

# What is “County Fire”?

## A review of fire protection in County Service Area 48

### *Summary*

A Grand Jury investigation into fire protection services in Santa Cruz County revealed the following key issues:

- The term “County Fire,” commonly used to describe fire protection services provided by the County, is misleading. The boundaries of County Fire do not include all rural, unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County.
- Although there is only one County Fire contract that covers two separate county service areas, the areas vary significantly in terms of cost, coverage and government responsibility. Under a \$2 million agreement with Cal Fire, the State is responsible for County Service Area (CSA) 48, which covers most, but not all, of the rural areas in the county, or 286 square miles. The County is responsible for a small, 0.2 square mile area known as Pajaro Dunes (CSA 4), which Cal Fire services under an \$840,000 agreement with the County. (See Map, Appendix A.)
- Volunteer fire companies are key to the fire protection of rural areas of Santa Cruz County.
- Because they include Cal Fire station responses only, the call reports provided by Cal Fire to the Board of Supervisors are incomplete.
- To offset rising costs of County Fire, the Board of Supervisors chose to reduce costs by cutting staffing. To evaluate the effects of staffing reductions properly, the board needs to know how to interpret call reports provided by Cal Fire.
- The majority of emergency calls are not fire-related, but fire engines are always dispatched.
- Even though County Fire is often the first responder to medical emergencies, it is not part of Emergency Medical Services Integration Authority (EMSIA), the entity established to integrate fire agency medical services into a countywide system.

While commending the vital service that Cal Fire and volunteer fire companies provide to Santa Cruz County Fire, the Grand Jury believes there is room for improvement in how fire protection services are structured, overseen and reported.

### *Definitions*

**Amador Plan:** An agreement under which Santa Cruz County government pays Cal Fire for fire and rescue services provided during winter/non-fire season

**CAIRS:** California All Incident Reporting System is a statewide emergency incident data program that collects, compiles, analyzes and distributes statistical information reported by the California Fire Service.

**Cal Fire:** California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection is dedicated to the fire protection and stewardship of local wild lands. The Department also provides emergency

services. As of 2007, Cal Fire is the new name for the State Fire Department, formerly known as CDF.

**CSA:** County Service Areas can be formed to provide residents in rural areas with services that are not generally provided by existing business or government agencies.<sup>1</sup> The Board of Supervisors serves as the governing body for County Service Areas.<sup>2</sup>

**ECC:** Cal Fire Emergency Command Center is responsible for dispatching County Fire resources.

**FDAC:** Fire Department Advisory Commission's primary duties are to advise the County Fire Chief and the Board of Supervisors.

**LAFCO:** The Local Agency Formation Commission was created by state law in 1963 to regulate the boundaries of cities and special districts.<sup>3</sup>

**Mutual/Automatic Aid:** Contractual assistance between agencies. Mutual aid is assistance that is dispatched, upon request, by a responding agency. Automatic aid is assistance that is dispatched automatically.

**Proposition 172:** Passed in 1993, this state proposition funds local public safety services. The County Board of Supervisors has the discretion to change the allocation of these funds.

**Schedule A:** An agreement under which local government pays Cal Fire for year-round fire protection/emergency services.

## ***Background***

The State of California is responsible for fire protection in the rural unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County. Cal Fire is required to provide this service only during state-declared fire season, which is normally five months a year. The County is not required to provide fire protection in unincorporated areas, but through long-running cooperative agreements, the County has paid Cal Fire to provide such service.

County Fire depends on the participation of organized volunteer fire companies. "The volunteer companies allow for a level of staffing and distribution of fire stations and equipment that could not otherwise be accomplished."<sup>4</sup> Volunteers are professionally trained firefighters but are non-salaried. The County funds a Cal Fire officer year-round to manage the training of volunteers. Volunteer companies rely on community donations to support the purchase or upgrade of equipment and to assist in the upkeep of fire stations otherwise not supported by county funds. There are five volunteer companies located in CSA 48. All but one of these volunteer companies operates out of its own fire station. The company that does not is co-located at a Cal Fire facility.

The Santa Cruz LAFCO released a recent study analyzing the impact of reorganizing fire service providers in the South County. The study determined that if the southern portion of CSA 48 were removed through reorganization, sufficient revenues may not be

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Public Works, County of Santa Cruz, <http://www.dpw.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/csa.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors home page, <http://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/bds/ctysupvs.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission, <http://www.santacruzlafco.org/pages/whatislafco.html>

<sup>4</sup> Santa Cruz County Fire Department Master Plan July 1, 2002 Through June 30, 2006. May 2002. County Fire Department.

available for the rest of CSA 48 to maintain County Fire. LAFCO is also reviewing a proposed detachment of the community of Bonny Doon from CSA 48.

## ***Findings***

1. “County Fire” is a generic term used to describe fire protection services provided in the rural parts of the county but has two different meanings depending upon the agency using it:
  - Includes both CSA 48 and CSA 4<sup>5,6</sup>
  - Includes only CSA 48<sup>7,8,9</sup>

**Response from the County: AGREES.**

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: AGREES.**

2. The County Fire contract provides fire and rescue services for two separate county service areas: CSA 48 (286 sq. mi.) and CSA 4 (Pajaro Dunes, 0.2 sq. mi.). Pajaro Dunes is a beachfront development located on the southern tip of the county.
3. All of CSA 48 is a State Responsibility Area except for the farmlands on the county’s North Coast and the farmlands that surround Pajaro Dunes. Cal Fire is, therefore, responsible for preventing and suppressing fires in this CSA.

