

Stanislaus County Fire Authority
Business Plan
2011-2012

The Stanislaus County Fire Authority is a joint powers agreement established in November 2005 by the fire agencies in Stanislaus County to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on the expenditure of the Less Than County Wide fire tax, and to establish a cooperative relationship among the parties to the agreement for the provision of these contracted services.

OVERVIEW:

Issues of mutual concern to the fire agencies of Stanislaus County were identified and through a work-group process, the Fire Authority came together for the following purposes:

- Facilitate cooperation among the Fire Agencies and the County related to the allocation and use of the Less Than County Wide Fire Tax.
- Provide a forum for discussion and study of countywide problems of mutual interest.
- Identify, inventory, and comprehensively plan for solutions to countywide problems requiring multi-jurisdictional cooperation.
- Facilitate cooperation among the Fire Agencies and the County for specific purposes, interrelated actions, and for the adoption of common policies with respect to issues and problems which are common to the parties.
- Develop countywide plans and policies for growth and development.

The following agencies are signatory to the joint powers agreement:

Burbank Paradise Fire District	City of Ceres
Denair Fire Protection District	Hughson Fire District
Keyes Fire District	City of Modesto
Mountain View Fire Protection District	City of Newman
City of Oakdale	Oakdale Fire Protection District
City of Patterson	Salida Fire District
Stanislaus Consolidated Fire District	Stanislaus County
City of Turlock	Turlock Rural Fire District
Westport Fire District	Woodland Avenue Fire District
West Stanislaus Fire District	Cal Fire – Santa Clara Unit

The Stanislaus County Fire Authority Board is comprised of a representative from each fire agency listed above. Each individual agency adopted a resolution to approve the Joint Powers Agreement in order to participate. Each representative is entitled to one vote. As outlined in the Joint Powers Agreement, the Stanislaus County Fire Warden’s Office is the administering agency. The Fire Authority may designate any representative of a member agency to serve as Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary.

A quorum of at least one half of the member agencies is required for the Fire Authority to take action. A two-thirds majority of those members present are required to approve all fiscal matters, including the use of the Less Than County-Wide Fire Tax, but not including expenditures of less than \$500.

FIRE AUTHORITY GOALS:

The following goals were adopted and reaffirmed by the Fire Authority membership:

- Ensure an open environment that provides respectful and professional responsiveness to our community and agency partners.
- Adopt integrated, collaborative, and multi-disciplinary planning to ensure that our community and agency partners are served in an equitable, efficient and effective manner.
- Provide the highest quality of fire, life safety and all risk support services through collaborative community and agency partnerships in the areas of fire prevention, fire investigation, training, finance/administration, fire communications, and EMS within available funding.
- Improve the stability and sustainability of revenue sources to support and enhance the fire, life safety and all risk services on a countywide basis.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

The strategy of the Stanislaus County Fire Authority is to represent the interests of all member agencies by focusing on organizational goals of both the Fire Authority and individual agencies. The following strategies were reaffirmed by the membership:

- Expand and foster mutually beneficial relationships with internal and external fire agencies
- Enhance relationships between fire districts, cities, County agencies, and identified stakeholders
- Achieve a unified voice and strengthen the fire service to meet future challenges
- Be the spokesperson/organization for fire and emergency services countywide
- Provide strategic direction, leadership, and influence to coordinate professional standards
- Encourage member agencies to develop and adopt defined service levels based upon the standards of cover process
- Initiate and support efforts that assist in funding the fire service
- Improve financial stability of the existing programs and services
- Explore financial opportunities
- Develop / maintain analysis and reporting systems that allow effective monitoring of financial performance

ACTION PLAN:

The action plans are defined in an effort to meet the adopted strategies stated above. The Fire Authority recommended contracts for priority services, which are available to all agencies.

The following pages outline the provider's plans, based on the service priorities and expected funding, for the 2011/2012 fiscal year.

Funding for the Fire Authority's programs for the fiscal year 2011-2012 is dependent upon the projected Less Than County Wide Fire Tax, and projected fire prevention fees. With current economic conditions and the uncertainty of property tax revenues, it has been necessary for the Fire Authority to re-evaluate service levels.

On an annual basis, the Fire Authority identifies service priorities, performance expectations and funding allocations for those services identified as critical to the fire agencies in Stanislaus County. Then, based on available funding, the group targets achievable service levels. During the process, there are services that have been identified as desirable, but funding constraints do not allow for those services.

It is the intent and purpose of the Fire Authority to achieve the most efficient and effective use of the Less Than County Wide Tax revenues, and to seek partnerships to advance our ability to provide fire and emergency services in Stanislaus County.

It has been the goal of the Fire Authority to provide services commensurate with funding levels. There has been a decrease in property tax revenues for each of the last three years, and this trend is expected to extend into at least two more fiscal years. Due to the reduction in revenues, the budget presented in this business plan has significant changes. It has been suggested and proposed that the Training Coordinator Position be eliminated in order to meet the diminished funding level. Other reductions are based on alternative options agreed to by the service providers to ensure a sustainable program.

