



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: December 11, 2007

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: GIVING FIREFIGHTERS A LIFT (DISTRICTS: ALL)

SUMMARY:

Overview:

In late October of 2007, San Diego County experienced its second devastating firestorm in four years. This latest round of fires charred more than 360,000 acres, destroying approximately 1,700 homes and killing 10 people. Now that the smoke has cleared, as a region we must again explore ways to enhance our ability to prevent, prepare for, and respond to these fires so that we can diminish their impacts. The proposal below involves the acquisition of a fleet of fire trucks that would be used primarily for fighting major fires.

Recommendation(s):

CHAIRMAN RON ROBERTS AND SUPERVISOR BILL HORN:

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to explore various funding options that might be available for the acquisition of up to 50 fire trucks and return to the Board within 90 days.
2. Direct County Counsel to explore how a regional entity, perhaps a Joint Powers Authority, could be legally structured to manage these trucks, as well as any other legal issues that may need to be addressed, and return to the Board within 90 days.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact related to this action.

Business Impact Statement:

N/A

Advisory Board Statement:

N/A

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BACKGROUND:

As we all know, wildfires can ignite at any time and in any location. Over the past few years, two catastrophic firestorms have swept across our region, taking dozens of lives, destroying thousands of homes and charring several hundred thousand acres.

In the years that have passed since the 2003 fires, the County of San Diego has spent approximately \$117 million on fire protection and prevention. Utilizing these funds, the County has purchased two firefighting helicopters, cleared more than 400,000 dead, dying and diseased trees, enhanced our regional communications system, implemented a Reverse 911 system, and most recently, put in place a much more technologically sophisticated mass notification system, called Alert San Diego.

In the wake of this most recent wildfire, we as a region must again explore ways to enhance our ability to prevent, prepare for and respond to these wildfires so that we can diminish their impacts.

In the area of response, an idea has been brought to our attention that certainly merits consideration. According to several fire chiefs, hundreds of off-duty firefighters from across the region could have been called into service during these most recent fires had additional fire trucks been available.

To bring the number of fire trucks into closer alignment with the number of available firefighters, this proposal entails the acquisition of additional fire trucks, perhaps as many as 50. The trucks would be housed at existing fire stations and other facilities in both incorporated cities and the unincorporated areas. The fleet would be placed under the command of a regional entity – perhaps the Unified Disaster Council or a newly created Joint Powers Authority – and would be deployed in the event of a large fire, whether it originates in the backcountry or a city.

Acquisition of these trucks could be funded through a variety of sources, including but not limited to, Homeland Security funds, proceeds from a parcel or property tax measure, the County, or other public and private sources. Maintenance for these trucks would become the responsibility of the city or the fire district that agrees to house them. Because these trucks would not be used on a day-to-day basis, but only for large fires, maintenance costs would be minimal.

The advantages are clear: additional firefighting power could be deployed by utilizing existing firefighters without hiring additional ones; and the fleet would be funded in large measure with a one-time expenditure and minimal on-going expenses.

A similar, but much smaller program currently exists in San Diego County. Seven fire trucks, purchased by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, are stationed at various fire stations throughout the county.

As our region begins the discussion of how to bolster our firefighting capabilities, this idea should be considered in conjunction with other concepts, including, but not limited to, the consolidation of fire districts and the acquisition of additional firefighting helicopters. Our

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region should also explore the feasibility of acquiring state-of-the-art equipment that would allow for fires to be detected in a much quicker fashion and monitored much more closely from high in the sky to aid incident commanders in the positioning of resources.

By way of this board letter, we are asking the Chief Administrative Officer to explore the various funding options that are available for the acquisition of additional fire trucks. We are also asking County Counsel to research and advise our board as to how a regional entity, perhaps a Joint Powers Authority, might be legally structured to manage this fleet of fire trucks should they be acquired, as well as any other legal issues that may need to be addressed.

This information will be vital as we engage elected and public safety officials on what measures need to be taken to minimize the destruction caused by future wildfires in our region.

We urge your support.

Respectfully submitted,

Ron Roberts
Chairman, 4th District

Bill Horn
Supervisor, 5th District

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AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

CONCURRENCE(S)

COUNTY COUNSEL REVIEW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Written Disclosure per County Charter Section 1000.1 Required	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
GROUP/AGENCY FINANCE DIRECTOR	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Requires Four Votes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
GROUP/AGENCY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
COUNTY TECHNOLOGY OFFICE	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A

Other Concurrence(s): N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: **Ron Roberts**
Chairman, Fourth District

Bill Horn
Supervisor, Fifth District

CONTACT PERSON(S):

Jason Farran

Name
619-531-5544

Phone

Fax
A-500

Mail Station
Jason.Farran@sdcounty.ca.gov

E-mail

Christopher Champine

Name
619-531-5555

Phone

Fax
A-500

Mail Station
Christopher.Champine@sdcounty.ca.gov

E-mail

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AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET
(continued)

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:

[Click **here** and type action(s), or type N/A if not applicable]

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:

[Click **here** and type applicable policies, or type N/A if not applicable]

BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:

[Click **here** and type required statement(s), or type N/A if not applicable]

CONTRACT NUMBER(S):

[Click **here** and type numbers, or type N/A if not applicable]

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FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

DEPARTMENT: [Click here and type]

PROGRAM: [Click here and type]

PROPOSAL: [Click here and type]

FUTURE YEARS ESTIMATED
BUDGET OF PROPOSAL
IF ADOPTED

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Budgeted Amount For Proposal	Proposed Change in Budgeted Amount	Proposed Revised Current Year Budget (a+b)	1st Subsequent Year	2nd Subsequent Year

Direct Cost

Revenue/Other Offset

**NET GENERAL
FUND COST**

Staff Years

Sources of Revenue/Other Offset for Proposed Change and Subsequent Years:

Space-Related Impacts: Will this proposal result in any additional space requirements? Yes N/A

Support/Other Departmental Impacts: Yes N/A

Remarks: Yes N/A