**Response from the County: PARTIALLY AGREES.**

*The geographical description of State Responsibility Area (SRA) is accurate except that, in general, the beach and agricultural areas of the north county are not SRA. CAL FIRE’s responsibility in SRA is for “fires” and pursuant to Public Resources Code 4114(b), the Department may provide rescue, first aid, and other emergency services only when available and when no additional costs to the State are associated.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: PARTIALLY DISAGREES.**

*The geographical description of State Responsibility Area (SRA) is accurate except that, in general, the beach and agricultural areas of the north county are not SRA. CAL FIRE’s responsibility in SRA is for “fires” and pursuant to PRC 4114(b), the Department may provide rescue, first aid, and other emergency services only when available and when no additional costs to the State are associated.*

4. County Fire does not include all the state responsibility areas in Santa Cruz County. Notably excluded is the area within the Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District.

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<sup>5</sup> Coastal Incident Response Plan, August 2005 <http://sccounty01.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/oes/Coastal%20Incident%20Response%20Plan%202005v1.5.pdf> (page 16 of 53).

<sup>6</sup> County Fire Contract for FY 2007-2008 as signed by the Director of General Services, [http://sccounty01.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/bds/Govstream/BDSvData/non\\_legacy/Minutes/2008/20080212/PDF/069.pdf](http://sccounty01.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/bds/Govstream/BDSvData/non_legacy/Minutes/2008/20080212/PDF/069.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> County Service Area (CSA) 48 contains all areas served by the County Fire Department, except the Pajaro Dunes development, which constitutes County Service Area 4” – page 3. Santa Cruz County Volunteer Firefighter Handbook [Revised: November 2003].

<sup>8</sup> LAFCO – Countywide Service Review 2005: CSA 48 is County Fire and CSA 4 is Pajaro Dunes.

<sup>9</sup> 2007-2008 Secured Property Tax Bill special assessments for parcels in CSA 48 labeled County Fire and CSA 4 labeled Pajaro Dunes.

**Response from the County: PARTIALLY AGREES.**

*The State Responsibility Area also exists within the following Fire Districts: Boulder Creek, Ben Lomond, Scotts Valley, Aptos-La Selva, Central, Branciforte, Zayante, and Felton.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: PARTIALLY DISAGREES.**

*SRA also exists within the following Fire Protection Districts: Boulder Creek, Ben Lomond, Scotts Valley, Aptos-La Selva, Central, Branciforte, Zayante, and Felton*

5. CSA 4 is a Local Responsibility Area. The County is required to provide fire protection services in this CSA.

**Response from the County: PARTIALLY DISAGREES.**

*There is no State requirement that a County provide fire services anywhere. The obligation for fire protection in CSA 4 was established through the development agreement that permitted the Pajaro Dunes community.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: PARTIALLY DISAGREES.**

*There is no State requirement that a County provide fire services anywhere. The obligation for fire protection in CSA 4 was caused by the development agreement which permitted the Pajaro Dune community.*

6. By county ordinance, the Fire Department Advisory Commission (FDAC) was established to advise the Board of Supervisors and County Fire Chief on budgeting, personnel, and other concerns relating to CSA 48 fire protection, rescue and emergency services.
7. The County Fire contract consists of three different cooperative agreements. Two are related to CSA 48, and a separate agreement is for CSA 4.
  - The two agreements for CSA 48 are
    - Amador Plan, wherein the county government pays Cal Fire for fire and rescue service during the winter/non-fire season. There are four Cal Fire stations in this agreement.
    - Schedule A, which provides a year-round Fire Marshal,<sup>10</sup> ECC, volunteer training, vehicle maintenance and administrative support services.
  - CSA 4 consists of a single Schedule A agreement, which provides Pajaro Dunes with year-round two-operator engine staffing.

**Response from the County: PARTIALLY DISAGREES.**

*The firefighters associated with the CAL FIRE engines staffed during non-fire season are identified in the Public Resources Code (PRC) as Schedule A. The Battalion Chiefs, company Officers, use of the fire stations and equipment are identified as Amador.*

8. In CSA 48, Cal Fire retains full control of state resources (personnel, vehicles, equipment) and can reassign these to meet emergency needs elsewhere in the state. In

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<sup>10</sup> The Fire Marshal duties include fire code enforcement, plan review, inspection and addressing services.

contrast, the Pajaro Dunes Schedule A year-round agreement requires Cal Fire to always staff and maintain a fire station in CSA 4.

**Response from the County: AGREES.**

9. There are four Cal Fire Amador Plan stations and five volunteer companies in CSA 48:

<i>Cal Fire Amador Stations</i>	<i>Volunteer Company Stations</i>
Big Creek	Bonny Doon – Martin Rd.
Burrell	Bonny Doon – McDermott
Corralitos*	Corralitos*
Saratoga Summit	Davenport
	Las Cumbres
	Loma Prieta

\*Cal Fire and volunteers co-located

(See Map, Appendix A, and Sources/Websites: [Santa Cruz County Fire Interactive Map<sup>11</sup>](#).)

