

## **Fire Department Response to James H. Robinson and Dave Zenker Inquiry Regarding Performance Reporting**

### **Introduction**

The Fire Department is committed to and in fact views government transparency as an opportunity to keep the Council and citizens informed about Department service levels. However, while the Fire Department is committed to providing comprehensive information regarding service levels, the Department has not possessed adequate data management systems nor staff resources to provide the information products and services it acknowledges are essential for performance reporting. This situation, given budget approval of several key analytical staff additions, is in the process of being corrected over the next six to seven months with the installation of a new comprehensive fire/EMS records management system.

The following narrative provides a response to each of the questions forwarded via email to the Department:

**“What performance measures do they compile on an ongoing basis? How often do they report these measures to the council/public, and in what format?”**

Some analysis and reporting is accomplished by obtaining response time, incident type and apparatus activity data from the Fire Communications computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system. However, the absence of dedicated analytical staff resources has significantly limited the Department’s ability to provide regular reports. Annual reporting of Department key performance indicators can be found in the Operating Budget each year. Following the formation of the Public Safety, Finance and Strategic Support Committee, the Department was directed to provide quarterly reports on several key performance measures. However, the quantity and reliability of these measures is limited by the absence of analytical staff needed to ensure data integrity and developed reports.

The Department also uses a geographic information system-based (GIS) deployment planning software capable of predicting performance impacts with changes in the location, staffing and type of apparatus. This software is being used to support the update of the 2000 Strategic Plan and other resource deployment decisions.

**“The last statistics available to the public on the City’s website were posted for the 2004 fiscal year. All it provides is the number of calls by station.”**

The Department does not have dedicated web support. However, following the initiation of the implementation of the RMS, the Department was able to obtain approval for an over-strength Senior Analyst position to provide support. In the course of reviewing data collection systems, the analyst has created a series of response time performance reports that will be posted shortly to update out-dated web information. However, ongoing support following completion of the RMS implementation will need to be approved to continue maintenance of the web site.

**“Police and Fire provide quarterly performance reports to the Public Safety, Finance and Strategic Support Committee but, strangely, the Fire Department does not provide any**

**statistics, performance information, or response times as part of their report. The police department provides statistics, response time information and trends.”**

As stated in the prior response, the Department provides quarterly and annual updates on selected key performance indicators. However, the number of performance indicators is considerably less than will be available following the installation of the new RMS and addition of analytical staff resources. The significance of this problem, in light of the reference to the Police Department, perhaps can be best illustrated through a comparison of Police Department analytical resources dedicated to operational and incident analysis with those possessed by the Fire Department.

The Police Department has approximately 34 staff resources in its Research & Development, Intelligence and Crime Analysis units compared with two positions (one is the over-strength discussed earlier) assigned to not only perform operational and incident analysis, but who are also responsible for completing a host of studies and reports (update of 2000 Strategic Plan, Signal Preemption Master Plan, resource needs for planned development [i.e., Evergreen, North Jose, Coyote Valley, etc.], budget-related performance measures).

In short, additional analytical resources are needed to provide similar statistics as those provided by PD on a quarterly basis. The Department is moving forward with analytical and IT staff requests through the 08-09 budget development process which, if approved, will significantly improve its ability to provide comprehensive performance reports quarterly, if not more frequently.

**“The Fire Department has a council-adopted response time goal of 8-minutes, 80% of the time (city-wide) that they have been failing to meet for more than a year. They are currently compliant to only about 77%.”**

The Department has and is implementing policy changes to improve response time performance by ensuring key intervals that are controllable by the Department such as “call processing time” and “turn-out time” are as short as possible. However, the most significant performance-degrading factors are engine availability and travel time. Engine availability is degraded by growing service demand, increased training requirements and support service needs (e.g., apparatus service, supply replenishment, etc.) that require the engine company to leave its service district. Engine travel time is impacted by surface street congestion, traffic calming measures, and security measures that impeded access.

In short, the solution to improving response time performance is improving engine coverage through the relocation of existing resources and additional engine companies. And while the Department has added two new companies this year and will add a third next year, they are correcting performance issues that were identified in the 2000 Strategic Plan. In the final analysis, resource additions and station relocations have not kept pace with new development and increased demand