



AGENDA REPORT

Department: Fire Department
Prepared by: Amedee Walter, Management Analyst III
Meeting Date: Tuesday, November 15, 2022
Approved by: Brad Raulston, City Manager

SUBJECT:

Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM) Fire & EMS Services Analysis

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept and File the Report.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE PRIOR ACTION:

Not Applicable.

EXPLANATION:

Executive Summary – Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM) Report – Fire Department

The Center for Public Safety Management, LLC (CPSM) was contracted by the City of National City to complete an analysis of the City's Fire Department, EMS ground transport service, and fire dispatch services. The National City Fire Department (NCFD) is responsible for providing services from two primary divisions that include Operations and Community Risk Reduction. The NCFD carries out these and other logistical and administrative functions through the Fire Chief's office and operational fire suppression officers and staff.

The service demands on the NCFD from the community are numerous and varied. A significant component of this report is the completion of an All-Hazard Risk Assessment of the Community. The All-Hazard Risk Assessment of the Community contemplates many factors that cause, create, facilitate, extend, and enhance risk in and to a community. The risk assessment includes Port property and proposed new industrial businesses/processes that are contemplating build-out in National City. The response time and staffing components discussion of this report are designed to examine the current level of service provided by the NCFD compared to national best practices. As well, these components of the report provide incident data and relevant information that can be utilized for future planning and self-review of service levels for continued improvement designed to meet community expectations and mitigate emergencies effectively and efficiently. Included also is an analysis of fire and EMS responses the NCFD provides through a regional automatic aid agreement to Paradise Hills, an area of San Diego City contiguous to National City.

Other significant components of the report are an analysis of the current deployment of resources and the performance of these resources in terms of response times and the three NCFD fire stations; current staffing levels and patterns; department resiliency (ability to handle more than one incident at a time); critical tasking elements for specific incident responses and assembling an effective response force.

A comprehensive risk assessment and review of deployable assets are critical aspects of a fire department's operation. First, these reviews will assist the NCFD in quantifying the risks that it faces. Second, the NCFD will be better equipped to determine if its current response resources are sufficiently staffed, equipped, trained, and positioned. The factors that drive the service needs are examined and then link directly to discussions regarding the assembling of an effective response force; these factors also must be considered when contemplating the response capabilities needed to adequately address the existing and future risks, and which encompass the component of critical tasking.

The report also contains a series of observations and planning objectives and recommendations provided by CPSM that are intended to help the NCFD deliver services more efficiently and effectively. This includes succession planning for near-term retirements, administrative capacity needed to manage day-to-day programs and processes such as workforce training and education, EMS (the greatest response workload of the department), and fleet and facilities (the infrastructure backbone of the department), and as well additional capacity in the Fire Marshal's Office, based on current and projected fire code inspection workload.

The final CPSM Study report outlined 12 recommendations and considerations for continuous improvement of services delivered by the NCFD. CPSM also recognizes there may be recommendations and considerations offered that first must be budgeted and/or bargained, or for which processes must be developed prior to implementation.

These recommendations were separated into 8 specific aspects of the department.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Department Structure

1. CPSM recommends the NCFD work with the City's Human Resources Department to develop and implement a succession planning process that identifies and develops future organizational leadership and includes key components that focuses on the retention of current talent. Included in this planning should be consideration for a 40-hour Deputy Fire Chief position that will work with the Fire Chief managing the day-to-day activities and programs of the NCFD. This position would be the likely successor to the Fire Chief on his retirement and would ensure succession of current department direction. This position can be implemented and filled through promotion (retention opportunity), which will create a vacancy to be filled at the lesser expensive Firefighter level.
2. CPSM also recommends the City consider adding an administrative Battalion Chief position to assist with the day-to-day management of the NCFD and to assume key program assignments currently assigned to shift Battalion Chiefs such as training, EMS, fleet and facilities, and health and safety. This position can be implemented through promotion (retention opportunity), which will create a vacancy to be filled at the lesser expensive Firefighter level) Estimated cost alternatives to support these recommendations are: Deputy Chief position internal promotion, \$108,000 (salary and benefits for one firefighter/EMT and \$20,000 for promotions for Engineer, Captain, and Battalion Chief); Battalion Chief position through internal promotion, \$103,000 (salary and benefits for one firefighter/EMT and \$15,000 for promotions of Engineer and Captain).

Fleet and Facilities

3. CPSM recommends the NCFD, due to the current and expected future workload on apparatus, follow to the extent possible the current apparatus in-service and replacement schedule.

4. CPSM further recommends the City continue with its planning to construct a permanent brick and mortar station in the northeast portion of the City utilizing national industry standards for fire facilities as outlined within the report and designed to accommodate current and future response apparatus and personnel.

ISO Rating

5. CPSM recommends the NCFD review and address, to the extent possible, deficiencies in the current ISO Public Protection Classification report (Fire Department Section) as outlined in this analysis. This includes, and given the identified building risks in the City, ensuring company personnel conduct (and document for future ISO reviews) some level of commercial, industrial, institutional, and other similar type buildings (all buildings except one- to four-family dwellings) familiarization and pre-plan information gathering; work with Sweetwater Authority to ensure the fire hydrants are inspected and flow-tested on a more regular basis; address Community Risk Reduction staffing and make adjustments to staffing to ensure current (and future) inspectable properties (2,700 total current) are receiving annualized (where required) inspections, and those not requiring annualized inspections receive timely inspections in accordance with applicable laws and standards, and as established by the Fire Marshal. Addressing the Community Risk Reduction deficiency will require additional staffing, to the extent possible with available funding, which has an estimated cost of \$87,500 to \$117,000 per Community Risk Reduction inspector, dependent on placement in the pay range.