10. Cal Fire prepares the annual operating budget for County Fire. In 2007-2008 this budget is \$2,870,629 including \$2,030,354 for CSA 48 and \$840,275 for CSA 4.
11. The primary funding sources for County Fire are property taxes and special assessments. The majority of CSA 48 property owners in 2007-2008 were assessed \$117 per parcel and CSA 4 property owners \$669.80. Secondary funding sources come from Proposition 172 funds and grants.
12. A special election was held in fall 2007 that would have nearly doubled the CSA 48 special assessment in order to offset the increasing cost of the Amador Plan staffing and equipment replacement. This ballot measure failed and, as a result, budget reductions were required.
13. The County Fire contract prepared by Cal Fire has been inconsistent from year to year:
- The 2007-2008 Amador agreement showed three stations, but the 2006-2007 agreement showed four stations.
  - The 2007-2008 Amador agreement totaled \$53,267, but the 2005-2006 agreement totaled \$711,590. The much lower cost in 2007-2008 was due to firefighter personnel, the most significant cost component, being listed on the Schedule A agreement instead of on the Amador agreement.

**Response from the County: DISAGREES.**

*The contract reflects changing needs and available resources. The three stations were identified in an initial budget reduction recommendation that was changed by the Board of Supervisors. A correction to the agreement was not processed.*

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<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msa=0&msid=105229572859786697499.00044308a6fb925404fc3&hl=en&ie=UTF8&z=10>

*The shift in the contract costs for the identified years reflects a change in planned overtime to be covered by the State due to the CAL FIRE firefighters' labor contract negotiations.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board:**  
**PARTIALLY AGREES.**

*The reference to the three stations was an initial budget reduction recommendation that was changed by the Board of Supervisors after the document was prepared. The corresponding correction was not made.*

*The shift in the contract costs for the identified years is due to the CAL FIRE firefighters labor contract negotiations and reflects a change in placement of planned overtime to be covered by the state.*

Santa Cruz County Office of Emergency Services (OES) under the General Services Department administers the County Fire contract and Cal Fire manages County Fire on a day-to-day basis.

The cost of the Amador Plan is dependent on the length of the state-declared fire season. The longer the fire season, the longer the state rather than the county is obligated to fund staffing for state-run fire stations.

The final 2007-2008 Amador Plan included 29 Cal Fire firefighters. Of these, 12 officers were paid by the state, and 17 seasonal firefighters were fully funded by the county. The majority of firefighters were not paid, with approximately 74 active volunteers in CSA 48.

During the last four months of the 2007-2008 Amador Plan, firefighter staffing was reduced. On a rotating schedule, instead of assigning three engine operators to all four stations, one station was reduced to two engine operators each week. Cal Fire assigned other state-paid personnel to the fire stations based on anticipated need.

A significant portion of the Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District is classified as State Responsibility Area but in contrast to CSA 48 has a single fire station with a year-round Cal Fire contract for two engine operators.

Only 0.4 percent of approximately \$16 million in Proposition 172 funds are designated to the 2007-2008 County Fire budget with the remainder going to county law enforcement.

**Response from the County:** PARTIALLY AGREES.

*0.4% of approximately \$16 million in Proposition 172 funds were designated to the 2007-08 County Fire budget pursuant to the revenue sharing policy developed in conjunction with the Fire Chiefs Association and adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 27, 1998. This amount represents 12% of the actual annual fiscal year change in Proposition 172 revenues. Funds are distributed to the fire agencies in the County's unincorporated area following an annual decision process by the Fire Chiefs Association.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board:**  
**PARTIALLY DISAGREES.**

*0.4% of approximately 16 million dollars in Proposition 172 funds were designated to the 2007-08 County Fire budget. The amount allocated was pursuant to the formula for distribution of Prop. 172 revenue that was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on*

January 27, 1998, and represents 12% of the actual annual fiscal year change in Prop. 172 revenues. Funds are distributed to the fire agencies in the County's unincorporated area following an annual decision process by the Fire Chiefs Association.

The average age of fire engines ready to respond is 15 years, but County Fire recommends maintaining an average age of less than ten years. The replacement cost of an engine is approximately \$350,000.<sup>12</sup>

The community of Paradise Park is located within the boundaries of CSA 48. (See Map, Appendix A.) Because of the distance to the nearest County Fire station, it is impractical for them to service this community, so Paradise Park's fire protection services are contracted out to the City of Santa Cruz.

**Response from the County: AGREES.**

**Response from the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO): AGREES.**

LAFCO also note that the CSA 48 "island" along Highway 9/the San Lorenzo River comprises more than Paradise Park. It includes parts of Cowell Redwoods State Park, residences on the west side of Highway 9 across the road from Paradise Park, and Ocean Street Extension.

