



Memorandum

TO: PUBLIC SAFETY, FINANCE, &
STRATEGIC SUPPORT COMMITTEE

FROM: Robert Sapien, Jr.

SUBJECT: FIREFIGHTER SAFETY SYSTEMS
IN HIGH RISE BUILDINGS
REPORT

DATE: November 30, 2020

Approved

Date

12/3/20

SUPPLEMENTAL

REASON FOR SUPPLEMENTAL

On August 10, 2020, the Public Safety, Finance, and Strategic Support Committee heard the Fire Department's Firefighter Safety Systems in High Rise Buildings Report and directed the following:

1. Provide a description of costs related to the Department's response to high rise buildings.
2. Provide a description of costs related to the installation of fire service access elevators (FSAE) and firefighter breathing air replenishment systems (FBARS).
3. Return to the Committee in 90 days to allow IAFF Local 230 additional time to evaluate the Department's report.

This supplemental memorandum provides a partial report on information requested by the Committee.

ANALYSIS

1. The Committee requested a description of costs related to the Department's response to high rise buildings.

Staffing

The Department maintains two Breathing Air Support Units (BASUs) which are cross-staffed with Squad resources to optimize operational benefit (squads are two-person resources). BASUs support emergency operations where self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) use exhausts multiple air bottles. Personal services costs to maintain two-person staffing levels on an annual basis are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Breathing Air Support Unit Staffing Costs

	FY2021-2022	FY2022-2023	FY2023-2024	FY2024-2025
Squad/Breathing Air Support Unit 5	\$1,145,317	\$1,162,522	\$1,180,243	\$1,198,496
Squad/Breathing Air Support Unit 18	\$1,145,317	\$1,162,522	\$1,180,243	\$1,198,496
TOTAL	\$2,290,634	\$2,325,044	\$2,360,486	\$2,396,992

The current cross-staffing model results in reduced costs, however, it also compromises resource availability. BASU response is delayed when Squads are responding to other emergencies. The Department currently has two BASU vehicles, which were placed into service in 2005 at a cost of \$290,444 each. The Department anticipates that these vehicles will require replacement in 2025 after 20 years of service life.

Training

The Department’s existing practice for high-rise firefighting training is to provide initial training at the Firefighter-Recruit Academy and BASU operations training to Fire Engineers upon promotion. The Department has relied on battalion level in-service training to maintain high-rise operations proficiency.

Through the budget process, as resources allow given the City’s budget position and other program priorities, the Department will initiate biennial four-hour high-rise firefighting refresher training for all field personnel that will be necessary to maintain response readiness. Refresher training will include high-rise firefighting standard operating procedures and fire protection systems including alarms, sprinklers, standpipes, elevators, and FBARS. High-rise firefighting refresher training has not been budgeted nor scheduled regularly in several years.

Cost estimates to provide biennial four-hour high-rise firefighting refresher training (annualized overtime costs shown) are shown in Table 2 below. If funded, the initial training would occur in Fiscal Year 2021-2022. The subsequent refresher trainings would be held every other year, requiring annual overtime funding to be carried over to the year in which the refresher training would occur.

Table 2: Biennial High-Rise Firefighting Refresher Training Cost Estimates

	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024**	2024-2025	2025-2026**
Attendees (663)***	\$218,721	\$116,021	\$116,021	\$123,086	\$123,086
Trainers (4)	\$55,051	\$29,202	\$29,202	\$30,980	\$30,980
TOTAL	\$273,772	\$145,223	\$145,223	\$154,067	\$154,067

* initial training year

** refresher training year

*** excludes 40-hour assigned personnel as the training would be conducted at straight time.

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2. The Committee requested a description of costs related to the installation of fire service access elevators (FSAE) and firefighter breathing air replenishment systems (FBARS).

Staff has been unable to obtain reliable information regarding developer costs related to the installation of fire service access elevators (FSAE) and firefighter breathing air replenishment systems (FBARS). At the Committee's discretion, staff will continue to pursue this information.

3. The Committee asked staff to return after 90 days to allow San Jose Firefighters IAFF Local 230 additional time to evaluate the Department's report.

The Department engaged San Jose Fire Fighters, IAFF Local 230 on October 22, 2020 to discuss recommendations and respond to questions.

/s/

ROBERT SAPIEN, JR.
Fire Chief, Fire Department

For questions, please contact Robert Sapien, Jr., Fire Chief at (408) 794-6952.