could provide needed additional management support.

Staffing for Station 47 (\$561,000) – A new fire station will soon be built by the developer in Pacific Highlands Ranch (Station 47). Current estimates are that it will be operational by March 1, 2006. Partial year staffing for one engine is needed to open the station in FY 2006.

Mission Valley Temporary Fire Station 2 (\$1,903,000) - There are currently no fire stations in Mission Valley and emergency fire units must respond from outside the area. Due to the distances and growing traffic congestion, there is an increasing problem with delayed responses. The current fire facilities plan calls for a new fire station (Station 2) to be constructed near Qualcomm Stadium. However, due to the City’s current inability to obtain bond funding, this new station may not be available for several years. As an interim measure, Fire-Rescue proposes establishing a temporary fire station with one fire engine and crew near the site of the future permanent station. The cost includes site development and assumes it will become operational on September 1, 2005.

Old Mission Beach Lifeguard Coverage (\$311,000) – Due to frequent rip tide conditions, this is a dangerous area for beach goers. In fact, two swimmers drowned in the area last summer. The Lifeguard Service believes that the distance between towers in this area is too long and should be reduced. The proposed staffing addition would allow full year staffing of Tower 18 at the foot of Santa Clara Place; it is currently only staffed in the summer. In addition, lifeguards would staff two additional seasonal towers on either side of Tower 18, and would reduce the average distance between towers.

SUPPORT STAFFING (\$ 947,000)

Clerical Support Staffing (-\$3,000) - Over the past two fiscal years, four clerical support positions have been deleted from the Fire-Rescue budget. Fire-Rescue proposes restoring these positions and offsetting the cost by a reduction of three Fire Dispatcher positions. Fire Dispatcher positions can be reduced because the dispatch center recently converted to 12-hour shifts, which allows for a reduction in total staffing requirements. This proposal would actually save \$3,000.

Equal Employment Opportunity Officer (\$102,000) – EEO training and investigations must currently be performed by Battalion Chiefs on overtime, which can be very expensive and time consuming. Fire-Rescue proposes performing this task with a full time, specially trained civilian position. This would improve the quality of investigations performed and training provided with the goal of minimizing the number of negative events. The cost would be partially offset by a reduction in Battalion Chief overtime pay.

Fire Plans Officer for Fire Facilities (\$154,000) – The proposed Fire Captain level position would work with the Development Services Department and impacted communities on locations for future fire and lifeguard facilities, environmental impact reports related to these facilities, and provide analysis for the permit finding process. Position should be fully reimbursable.

Project Officer Support for Emergency Operations (\$383,000) – One of the shortcomings identified in the Cedar Fire After Action Report and most recent Zero Base Management Report study is the lack of project support in the Emergency Operations Division. In fact, there are no support positions currently funded. This proposal would add two Fire Captain positions to provide administrative support with required equipment.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program Manager (\$111,000) – Another need identified after the Cedar Fire was for more community self-sufficiency during major disasters. In response, Fire-Rescue created the CERT program to train citizens and businesses to deal with disasters when emergency services are overwhelmed and to offer support for prevention and recovery efforts. CERT teams have already been organized in the Scripps Ranch, Tierra Santa, Navajo/San Carlos, University Heights and Talmadge areas. The CERT program provides council districts with new tools and planned development of a city-wide volunteer network, part of a Fire-Rescue master plan with the city Office of Homeland Security and governmental agencies. The program was

developed with the support of temporary CERT grant funding, but a full time, permanent Program Manager position is required to manage and expand the program.

Corporate Sponsorship Development Manager (\$111,000) - The wildfires of 2003 demonstrated that City funding alone may not be sufficient to provide all the resources and capabilities needed in major, widespread emergencies. After the fire, a number of corporations and other private organizations stepped forward to help acquire needed emergency response equipment and programs such as: wildfire firefighting equipment, CERT program startup, an Ultra XT Brush engine, compressed air foam system, rapid intervention kits and VHF portable radios. To continue to pursue these opportunities, Fire-Rescue needs a full-time person with appropriate skills and expertise in the area of developing private giving. The cost of this position should be significantly more than offset by the increased level of donations.

Division Chief Reorganization (-\$16,000) - Fire-Rescue currently is challenged to provide an appropriate level of management support at the field supervision level. There are currently only two Division Chiefs (Fire Shift Commander) and they work five day schedules; whereas, the personnel they supervise work on three 24-hour shifts. The current span of control for field supervision is nine-to-one and twelve-to-one. To increase the presence of management level oversight, Fire-Rescue proposes adding one additional Division Chief position (for a total of three), and assigning one Division Chief to each of the three operations divisions, on 24-hour shifts. This would significantly improve the ability of the Division Chiefs to stay in close contact with field operations, reduce the span of control to seven-to-one, and provide a higher level of management immediately available for major incidents. This is critical, as the Department anticipates a significant transition in experienced personnel with a number of retirements forecast over the next three to five years. The budget impact of this proposal would be offset by the elimination of two Fire Engineer positions and includes an amount equal to EMT pay for all three positions as discussed in the following issue on Senior Staff Salary Compaction.