Fees collected for fire marshal services do not cover the cost of operations. FDAC recommended recently that fire marshal staffing be reduced in an effort to match spending with revenues.<sup>13</sup>

**Response from the County: PARTIALLY AGREES.**

*The two options would be to reduce costs or increase fees to cover the cost of services provided by the fire marshal.*

CSA 48 fully funds the position of addressing clerk in the General Services Department. The addressing clerk updates and maintains the database of street names and locations. All emergency personnel in the county have access to this updated information to accurately locate addresses. FDAC recommended recently that the County Office of Emergency Services assume the funding for this position.<sup>12</sup>

**Response from the County: PARTIALLY DISAGREES.**

*Beginning in FY 07/08, the Clerk position's time and associated cost has been distributed between the County Fire and Office of Emergency Services based on the jurisdiction receiving the benefit. Although the position itself is in the Fire budget unit, the actual costs are distributed based on the work and derived benefit.*

Cal Fire enters dispatch information into and draws statistics from the California All Incident Response System (CAIRS) database. CAIRS data was used to prepare the County Fire call reports presented to the Board of Supervisors.

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<sup>12</sup> California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection/Santa Cruz County Fire Department. Five-Year Mobile Equipment Replacement Plan for Fiscal Years 2006-2011.

<sup>13</sup> County of Santa Cruz Fire Department Advisory Commission, draft minutes for the March 19, 2008, meeting.

**Response from the County: PARTIALLY AGREES.**

*Additional data for the report on CAL FIRE firefighter deployment during non-fire season was obtained using the CAL FIRE computer aided dispatch system.*

A type of CAIRS report, Resources Activity, shows dispatch data for four different time points: dispatch, enroute, on-scene, return to quarter. Each incident is identified using the following fields: incident type, location, area and unit.

**Response from the County: AGREES.**

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: AGREES.**

The majority of emergency incidents are not fire related yet fire personnel and heavy equipment are dispatched routinely. (See Appendix B.)

The Emergency Medical Services Integration Authority (EMSIA) was established to administer a program to integrate fire agency emergency medical services into a countywide system.

In the rural areas of the county, firefighters are normally the first medically trained responders to arrive on the scene of an emergency.

**Response from the County: AGREES.**

Cal Fire and volunteer firefighters are trained and certified to provide basic life support services.

**Response from the County: AGREES.**

The County contracts with American Medical Response to provide medically necessary ambulance transport staffed with advanced life support paramedics

**Response from the County: PARTIALLY AGREES.**

*Response plans indicate more than one resource (engine, company officer) respond to each incident and this varies by type of incident. The fact that volunteer companies, adjoining district resources, or ambulances respond does not create a separate incident or CAIRS report. Individual resource or agency responses can be tracked by CAD data review. If engines are cancelled prior to arrival (e.g. false alarm or cancellation by law enforcement or other agency), it still qualifies as a response.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: PARTIALLY AGREES.**

*Response plans indicate more than one resource (engine, company officer) respond to each incident, which varies by type of incident. The fact that volunteer companies, adjoining district resources, or ambulances respond does not create a separate incident or CAIRS report. Individual resource or agency responses can be and are tracked by CAD data review. If engines are cancelled prior to arrival (e.g. false alarm or cancellation by law enforcement or other agency), the initial dispatch still qualifies as a response.*

The Board of Supervisors asked County Fire management to provide monthly incident reports to evaluate the effects of reduced staffing approved in February 2008.



Matching a 10-day period of ECC audio dispatches<sup>14</sup> to corresponding CAIRS Resource Activity reports revealed

- A single incident can have multiple responses.
- Every dispatch is reported as an incident response regardless of actual on-scene arrival. Volunteer company responses are not included.
- Adjoining fire district responses are not included.
- Ambulance responses are not included.

**Response from the County: AGREES.**

Emergency calls from County Fire are first routed to the Santa Cruz Consolidated Emergency Communications Center (Netcom). Since the State requires Cal Fire to command its resources, Netcom must relay the initial call and pass control of the dispatch to the Cal Fire ECC.

**Response from the County: AGREES.**

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: AGREES.**

County Fire responds to medical emergency calls but is not a member of the Emergency Medical Services Integration Authority (EMSIA).<sup>15</sup> The Cal Fire Chief is on the EMSIA Board of Directors only on behalf of the Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District.

**Response from the County: PARTIALLY AGREES.**

*Although it is difficult to quantify and varies throughout the year, the CAL FIRE Chief estimates that 33% of his time is expended on Santa Cruz County issues. Additional administrative and operations management is provided through two Deputy Chiefs.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: PARTIALLY DISAGREES.**

*Although difficult to quantify, with variations throughout the year, the CAL FIRE Chief estimates that 33% of his time is expended on Santa Cruz County work and issues.*

The Cal Fire Unit Chief for both San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties is designated as the Chief of County Fire and the Santa Cruz County Fire Department. Approximately 20 percent of his time is spent on Santa Cruz County support.

**Response from the County: DISAGREES.**

*The role of the FDAC is not related to the authority granted under the establishment of CSA 48. Rather the FDAC was established under the County Code to exercise responsibilities to ensure that the interests of the county fire department, career and volunteer fire companies and the citizens residing within county fire department jurisdiction are protected and promoted by monitoring, studying, and advising the County Fire Chief and the Board of Supervisors.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: DISAGREES.**

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<sup>14</sup> Firescan.net, <http://www.firescan.net/>

<sup>15</sup> "Surviving Sudden Cardiac Arrest: Improving the Odds with Automated External Defibrillators, Santa Cruz County Grand Jury 2006-2007 Final Report with Responses, pages 4-5.

