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ADMINISTRATIVE AND MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Administrative and Municipal Affairs Committee (AMA) is responsible for investigating the policies and procedures relating to the administration and management of municipal agencies within Sacramento County. AMA reviews budgets, organizational charts, policy and procedure manuals, and any other pertinent information relevant to complaints concerning any municipal agency within Sacramento County.

Sacramento County Metropolitan Fire District Tour

Background

The Sacramento County Metropolitan Fire District (Metro Fire) covers an area of 417 square miles previously served by 16 separate fire agencies. The District serves rural, suburban, and urban settings. The firefighters are required to respond to wildland fires, structural fires, emergency rescues, swift water emergencies, hazardous material dispersions, and other emergencies. There are 42 fire stations in the District. The Grand Jury visited Station 61 as well as the District's Central Headquarters.

Firefighters are centrally dispatched, and there are detailed maps posted in all firehouses, along with specialized map books on all trucks and engines. Schedules for firefighters are 48 hours on duty and 96 hours off. This is a recent change in shift design.

National Fire Standard Association Code 1510 and Cal-OSHA require that two firefighters enter a building and two remain outside. This is referred to as "two in/two out". When sufficient crew is present, this allows firefighters to fight the fire from inside rather than being limited to working only from outside. Currently, Metro Fire staffs each truck with four firefighters, each engine with three, and each ambulance with two.

Metro Fire requires completion of a 15-week Recruit Academy. Training is continuous in the District, and training in high-rise emergencies and electrical fires is stressed. Each firehouse has an exercise area. Annual agility tests are required for all firefighters hired since 1990.

Additionally, Metro Fire operates the Emergency Medical Services for its area. There are more calls for medical assistance than for fires. A fire vehicle and an ambulance staffed by emergency medical technicians respond to calls for medical assistance.

Observations

- There seems to be high morale and a strong sense of duty. Firefighters are proud of the work they do and of their importance to the community. Metro Fire personnel, on average, earn 23% more than Sacramento Fire personnel. Metro Fire has 750 authorized positions. Many senior staff are close to retirement.

- Community governance, input, and leadership are provided by a locally elected nine-member Board of Directors. This Board meets twice a month.
- Fire services cost approximately \$170 million for the current fiscal year, up \$20 million from the previous year. Eighty-five percent of expenditures are for salaries and benefits.
- Metro Fire cannot communicate directly by radio with local police, the Sheriff's Department, and/or the Sacramento Fire Department. It must use a separate police channel in order to do so. There are plans to install a more technically sophisticated communication system.
- Metro Fire is embarking on a long range plan to replace older firehouses with larger new ones.

Sacramento Fire Department Tour

Background

The Grand Jury toured Sacramento Fire Department Station 2 and the administrative offices on Freeport Boulevard.

Fire departments are responsible not only for fire suppression and emergency medical services, but also for regulation of hazardous materials, rescues, fire prevention, code enforcement, public education, and disaster preparedness. Training in all these areas is ongoing and is partially funded by grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the California Office of Emergency Services, and other sources. The Sacramento Fire Department participates in three to six emergency preparedness drills per year with local, state, and federal agencies.

Since early 2007, firefighter shifts are 48 hours on duty and 96 hours off. This has resulted in reduced sick leave and overtime costs compared to the prior modified Kelly shift schedule (basically, 24 hours on, 48 hours off). Firefighters are required to pass an annual physical agility test. Exercise equipment is provided at each station house. The Sacramento Fire Department conducts its Fire Academy at McClellan Business Park, providing 18 weeks of training for firefighter recruits.

Of the 555 firefighters in the Department, 15% are female. The Department is 67% Caucasian, 11% African American, 18% Latino, 4% Asian, and less than 1% Native American.

The Sacramento Fire Department has four-person crews on their engines and trucks. This allows more efficiency for fighting house/structure fires. National Fire Standard Association Code 1510 and the State of California Occupational Safety and Health Agency (Cal-OSHA) require that two firefighters enter a building and two remain outside. This is referred to as "two in/two out" and

when sufficient crew is present allows firefighters to battle the fire from inside rather than being limited to working only from outside. This often results in less fire damage to the building.

Trucks and engines are equipped with GPS systems to guide them to calls. The Department has a very high call volume. For example, City Station 2 averages 12,000 calls a year. Eighty percent of calls are for medical reasons, twenty percent for fires.

There has been a decrease in structure fires over the years, but an increase in roadside and smoking-related fires. Fire Department personnel stressed the need for fire/life safety messages as part of public education. The Sacramento Fire Department has a staff of 24 Fire Prevention officers.

Observations

- Workers' Compensation costs have gone down in recent years due to the emphasis on health and fitness within the Department. The use of Standard Operation Guidelines ensures that firefighters know their roles and adhere to their training.
- The personnel interviewed both at the station and at the administrative offices exhibited a great dedication to their work, to the safety of the public, and to the well-being of their fellow officers. They are aware of salary and benefit differences, which can be 20% or more in nearby districts, but the firefighters expressed loyalty and satisfaction with their working conditions.
- Currently, the Sacramento Fire Department and the Sacramento Police Department use different radio frequencies and are unable to communicate directly. In addition, the Fire Department radios are not waterproof. There appears to be a need for a more cohesive communication system among all law enforcement agencies and fire districts within the county.