Fire Senior Staff Salary Compaction (\$105,000) – Due to growing salary compaction problems between unclassified Senior Staff level personnel (Division Chief and above) and classified firefighter personnel (Battalion Chief and below), it is difficult to attract highly qualified individuals to fill unclassified management positions in Fire-Rescue. With overtime and specialty pay, Battalion Chiefs and even some Captains can make significantly more than unclassified Senior Staff employees. This was aggravated further this year because unclassified employees throughout the City took an effective 5.8% salary reduction to help offset the City's financial problems. As a result, Fire-Rescue cannot implement succession planning or career development programs at the management level because it does not have an adequate, motivated employee base willing to participate. To increase the attractiveness of Senior Staff positions, Fire-Rescue is proposing that EMT certified firefighters in unclassified assignments be made eligible to receive EMT pay (8.5%); consistent with other classified firefighters who currently receive this pay. There is an expectation from the public that personnel in uniform are certified EMTs and capable of performing emergency medical services. The

budget impact does not include Division Chiefs because they were included in the previous item.

SUPPLIES AND SERVICES (\$93,000)

Public Safety Additions in the FY 2005 budget helped Fire-Rescue catch-up with most of its funding needs for supplies and services. However, based on projected needs it is anticipated that another \$93,000 is required for FY 2006. \$41,000 of this cost is associated with the increased lease cost for the Fire Station 43 on Brown Field.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (\$232,000)

EMS Field Electronic Documentation Support (\$71,000) – Over the past several years, the emergency medical services program has transitioned from paper to electronic documentation of emergency medical incidents using a Palm Pilot based system. This system eliminates much of the paperwork formerly involved, and allows for the electronic transmission of run information from ambulance units to base hospitals. This has substantially improved billing information for the medical program. Funding is now needed for supplies, software support, maintenance and training.

MDC Service Charge (\$80,000) – In FY 2006, Fire-Rescue will complete its transition from Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) to Mobile Data Computers (MDC). As part of this change, Fire-Rescue will be transitioning off the City's 800 MHz communications backbone system and begin using a commercially operated system similar to the steps the Police Department have taken. Service costs for using the commercial backbone system will be about \$80,000 per year.

ENERGY/UTILITIES (\$269,000)

In the current year, energy/utilities costs are running significantly over budget primarily due to higher fuel costs. If the high fuel prices continue into FY 2006, a significant budget increase will be needed to keep the department whole.

EQUIPMENT OUTLAY (\$475,000)

Fire-Rescue's FY 2005 equipment budget included significant one-time CCDC and CDBG funding for equipment. With the loss of this funding in FY 2006, Fire's equipment budget will be reduced from \$1.2 million to \$530,000, which is not adequate. The four-year average prior to FY 2004 was \$1.1 million. The request for \$475,000 would provide a total of about \$1.0 million for FY 2006.

COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT (\$481,000)

Completion of Portable Radio Deployment (\$254,000) – Fire-Rescue is in the middle of a phased effort to replace old 800 MHz portable radios and provide four portable radios

(one for each crew member) on each engine and truck. The requested funding will allow the department to complete this effort for the fire suppression apparatus.

Replacement of VHF Mobile Radios (\$157,000) – Current VHF mobile radios on emergency apparatus do not meet new Federal Communications Commission (FCC) standards, which take effect on January 1, 2006 and will not be usable after that time. These radios are the primary means of interagency communications and vital during large, multi-jurisdictional emergencies.

Additional Radios for Fire Mobile Command Vehicle (\$41,000) – To meet communications needs during major emergencies, Fire-Rescue needs to upgrade radio equipment on its mobile command vehicle. This requires five 800 MHz portable radios as well as five VHF portable and two VHF mobile radios to meet new FCC standards.

FLEET REPLACEMENT PROGRAMS (\$12,758,000)

Fire Emergency Response Apparatus Replacement (\$11,825,000) – This request would provide funds to purchase: 20 fire engines to replace current open cab engines which proved to be extremely dangerous during the Cedar Fire, three closed cab ladder trucks to replace the remaining three open cab ladder trucks, and one Explosive Device Team replacement vehicle. Fire-Rescue and the Purchasing Department are currently evaluating responses to an RFP soliciting proposals to lease, rather than purchase, fire engines. However, no decisions have been made yet on the advisability of pursuing this option or its potential impact on Fire-Rescue's FY 2006 budget. If either a lease or a lease-purchase option is selected, only eight apparatus would be purchased in FY 2006, and the only budget funding required would be approximately \$250,000 for sales tax payments.

Lifeguard Fleet Replacement Program (\$893,000) – This request would fund the replacement of six surf rescue vessels, three personal watercraft (PWCs), and two all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), as well as various trailers and motors.