*The role of the FDAC is not related to the authority granted under the establishment of CSA 48. Rather the FDAC was established under the County Code to exercise responsibilities to ensure that the interests of the county fire department, career and volunteer fire companies and the citizens residing within county fire department jurisdiction are protected and promoted by monitoring, studying, and advising the county fire chief and the board of supervisors.*

The FDAC represents CSA 48 and its role is to advise the County Fire Chief and the County Board of Supervisors. FDAC does not represent CSA 4.

**Response from the County: PARTIALLY DISAGREES.**

*The membership of the Fire Department Advisory Commission was amended to reduce membership because the subject matter under consideration at most meetings was outside the scope of some then member representatives. As a result, those representatives did not attend every meeting. Representatives of these agencies are always available to attend any meetings where their participation would be helpful.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: PARTIALLY DISAGREES.**

*As stated in the Board of Supervisors report in 2005, other issues besides attendance were considered in revising the membership of the FDAC.*

The county code for FDAC membership was amended in 2005 to reduce membership from 13 seats to 10 seats, eliminating two representatives from the Health Services Agency (one each from Emergency Medical Services and Environmental Health) and one from Public Works, due to their poor attendance records.

**Response from the County: AGREES.**

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: AGREES.**

Although several volunteer fire companies and Cal Fire maintain websites, there is no County Fire website.

## **Conclusions**

1. "County Fire" is a confusing term, implying the existence of a single department responsible for fire protection in the rural areas of the county.
2. Because fire safety personnel are listed incorrectly on the year-round Schedule A agreement, the true cost of the Amador Plan is not clear.
3. The 2007-2008 County Fire contract total of \$2,870,629 is misleading due to the inclusion of Pajaro Dunes. Pajaro Dunes is a Local Responsibility Area and not a State Responsibility Area. The Pajaro Dunes Schedule A agreement is \$840,275, close to one-third of the total County Fire contract.
4. A significant cost factor in the Amador Plan is the length of the state-declared fire season. For example, a fire season extended by one month could equal a savings to the county of approximately 15 percent on the original contracted amount.
5. Significant capital spending to replace aging equipment is overdue.
6. Proposition 172 funds seem disproportionately distributed.

7. The call reports presented to the Board of Supervisors by County Fire management are incomplete. These reports do not show all the responses made to emergency incidents. Volunteer, mutual/automatic aid and ambulance responses are critical in evaluating County Fire performance.
8. Emergency responses are delayed due to the additional time required for Netcom to relay calls to the Cal Fire ECC.
9. Though Paradise Park is located in CSA 48, the Santa Cruz City Fire Department can reach this community much faster than the more distant County Fire stations, so contracting fire protection to the city is appropriate.
10. Because other agencies also benefit from the work of the addressing clerk, it is inequitable that the cost of this position is borne entirely by CSA 48.
11. Active input to the Fire Department Advisory Commission (FDAC) from a Health Services Agency representative is necessary because medically related incidents comprise a major component of County Fire responses.
12. Because Cal Fire officers concurrently manage both state resources and those of County Fire, conflicts may arise when decisions are made to prioritize issues involving the state and county fire protection resources.
13. An effective way to enhance the public's understanding of County Fire is to create a page on the county government website.

## **Recommendations**

1. The label "County Fire" should be applied only to County Service Area 48 and not CSA 4. The Pajaro Dunes Schedule A service agreement should be removed from future County Fire contracts.

### **Response from the County: WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.**

*County Fire is contained within the geographical boundaries of both areas represented by the two CSAs. CAL FIRE manages them under contract to Santa Cruz County. Other fire agencies within the County unincorporated area are organized as special districts with independent boards of directors.*

### **Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.**

*The recommendation is not warranted. County Fire is contained within the geographical boundaries of both areas represented by the two CSAs. CAL FIRE manages them under contract to Santa Cruz County. Other fire agencies within the County unincorporated area are organized as special districts with independent boards of directors.*

2. The Cal Fire contract should clearly present the services paid by the County so that FDAC, General Services Dept/OES and Board of Supervisors may properly review and understand the services provided in the contract.

### **Response from the County: WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.**

*CAL FIRE uses a standard contract instrument statewide which only lists those personnel and services provided by the State to the County. The County also provides services and personnel which are identified in the County Budget and are sometimes*

referred to as Schedule "C" of the State contract. Clarification regarding provision of services will continue to be handled separately on an as needed basis by staff.

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.**

*The recommendation is unreasonable in that CAL FIRE uses a standard contract instrument statewide. The CAL FIRE contract only lists those personnel and services provided by the State to the County. The County also provides services and personnel and those are listed in the County Budget and are sometimes referred to as Schedule "C" of the State contract. Clarification regarding provision of services will continue to be handled separately on an as needed basis by staff.*

3. The Board of Supervisors should carefully scrutinize FDAC recommendations for Cal Fire services with the knowledge that these recommendations are heavily influenced and prioritized by Cal Fire officers who also manage County Fire.