Risk Assessment / Resiliency

6. CPSM recommends the NCFD continue with the Squad program as designed, due to the efficiencies and effectiveness this unit has produced for the City. CPSM further recommends the NCFD monitor dual responses (Squad/Engine) and make necessary adjustments to maintain a 10-percent ratio.

NCFD Staffing Model

7. CPSM recommends the NCFD, to the extent possible and if practical depending on available automatic and mutual aid resources, work with regional Fire Chiefs to increase response resources to commercial, apartment, and high-rise fire responses that align more closely with the NFPA 1710 standard.
8. CPSM further recommends due to the following factors: demand for service on the NCFD; population density that includes substantial current and projected vertical density structures, many involving assisted and/or senior living; building and other risks identified in this report such as the San Diego Port property; industrial and commercial properties that include heavy rail and tractor-trailer transportation; proposed industrial and commercial properties; the resiliency issues the department faces due to demand for service; and to increase NCFD resources regarding assembling an Effective Response Force, that the City develop a one- to three-year funding plan to increase staffing on Engine 31 to four per shift (three total personnel with estimated costs of \$263,000) as this is a single station response unit in a high demand fire management zone, and in the subsequent three to five-year period develop a funding plan to increase staffing on Engine 34 to four per shift (three total personnel with estimated costs of \$263,000 to \$300,000, depending on implementation year).

Ambulance Service

9. The current method of ambulance service provision of using an outside contractor should be retained, and the NCFD should not assume responsibility for providing ambulance services to the City.

10. The City should negotiate with AMR for contracting updates or consider undergoing an RFP process to seek enhanced service delivery models, either from the current, or prospective ambulance service providers.

Mobile Integrated Healthcare/Community Paramedicine

11. NCFD should engage in discussions with local and regional stakeholders to determine the potential benefits and impact of initiating a Mobile Integrated Healthcare / Community Paramedicine program.

Fire Emergency Communications

12. Based on the initial start-up and annualized costs CPSM estimates Fire Dispatch in-house totals, and that the annualized costs almost double the current San Diego Metro Fire Dispatch costs, CPSM strongly recommends National City continue with the current agreement with San Diego City for fire dispatch services. CPSM does recommend, however, that National City work with San Diego City to reduce the current fire dispatch agreement costs to offset the costs the NCFD incurs as the de facto fire department for Paradise Hills, which was demonstrated in the analysis.

Upon receiving the complete CPSM report and with the direction of the City Manager's Office, Chief Mora met with the Command Staff to identify the following as priorities.

Recruitment/Retention/Succession

- Commit to maintaining budgeted positions **(53)**
- Train Additional Fire Investigator (Assign Vehicle)-(ongoing)
- Hire an additional Fire Inspector-(in process)
- Provide Administrative support for Operations
- Enhance Fire Prevention and Administration staff to bolster Community Risk Reduction, Public Education and Administrative capacity.
- Promote Deputy Fire Chief- (successor to Fire Chief)

Plan for Fire and EMS Response

- Increase Staffing to 4 per Engine Company
- Retain Squad 33
- Add two Fire Investigators per fire response-(in process)
- Prepare multi-year RFP for Ambulance Service

Station 33 Build Out

- Continue developing concept plan for Facility to include Fire, Police and a Community Center
- Identify Funding for Station 33
- Staff with an Engine Company
- Maintain Squad 33 as a 4th response unit

Expand Community Education

- Hire Public Education/Senior Office Assistant/Recruitment Coordinator
- Expand PLNU's Nursing Program opportunities to provide public education-(ongoing)

Disaster Preparedness

- Provide Employee Shelter Worker Training-(ongoing)
- Provide Employee Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Training
- Inventory Buildings in National City (e.g. URM, Soft-Story, Cripple Wall)
- Develop a Seismic Awareness Campaign

Succession Planning continues to be a priority for the organization, especially in Community Risk Reduction as the incumbent Fire Marshal plans to retire within two (2) years and this is a highly specialized position in the department. The recent promotion at the Fire Chief level allows for a greater window of succession planning for this position. The creation of a Deputy Chief in the mid-term (2-3 years) will allow for succession in that position.

An additional challenge is in the staffing the NCFD is it currently understaffed with 5 vacancies resulting in repeated force hires which lead to injury and burn-out of staff. This is further compounded by a marked increase in calls for service. Increasing staffing on the Engines to 4 personnel will result in a redistribution of the workload while also increasing the critical tasking efficiency of our engine companies. Additionally, the build-out of station 33 with an Engine company in the long-term (5 years) will also address our current and projected increase in calls for service demands and improve our ability to respond within national best practice standards. Administrative support in the Operations division will increase the efficiency of the Chief and Company Officers and allow them to focus on operational priorities that are essential to the capabilities and service delivery of an all risk division faced with ongoing and emerging threats.

Developing, mentoring and reclassifying two of our employees will retain critical personnel that have long tenures in the organization and promote retention in these positions. The CPSM analysis provides a framework for the NCFD to plan for the future while meeting the current challenges that face the organization. Our dedicated and professional workforce values the information presented within the report and together we will utilize to guide us in improving the NCFD while meeting the current and expected challenges that we face as an organization.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT:

Not Applicable

RELATED CITY COUNCIL 2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Public Safety

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

This is not a project under CEQA and is therefore not subject to environmental review.CCR15378; PRC 21065.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION:

Agenda Report posted within 72 hours of meeting date and time in accordance with Brown Act.

ORDINANCE:

Not Applicable

EXHIBITS:

Exhibit A – CPSM Analysis – Final Report

Exhibit B – CPSM PowerPoint Presentation