

Study

Municipal Reviews of San Miguel, Borrego Springs, and San Diego County Fire Protection Districts

*Prepared by:
San Diego Taxpayers Educational Foundation*

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Executive Summary

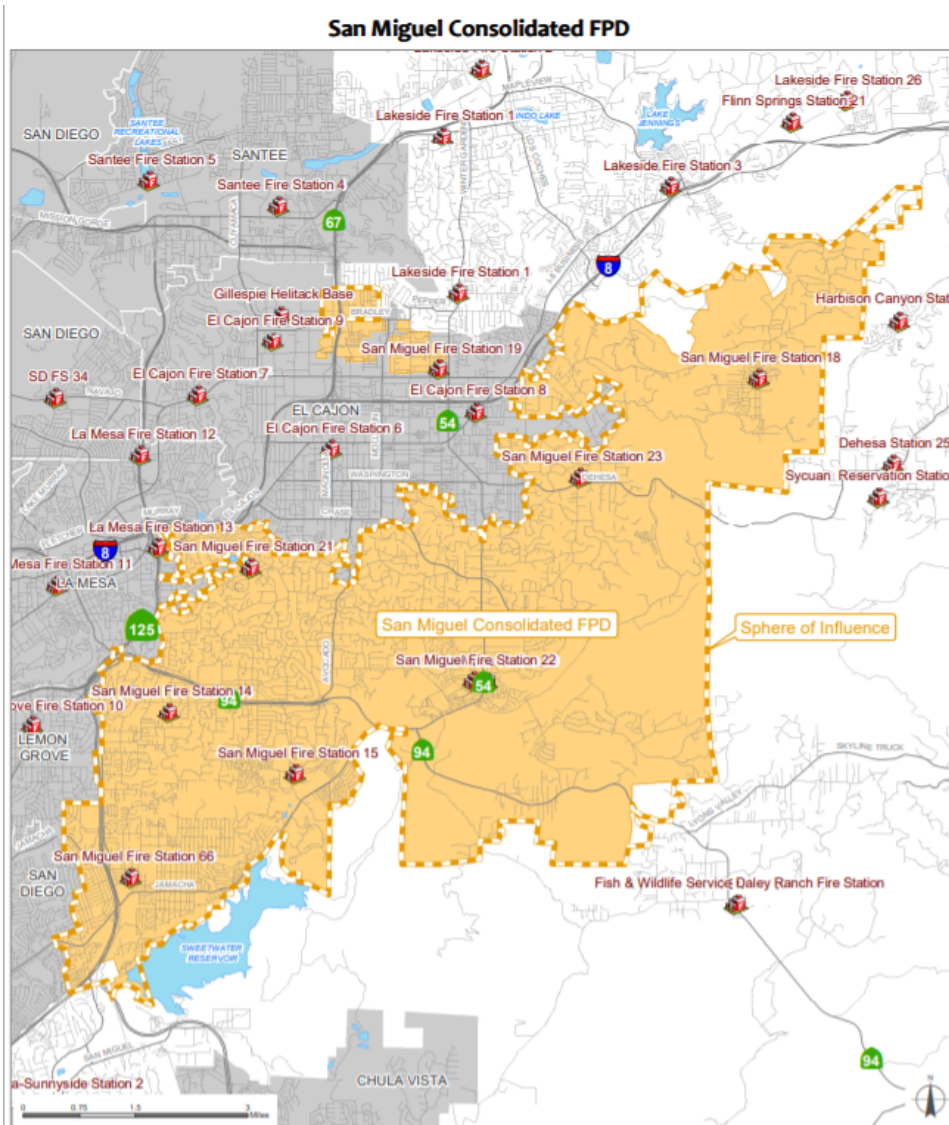
The San Diego Taxpayers Educational Foundation (SDTEF) periodically conducts reviews of municipal agencies in San Diego County. This is to provide taxpayers and the general public some basic information about their local governments. This report, like other municipal reviews, summarizes a shared and validated baseline of information for all stakeholders so that public policy recommendations by any organization, including the San Diego County Taxpayers Association (SDCTA), can be based on well-researched and factual findings.

Fire protection is a critical issue for San Diego County, and recent large fires in other parts of the state reminded members of SDCTA that it is important to understand whether the 23 fire districts or departments, not including Federal or tribal agencies, are being effective and efficient with their taxpayer resources.