**Response from the County: WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.**

*The membership of the Fire Department Advisory Commission includes one person nominated by each member of the Board of Supervisors, and representatives of the Planning Department, the Office of Emergency Services, County Fire/CAL FIRE, the volunteer company officers organization, and the CAL FIRE firefighters. This membership is designed to ensure that the interests of the county fire department, career and volunteer fire companies and the citizens residing within county fire department jurisdiction are protected and promoted. All recommendations by the FDAC are the result of a democratic process with open, noticed meetings. The Board relies upon and is confident that the recommendations submitted by the FDAC are based upon the knowledge and expertise of all the members.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.**

*The recommendation is not warranted. By County ordinance, the Chief of County Fire or his designee is a voting member of the FDAC as are representatives from each supervisorial district. All recommendations by the FDAC are the result of a democratic process.*

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4. A County Fire web page should be created, with a link available on the Santa Cruz County Government home page. The County Fire web page could include the Cal Fire cooperative agreements that make up the contract and links to the Cal Fire and participating volunteer company web sites.

**Response from the County: HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED, BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE.**

*The FDAC has established a task group to develop appropriate models and anticipates making recommendations for implementation of a web site by the end of the calendar year. The implementation schedule is dependent upon the determination of necessary resources and funding.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED, BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE.**

*The FDAC has established task group to develop appropriate models and anticipates making recommendations for implementation of a web site by the end of the calendar*

year. The implementation schedule is dependent upon the determination of necessary resources and funding.

5. All fire company volunteers should receive recognition from the Board of Supervisors, with particular commendations to long-time volunteers.

**Response from the County: HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED, BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE.**

*County Fire management will work with County staff to formulate an action plan for consideration by the County Administrative Office and Board of Supervisors.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS.**

*County Fire management will work with County staff to formulate an action plan for consideration by the County Administrative Office and Board of Supervisors.*

6. County Fire management needs to explain the parameters that shape its incident reporting to the Board of Supervisors, and the supervisors should understand the elements involved in tracking incident responses. This knowledge is required to understand properly what is being reported.

**Response from the County: HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED, BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE.**

*For all statistical reports involving County Fire call data, the methodology and data sources will be explained fully to ensure the Board's understanding of the information.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED, BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE.**

*For all statistical reports involving County Fire call data, the methodology and data sources will be explained fully to ensure the Board's understanding of the information.*

7. County Fire management should include the responses of volunteer companies and other mutual aid when evaluating the effects of reduced staffing.

**Response from the County: HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED, BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE.**

*Depending upon direction from the Board of Supervisors and/or the specific assignment at hand, any evaluation of reduction in staffing will include both career and volunteer responders.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED, BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE.**

*Depending upon direction from the Board of Supervisors and/or the specific assignment at hand, any evaluation of reduction in staffing will include both career and volunteer responders.*

8. The FDAC should include a representative of the Health Services Agency to add perspective to medical response issues.

**Response from the County: WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.**

*Health Services Agency staff already coordinate closely with the fire agencies on medical response issues through various other groups and committees. The FDAC has been in the process of evaluating its current membership complement. At their July 2008 meeting reconsideration of adding an HSA representative was discussed; FDAC members voted not to include HSA as a voting member. FDAC members agreed that HSA staff might be invited to FDAC meetings if particular topics are related to their areas of expertise.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.**

*The recommendation is not warranted. The FDAC has been in the process of evaluating its current membership complement. At their July 2008 meeting reconsideration of adding an HSA representative was discussed; FDAC members voted not to include HSA as a voting member. FADCA members agreed that HSA staff may be invited to FDAC meetings if particular topics are related to their areas of expertise.*

9. County Fire should be made a member of the Emergency Medical Services Integration Authority (EMSIA).

**Response from the County: WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.**

*The Emergency Medical Services Integration Authority (EMSIA) is a joint powers association of Fire Agencies. At the time that the EMSIA was formed, the County decided not to become member due to possibility for future, unidentified fiscal obligations as set forth in the EMSIA membership agreement.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.**

*The recommendation is not warranted. County Fire does not have paramedic services at present.*

10. Paradise Park should be detached from CSA 48.

**Response from the County: REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS.**

*Detachment is only viable if another agency assumes full responsibility for service delivery in Paradise Park. County Fire will continue to evaluate possibilities for ensuring appropriate level of protection for Paradise Park.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS.**

*Detachment is only viable if another agency assumes full responsibility for service delivery in Paradise Park.*

**Response from the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO): REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS.**

*The principal alternatives to provide fire and emergency services to the Paradise Park area are:*

- *For the Paradise Park area to remain in County Service Area 48, and for the Board of Supervisors to form a Paradise Park Zone of County Service Area 48 to separately pay for the fire and emergency response services in the Paradise Park area.*

- *Detach the Paradise Park area from the County Service Area 48 and form a new Paradise Park Service Area to pay for fire and emergency response costs in the Paradise Park area.*
- *Detach the Paradise Park area from County Service Area 48 and annex it to the City of Santa Cruz.*

*Any analysis should include one-time process costs (such as LAFCO fees, State Board of Equalization fees, preparation of legal map and description, and the initial Proposition 218 elections to establish a special tax or fire suppression assessment). In the third alternative of annexing to the City of Santa Cruz, additional analysis should be done to look at the entire range of services (police, land use regulation, public works costs and liabilities, etc). Paradise Park is currently located outside the City of Santa Cruz sphere of influence.*

*Concerning implementation of this Grand Jury recommendation, LAFCO believes that the lead agency for the analysis should be the County of Santa Cruz. The County has expressed interest in establishing Zones within County Service Area 48, and that may be the simplest alternative to simply account for the cost of fire and emergency services in the Paradise Park area. Under state law, establishing such Zones does not require a LAFCO hearing and authorization. LAFCO staff is available to assist the Paradise Park area property owners, the Paradise Park area residents, the County of Santa Cruz, and other interested parties in evaluating the alternatives.*