Currently the services outlined in this plan are provided by the City of Modesto, the Stanislaus County Fire Warden's Office and the Salida Fire Protection District. These three agencies have joined together to form the Modesto Regional Fire Authority, a Joint Powers Agreement for the provision of fire and emergency services. Through the agreement, the County has determined that the funding from the Less Than Countywide Fire Tax shall be directed to this newly formed agency to provide those services identified and prioritized as important by the fire service representatives.

During the 2011-2012 fiscal year, the Fire Authority will hold quarterly meetings for updates on services provided and financial information. Each individual service provider will hold monthly meetings to address issues specific to their service with agency representatives impacted.

2011-2012

FINANCE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

Funding

\$165,998

In the 2011-2012, Finance/Administrative Support Services will continue to administer and manage the Less Than Countywide Fire Tax budget which includes County costs as well as service provider reimbursement. This position coordinates the meetings, agendas, required filings; distributes reports provided by the service providers to all of the participating agencies; addresses issues affecting the fire districts; and seeks opportunities to provide for regional solutions to common challenges. Support for the Fire and Rescue Operational Area Coordinator is provided through this program which allows assistance to individual agencies as well as the mutual aid system as a whole.

The programs priorities are to:

- Administer the budget within the County guidelines and processes and report to the Fire Authority
- Provide administrative support to the Fire Authority with agendas, board reports, minutes, conflict of interest statements, and information updates on Fire Warden website
- Administer MDC and Fire RMS programs including billing of participating agencies and processing of all related maintenance contracts and invoices
- Assist fire agencies with financial information, human resources, and administrative issues as requested
- Continue to seek opportunities to fund regional equipment
- Ensure that Fire Authority members are updated through annual report, business plan, and budget documents
- Communicate with county CEO staff and Board of Supervisors regarding the goals, priorities, needs and expectations of the Fire Authority
- Provide support to the Fire and Rescue Operational Area Coordinator
- Administer special projects to support the fire service in Stanislaus County
- Coordinate quarterly meetings to address mutual concerns and issues

2011-2012

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES COORDINATOR

Funding

\$40,000

On May 6, 2010 the Fire Authority voted to contract with the City of Modesto for the services of its Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Coordinator. This position has been used widely throughout the fire service in Stanislaus County. In order to document the terms of the arrangement, and share the costs accordingly, the City requested joint funding for the position through the Fire Authority. The City agreed to cover greater than 50% of the cost of the position, with the County, through the Fire Authority, contracting to cover the rest of the cost. Coordination of EMS was identified early on by the Fire Authority as a desired service. The following performance expectations were developed:

- Recommend and assist with the development of goals and objectives of the fire service with respect to EMS
- Develop and implement EMS programs by compiling and evaluating operations and activities, recommend improvements and modifications, prepare reports on activities
- Review and update the exposure control program for the fire agencies in the county including drafting policies and procedures, reviewing OSHA mandates, provide training, and reviewing exposure follow up reports
- Represent fire agencies on the Dispatch Quality Assurance Committee to develop guidelines for lift assists, paramedics request for fire, improved communications and provide monthly reports to Fire Authority
- Provide oversight of the Infection Control Program including the development of policies and procedures in compliance with federal and OSHA standards for fire agencies
- Facilitate monthly meetings for all county fire agencies to discuss issues and concerns related to EMS

2011-2012

FIRE COMMUNICATIONS

Funding

\$141,124

The Fire Communications Coordinator will continue to assist the fire agencies throughout Stanislaus County in 2011-2012 by supporting and enhancing the many systems that provide critical communications capabilities. The action plan assumes that the funding level will continue at the same level as in the 2010-2011 fiscal year. The coordinator will continue to focus on programs that were identified as priorities through the performance expectations. The original plan document identified additional staff to achieve the goals and objectives of this program; however, that is not possible with current funding. During the time this program has been functioning, it has become very apparent that there are demands well beyond what one person can provide. During the 2011-2012 year, the following services will be provided:

- Represent fire service in CAD development
- Represent county fire agencies on SR911 Operational Technical Advisory Committee (OTAC)
- Represent the fire service in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) map development for Stanislaus County.
- Represent Stanislaus County fire agencies in statewide communications groups (CALSIIEC, Bay Area Radio Users Group- BAYFROG, and Statewide COMT and Capital Bay Planning Area)
- Continue to work towards establishing radio interoperability within Stanislaus County
- Completed implementation of frequency narrow-banding of all fire frequencies within Stanislaus County
- Assist fire agencies with grant writing for their communications needs
- Provide recommendations for standardized radio equipment
- Recommend IT systems countywide
- Serve on project team to develop and implement county-wide fire records management system
- Coordinate dispatch center to dispatch center training and communications
- Lead the Communications Advisory Committee in monthly meetings

2011-2012

FIRE INVESTIGATION SERVICES

Funding

\$317,390

The 2011-2012 Fire Investigation program will see a reduced level of funding which will necessitate a restructuring of the Fire Investigation Unit. This restructuring will provide for investigation services to continue throughout the County while meeting the constraints of the current fiscal environment.

