



Stanislaus County Fire Authority

Business Plan 2013-2014

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
Denair Fire Protection District
Keyes Fire District
Mountain View Fire Protection District
City of Oakdale
City of Patterson
Stanislaus Consolidated Fire District
City of Turlock
Westport Fire District
West Stanislaus Fire District

City of Ceres
Hughson Fire District
City of Modesto
City of Newman
Oakdale Fire Protection District
Salida Fire District
Stanislaus County
Turlock Rural Fire District
Woodland Avenue 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. With the formation of the Modesto Regional Fire Authority, A Joint Powers Agreement, which includes the Stanislaus County Fire Warden's Office, it has become the administering agency on behalf of the County. 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. With the reduction in funding that has occurred over the last four fiscal years, this goal has been revised to eliminate those services that were not able to be funded which includes Training and EMS.
- 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 2013/2014 fiscal year.

Funding for the Fire Authority’s programs for the fiscal year 2013/2014 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 four years, and this trend is expected to extend or level out in the next fiscal year. Adjustments are based on available funding and agreed to by the service providers to ensure a sustainable program.

The services outlined in this plan are provided by 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 2013-2014 fiscal year, the Stanislaus County Fire Authority will continue to hold quarterly meetings for updates on services provided and financial information. Regular sub-committee meetings to address issues specific to each service are held on a regular basis or as requested

2013-2014

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

Funding

\$169,554

In 2013-2014, 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

2013-2014

FIRE TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

Funding

\$149,133

The Fire Technology & Communications Services will continue to assist fire agencies throughout Stanislaus County in 2013-2014 by supporting and enhancing the many systems that provide critical communications capabilities. The services will continue to focus on programs that were identified as priorities throughout the prior fiscal years. The original plan document identified additional staff to achieve the goals and objectives of this program. To date, hiring additional full time staff has not been possible due to the need to fund other services with limited revenues. During the time this program has been functioning, it has become very apparent that there are demands well beyond what staff can provide. As a result of increased costs to support infrastructure, radio, mobile data computer, CAD, and specific agency requests, the funding has been increased slightly for the fiscal year. During the 2013-2014 year, the following services will continue to be provided:

- Represent county fire agencies on SR911 Operational Technical Advisory Committee (OTAC)
- Lead the Communications Advisory Committee
- SR911 fire service representative for CAD
- Represent the fire service in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) map development for Stanislaus County.
- Represent Stanislaus County fire agencies in statewide communications groups (CALSIEC, Bay Area Radio Users Group- BAYFROG, and Statewide COMT and Capital Bay Planning Area)
- Represent the fire service as the lead of the regional mobile data computer project
- 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
- Annually provide updated radio frequency loads for specific mobiles and portables
- Monitor technology trends and recommend system improvements
- Provide recommendations for standardized radio equipment
- Recommend IT systems countywide
- Provide administration and technical support for the regional records management system (RMS)
- Serve on project team to develop and implement county-wide fire records management system
- Coordinate dispatch center to dispatch center training and communications
- Manage and support NetMotion and RMS servers for regional systems

2013-2014

FIRE INVESTIGATION SERVICES

Funding

\$331,058

As a result of previous reductions the Fire Investigation Unit has been restructured over the last two years. This restructuring provided for investigation services to continue throughout the County while meeting the constraints of the current fiscal environment. In 2013-2014 the funding increased towards the program, only to cover the costs and not to change the level of services.

- 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 regular meetings for all county fire agencies to discuss issues and concerns related to fire investigations

2013-2014

FIRE PREVENTION SERVICES

Funding

\$535420

The 2013-2014 Fire Prevention Services action plan assumes that the funding level for the program will experience little increase from the previous years. This funding, will cover increased costs and allow the following objectives to be addressed:

- Continue cooperation and communications between the Fire Marshal and Fire Districts regarding impacts of new development projects
- 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 the use of the fire records management system for enhanced reporting processes and fee tracking
- Continue training program to increase knowledge and proficiency of Fire Prevention Specialists
- 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 regular meetings for all county fire agencies to discuss issues and concerns related to fire prevention

Stanislaus County Fire Authority
Budget Narrative
June 2013

The following budget projection worksheet projects revenues and expenses for 2013-2014

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 last four years have seen a significant overall reduction to property taxes and the services that are provided through this funding. The following assumptions were used in developing the 2012-2013 proposed budget:

- 2012-2013 property tax collections were only slightly lower than projected, therefore, 2013-2014 projections have been maintained at the same level anticipating that property taxes will begin to recover...
- Fire Prevention fees showed an increase during the 2012-2013 fiscal year. We are hopeful that there will be a continued upswing in activity. The projections are consistent with current activity.

The following measures have been put in place to achieve a balanced budget:

- Increase Fire Technology & Communication funding by \$3,009
- Increase in Fire Prevention funding by \$14,000
- Increase in Fire Investigation funding by \$13,669
- Decrease in Finance and Admin. support and County Costs of \$8,817

The net effect of the changes listed above is a balanced budget. In past years the Fire Authority members have stated that the services provided must be commensurate with the revenues received. The 2013-2014 Budget has achieved that objective.

Over the next year the priorities identified by the membership and services being provided will continue to be evaluated.

2013-2014 Budget Projections
Less Than County-Wide

	2012-2013 Budget	Revenue & Service Level +/-	2013-2014 Budget
<u>Projected Revenues</u>			
Less Than County-wide	\$ 1,035,105	\$ 1,945	\$ 1,037,050
Fire Prevention Fees	\$ 113,000	\$ 19,715	\$ 132,715
Misc. Reimbursements	\$ 15,000	\$ -15,000	\$ -0-
Intergovernmental	<u>\$ - 0-</u>	<u>\$ 15,400</u>	<u>\$ 15,400</u>
Total	\$ 1,163,105	\$ 22,060	\$ 1,185,165
<u>Projected Expenses</u>			
Finance & Admin Support, Equipment Maintenance And County Charges	\$ 178,171	\$ -8,617	\$ 169,554
Fire Prevention	\$ 521,420	\$ 14,000	\$ 535,420
Technology & Communications	\$ 146,124	\$ 3,009	\$ 149,133
Fire Investigations	<u>\$ 317,390</u>	<u>\$ 13,668</u>	<u>\$ 331,058</u>
Total	\$ 1,163,105	\$ 22,060	\$ 1,185,165