11. All agencies using addressing clerk services should share in the cost.

**Response from the County: HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED.**

*Effective FY 08/09, the cost of this position is allocated to either County Fire (a Fire Fund expense) or the Office of Emergency Services (a General Fund expense), based on the jurisdiction of the address being assigned. As a General Fund expenditure, the allocation of costs to the Office of Emergency Services essentially includes County agencies such as the Sheriff's Department and the Department of Public Works.*

*Allocation of costs to individual County departments would be a cumbersome process with no programmatic or fiscal benefit. Assigning costs to either the General Fund of the Fire Fund will appropriately allocate costs of the program.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: AGREES.**

*The recommendation is reasonable. The cost of the work of the position should be allocated to all County jurisdictions/operations receiving the actual benefit including the Sheriff's Office and Public Works.*

12. The Board of Supervisors should review the allocation of Proposition 172 funds.

**Response from the County: WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.**

*The policy for the distribution of funds to unincorporated area fire services was developed jointly by representatives of County public safety agencies (the Sheriff-Coroner, District Attorney, the Chief Probation Officer, and representatives of the unincorporated area fires services) and the County Administrative Officer and approved by the Board of Supervisors in 1998.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: AGREES.**

*A more equitable distribution of funds to unincorporated area fire services should be considered.*

*The fire share represents a percentage of benefit only in those years when an increase over the tax base amount occurs. For those years where no increase occurs, fire does not receive share.*

*The development of the distribution formula was agreed to by all the above mentioned representatives and was intended to recognize the inclusion of the fire services in the definition of public safety under Proposition 172 as well as to respond to the fire services request for a fair share of the public safety funding. The fire share represents a percentage of benefit in those years when an increase over the tax base amount occurs. For those years where no increase occurs, fire agencies do not receive a share, nor is there any reduction to the fire agencies allocation when Proposition 172 funds decrease from the prior year.*

13. The Board of Supervisors should examine fire marshal services for ways to reduce County Fire cost.

**Response from the County: HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED.**

*The County continually monitors the activities of the Fire Marshall's office and adjusts operations according to the desired level of service within available resources.*

**Response from the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Board: HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED.**

*County continually monitors the activities of the Fire Marshall's office. County Fire adjusts operations according to the desired level of service.*

### **Commendations**

1. The Grand Jury commends all firefighters for performing a vital service and for their willingness to put their health and lives at risk.
2. We especially commend the volunteer firefighters for providing essential fire protection and emergency rescue services, and for making major contributions of time devoted to training and certification.
3. The Grand Jury commends the volunteer fire company auxiliaries for their fund-raising efforts and support of their local volunteer firefighters and fire stations.



## Responses Required

Respondent	Findings	Recommendations	Respond Within / Respond By
County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors	1, 3-5, 7, 8, 13, 18, 19-24, 26, 29-37	1-6, 10, 12, 13	60 Days September 1, 2008
County of Santa Cruz Fire Department	1, 8, 13, 22, 26, 31, 33, 34, 37	1-7, 10	90 Days October 1, 2008
County of Santa Cruz General Services Department	1, 3-5, 7, 8, 13, 19, 20, 22, 23, 29-37	2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11	90 Days October 1, 2008
County of Santa Cruz Fire Department Advisory Commission (FDAC)	1, 3-5, 13, 19, 26, 31, 33-37	1-13	90 Days October 1, 2008
County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency	36	8, 9	90 Days October 1, 2008
Emergency Medical Services Integration Authority (EMSIA)	33	9	90 Days October 1, 2008
Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)	21	10	90 Days October 1, 2008

## Sources

### Websites

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Cal Fire, <http://www.fire.ca.gov/>

Cal Fire Santa Cruz/San Mateo Unit Training Battalion, <http://www.czutrainng.org/>

Corralitos Volunteer Fire Department, <http://www.corralitosfire.com/>

County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency Public Health Department– Emergency Medical Services, <http://www.santacruzhealth.org/phealth/ems/3ems.htm>

County Service Areas - Department of Public Works, County of Santa Cruz, <http://www.dpw.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/csa.htm>

Davenport Volunteer Fire Department, <http://sccounty01.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/GSD/Davenport/index.html>

Emergency Medical Service Integration Authority of Santa Cruz County, <http://www.emsia.org>

Loma Prieta Fire and Rescue, <http://www.lomaprietafire.org/>

Santa Cruz County Fire Interactive Map, <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msa=0&msid=105229572859786697499.00044308a6fb925404fc3&hl=en&ie=UTF8&z=10>

Santa Cruz LAFCO, <http://www.santacruzlafco.org/>

South Skyline Fire & Rescue, <http://southskylinefire.org/>

Volunteer Data (Password protected, not publicly accessible) <http://www.czuvolunteers.com>