- Determine origin and cause of fires in compliance with NFPA 921 guidelines.
- Provide documentation and assistance to law enforcement agencies for follow up of criminal fire investigations.
- Provide documentation and assistance to District Attorney's office regarding criminal fire investigations.
- Provide documentation and assistance to private fire investigators and insurance industry representatives regarding civil fire investigations.
- Establish an effective training program for chief and company officers throughout the County to conduct preliminary fire investigations and initial origin and cause determinations following NFPA 921 guidelines.
- Establish effective lines of communications with partner agencies to promote information sharing.
- Provide training for fire investigation staff to increase their skills and proficiency in the field of fire investigation.
- Provide a quarterly report to the Fire Authority that outlines the number of fires investigated, case status, dollar loss, and number of arrests by jurisdiction.
- Actively participate in the Stanislaus County Arson Task Force.
- Facilitate monthly meetings for all county fire agencies to discuss issues and concerns related to fire investigations

2011-2012

FIRE PREVENTION SERVICES

Funding

\$543,133

The 2011-2012 Fire Prevention action plan assumes that the funding level for the program will experience a decrease from previous years. This funding, will allow the following objectives to be addressed:

- Continue cooperation and communications between the Fire Marshal and Fire Districts regarding impacts of new development projects
- Continue development of a Service Level Agreement
- Assist districts with fire prevention needs assessment to determine appropriate service level option from Service Level Agreement.
- Maintain state mandated inspection program
- Increased target hazard and business inspection programs
- Continuously evaluate local fire and life safety codes and ordinances as they apply to current and proposed projects
- Active involvement in the code hearing process to ensure that Stanislaus County fire agencies may have input in the next code adoption cycle
- Continue with cooperative vegetation/ force clean program with the districts
- Continue implementation of a fire records management system for enhanced reporting processes and fee tracking
- Continue training program to increase knowledge and proficiency of Fire Prevention Specialists
- Continue to advocate a new business license process for the unincorporated area of the County that includes a fire prevention component
- Enhance partnerships with business community, groups and county departments
- Analyze fire prevention fees for cost recovery data
- Develop a countywide static rural water supply recommendation except for SRA
- Facilitate monthly meetings for all county fire agencies to discuss issues and concerns related to fire prevention

Stanislaus County Fire Authority
Budget Worksheet Narrative
June 2011

The following budget projection worksheet projects revenues and expenses through 2011-2012.

At the time the Fire Authority was formed, the County Fire Service Fund, through property taxes, had experienced significant growth on an annual basis for several years. The property tax revenue projections to fund the five year contracts for services were conservative; however, the unprecedented decline in property values and the downturn in the economy necessitated a revision in projections. The following assumption was used in developing the 2011-2012 proposed budget:

- Projected property taxes were reduced by 4.5%

The following measures have been put in place to reduce costs:

- Fire Prevention and Fire Investigation services sustained reductions in funding in order to achieve a balanced budget
- The Admin./Finance support service was reduced through the elimination of a support position
- The Training Coordinator position was eliminated

The net affect of the changes listed above is a balanced budget. The Fire Authority members have stated repeatedly that the services provided must be commensurate with the revenues received. That was the objective in the development of the 2011-2012 Business Plan.

Over the next year, the Fire Authority will evaluate the services currently being provided, and revisit the priorities identified by the membership for recommendations for adjustments.

2011-2012 Budget Projections
Less Than County-Wide

	2010-2011 Projected	2011- 2012 reduction	Revenue/Service Level reduction	2011-2012 Recommended
<u>Projected Revenues</u>				
Less Than County-wide	\$ 1,091,775	4.5%	\$ 49,130	\$ 1,042,645
Fire Prevention Fees	\$ 150,000			\$ 150,000
Misc Reimbursements	<u>\$ 15,000</u>			<u>\$ 15,000</u>
Total	\$ 1,256,775			\$ 1,207,645
<u>Projected Expenses</u>				
Administration and Finance	\$ 239,271		\$ 73,273	\$ 165,998
Fire Prevention	\$ 573,133		\$ 30,000	\$ 543,133
Communications	\$ 141,124		\$ -	\$ 141,124
Investigations	\$ 507,861		\$ 190,471	\$ 317,390
Training	\$ 168,455		\$ 168,455	\$ -
EMS	<u>\$ 40,000</u>		<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 40,000</u>
	\$ 1,669,844			\$ 1,207,645
Difference	\$ (413,069)			\$ 0

Budget Objective - Provide services commensurate with funding level

Decrease in property taxes based on average Assessors projections of 3-6%

Training Coordinator position is eliminated

Fire Prevention contract labor, extra help and services and supplies reduced

Fire Investigation Unit is restructured

Finance Admin. Support position is eliminated