Support Fleet (\$40,000) - A new Community Outreach van is needed to replace the high mileage vehicle currently used for the fire and lifeguard community outreach programs. The objective of these programs is to expand the pool of potential firefighter and lifeguard candidates through increased interaction with underrepresented community populations.

FACILITIES (\$13,184,000)

Deferred Facilities Maintenance (\$10,549,000) – Unmet needs listed in Attachment 1 total \$10,549,000. This includes all unfunded fire and lifeguard deferred facilities maintenance needs, including those at the Fire Training Center (NTC). The total of unmet needs in Attachment 1 does not include deferred maintenance scheduled to be accomplished using Fire and Lifeguard Facilities Improvement Project bond proceeds; however, for completeness, these projects are also listed in Attachment 3.

Lifeguard Boat Dock Replacement (\$2,635,000) – The lifeguard boat dock has been identified as being in a seriously deteriorated condition for a number of years, and has been consistently listed as one of Fire-Rescue’s top funding needs. Worst fears came to reality in early January of this year when severe storms rendered the dock unusable. The total cost to replace the dock is now estimated by engineers at \$2,635,000; however, because of long lead times required for design and permitting, it could be phased with only \$1,000,000 needed in FY 2006.

TRAINING (\$427,000)

All Risk Incident Management Training (\$258,000) – Fire-Rescue currently has no funding available for essential major incident training courses. This type of training is needed to ensure that Fire’s field officers are fully capable of managing major, multi-agency emergencies, and it is now mandatory in order for the City to receive reimbursement for resources committed to State OES emergencies. This request would provide appropriate training for all current Battalion Chiefs.

Hazardous Materials Team Training (\$19,000) – The Fire-Rescue’s Hazardous Materials (HazMat) team provides hazardous materials mitigation services to most jurisdictions in the county under a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA). For providing these services, the City will receive a fee of \$771,000 in FY 2006. The JPA requires specialized training for HazMat team members; however, Fire-Rescue does not receive any funding for this training.

Other Training Requirements (\$150,000) - As indicated previously, Fire-Rescue has no funds budgeted for formal training. However, for FY 2006, essential training requirements have been identified as totaling over \$150,000. These include: Fire Prevention Bureau employee development training, incident command system training, in-service training, equipment mechanic training, Telestaff training, employee performance review training, and out-of-town training courses.

PROGRAMS (\$829,000)

Brush Management Program Restoration (\$160,000) – For FY 2006 Fire-Rescue proposes beginning a phased expansion of the brush management program to the level established after the 1985 Normal Heights fire. The first year would add 2.00 Code Compliance Officers. Eventually, the full program would include the addition of 9.00 positions (including the two added in FY 2006), at a total annual cost of \$772,000.

Helicopter Program Staffing (\$0) - In FY 2006 Fire-Rescue needs to add 10.00 positions to support the new City operated helicopter program, which was previously operated under a contract with Kachina Aviation. These positions include three pilots, two crew chiefs (Fire Captains), two Fire Fighter/Paramedics, two mechanics, and one program manager (Battalion Chief). The positions can be funded from Fire-Rescue’s current \$2.76 million helicopter program allocation so no additional funding is needed.

Health and Wellness Services Program (\$669,000) – This program is initially intended to provide health and wellness services to all uniformed fire personnel in compliance with the International Association of Fire Fighters Wellness Initiative. The objective is to improve the overall health and fitness of firefighters and reduce workers compensation claims. In other cities, such as Phoenix, the savings in workers compensation costs have more than paid for the program. It was begun in FY 2005 using grant funding with a 30% City match. The grant funding ends in August 2005, so additional City funding is needed to continue the program past that time. It is hoped that the program can eventually be expanded to include other City employees as well as to employees of other government agencies that could help defer overall program costs. The ultimate goal is to make it financially self sustaining.

CONCLUSION

The information in this report responds to the PS&NS Committee's request for information on the Fire-Rescue Department's proposed FY 2006 budget needs, including those items most critical to public health and safety. In addition, it provides a listing of every deferred maintenance item along with associated costs as requested by the PS&NS Committee.

In summary, Fire-Rescue has identified \$36.7 million in funding needs for FY 2006, including the addition of 48.05 positions. \$25.9 million of this is related to fleet replacement and deferred facilities maintenance. Approximately \$3.3 million is related to additional salaries and wage related costs, which cannot be avoided. Continuing increases in fuel costs drive the need to increase Fire-Rescue's energy/utilities budget for FY 2006 by \$269,000. At a minimum, to maintain current levels of service, \$4,905,000 and 17.32 positions are required in the FY 2006 budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Bowman
Fire Chief

P. Lamont Ewell
City Manager

BOWMAN/TKJ

Attachments: [1. San Diego Fire-Rescue FY2006 Budget Needs](#)
[2. San Diego Fire-Rescue FY2006 Budget Priorities](#)