## **Documents/Publications**

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- Fire Department Advisory Commission Bylaws.
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- Santa Cruz County Fire (County Service Area 48) Fact Sheet – Fire and Emergency Medical Response Ballot Measure.
- Santa Cruz County Fire Department Master Plan July 1, 2002 Through June 30, 2006. [May 21, 2002 Revision].
- Santa Cruz County Master Fire Plan 2006-2011 Draft.
- Santa Cruz County Property Tax Statements.
- Santa Cruz County Volunteer Firefighter Handbook [Revised: November 2003].
- SCCECC, EMS Response Summary Analysis for 2007, Report #14.
- State of California, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, CDF Training and Academy Course Catalog,  
[http://www.fire.ca.gov/fire\\_protection/downloads/CDFCourseCatalog.pdf](http://www.fire.ca.gov/fire_protection/downloads/CDFCourseCatalog.pdf)

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### **Interviews**

Cal Fire Officers

Cal Fire Staff

County Fire Officers

County Fire Firefighters

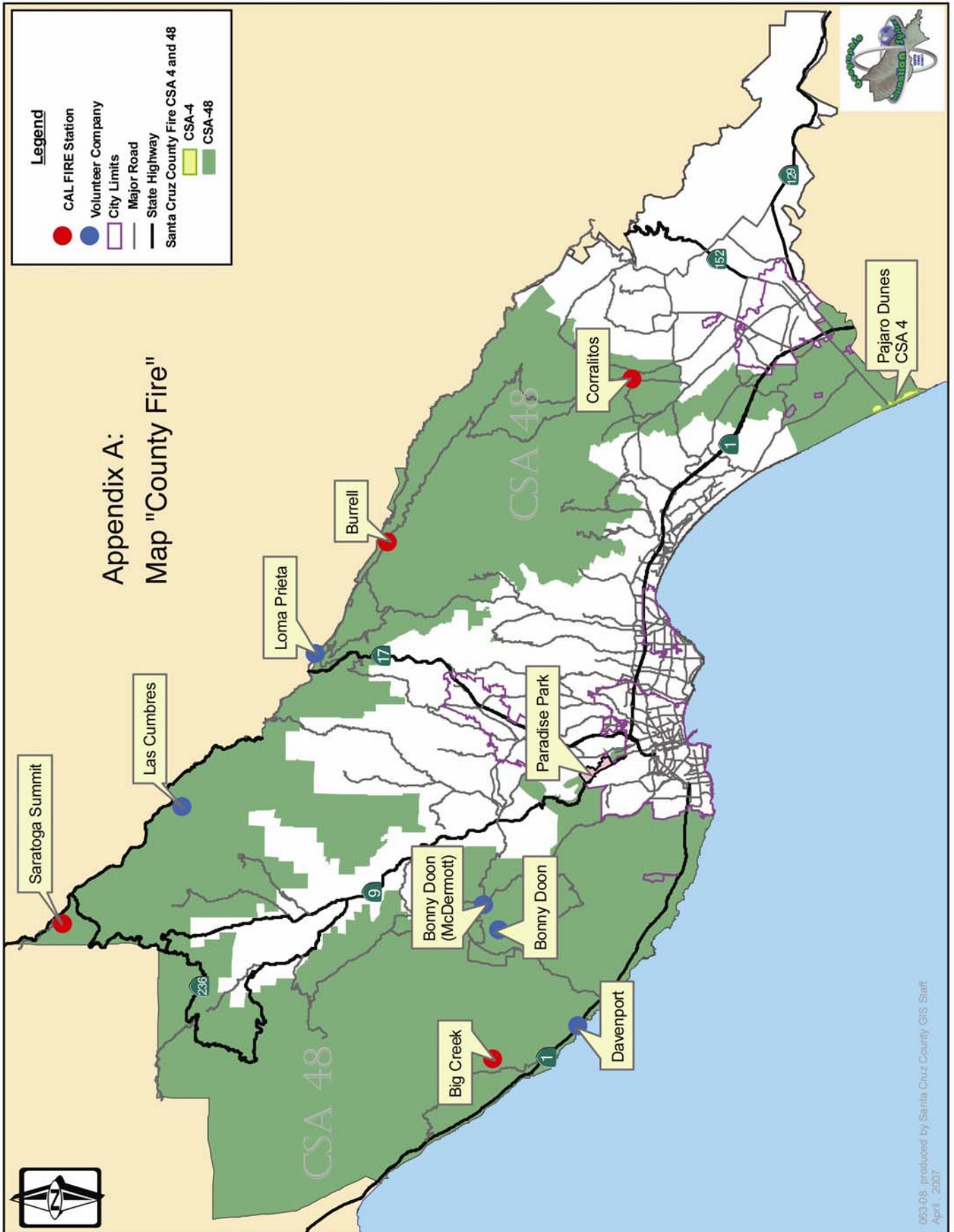
Santa Cruz County Auditor Controller's Office

Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency

Santa Cruz County General Services Department

Santa Cruz LAFCO Office

Volunteer Fire Companies





## ***Appendix B***

### **Santa Cruz County Fire 2006-2007 Incident Breakdown**

<b>Incident Type</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Medical	546	735
Structure Fire	89	66
Wildland Fire	92	138
Vehicle Fire	39	32
Other Fire	217	520
Traffic Collision	263	327
Rescue	16	17
Hazardous Conditions	194	108
Law Enforcement	13	18
Public Assistance	61	87
Hazardous Material	13	14
Other	129	319
<b>Total</b>	<b>1672</b>	<b>2381</b>