As such, SDCTA decided in early 2021 it would do a “spot check” on two random fire districts that partially finance their activities through special parcel taxes and assess whether they are being effective and efficient. To inform that assessment, SDTEF provides this municipal review of the San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District and the Borrego Springs Fire Protection District. Because the landscape of fire district organization continues to evolve after a Grand Jury report and recommendation, this report provides some basic information for the new and larger San Diego County Fire Protection District, as well. All three fire districts were each provided a draft copy of their sections before this report was finalized for the purpose of reviewing and correcting any factual errors in either the historical narratives or the data tables.

Before the publication of this report, SDTEF determined it would expand the scope of its fact finding to all non-Federal and non-tribal fire departments and districts in San Diego County. Information on those districts/ departments, however, are outside the scope of this report, while SDTEF awaits information. If SDTEF is able to acquire all the data on the other districts/ departments, it may be able to conduct comparisons of districts through econometric analyses and a statistical determination of the impact of fire district/ department performance on homeowner insurance rates, but again, other districts and other findings about fire protection in the entire county are outside the scope of this report, which is limited to San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District, Borrego Springs Fire Protection District, and San Diego County Fire Protection District.

San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District



Map source: SD LAFCO

General Statistics

Year Established: 1988	Square Miles Covered: 50
# of Employees: 88	Covers Bostonia, Casa de Oro, Crest, Grossmont/Mt. Helix, La Presa, Rancho San Diego, Spring Valley and the unincorporated areas of El Cajon and La Mesa
# of Households Served: 42,974	
# of Businesses Served: 2550	

History and Background

General

San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District is one of the largest fire districts in San Diego County, formed on July 1, 1988 through a merger of the Spring Valley and Grossmont/Mt. Helix Fire Protection Districts, and again on July 3, 2008 with the East County Fire Protection District. It serves nearly 140,000 residents in the communities of Bostonia, Casa de Oro, Crest, Grossmont/Mt. Helix, La Presa, Rancho San Diego, Spring Valley, and the unincorporated areas of El Cajon and La Mesa.

San Miguel is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors who are elected by the general population within the district boundaries and each serve four-year terms.

Consolidation with the East County Fire Protection District (2008)

In July 2008, East County Fire Protection District (ECFPD) completed the necessary steps, as directed by the San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), in order to merge with San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District. The former East County Fire Protection District was originally established on July 1, 1994, as the first non-contiguous Fire District in the State of California, created as a result of the merger of Crest Fire Protection District and the Bostonia Fire Protection District.

The old ECFPD area covers nearly 12 square miles. An estimated 15,000 residents receive fire, emergency medical, and rescue services from the former ECFPD and now directly from San Miguel. The area that was covered by ECFPD is located in an unincorporated area of eastern San Diego County, including the community of Bostonia (unincorporated area north of the city of El Cajon), and the community of Crest (portion of unincorporated areas of El Cajon, between the City of El Cajon and the Harbison Canyon / Alpine area).

The former District's operations and services are funded from several sources: a fraction of ad valorem property taxes; the fire suppression and emergency services (Crest Area) special benefit tax; the fire protection and emergency medical services (Bostonia Area) special benefit tax; the advanced life support (paramedic/firefighter) engines special benefit tax; the fire suppression, protection and emergency medical response services special tax (Proposition E); and other miscellaneous sources.

Proposition E (2007)

On September 25, 2007, registered voters in the former East County Fire Protection District (Crest and Bostonia) approved Proposition E, a parcel tax, that would provide additional revenue for fire and medical services to district residents. With a voter turnout of 37.1%, voters overwhelmingly supported the proposition (73.2%), which satisfied the 2/3 requirement. When the ECFPD consolidated with San Miguel a year later in 2008, all of the pre-existing taxes in place were transferred as well. Of course, this included Prop E, which to this day still collected to help fund the stations in Crest and Bostonia.

According to the official proposition text, the purpose of its existence is:

“To keep and maintain the District’s two existing fire stations open, keep property insurance rates manageable, employ professional firefighters and to provide year-round fire protection and medical emergency response services”

It should be noted that there is no set standard for objectively determining what “manageable” insurance rates look like. Additionally, considering the broad range of factors at play when it comes to insurance, it is unknown whether or not keeping insurance rates manageable is something ECFPD had control over.

The passage of Prop E also came with several legal requirements that the fire district needed to oblige by:

- 1. The special tax revenues shall be deposited into a separate account held by the San Diego County Treasurer for exclusive use by the East County Fire Protection District, in accordance with Government Code Section 50075.1*
- 2. The special tax revenues shall be expended by the District according to a plan developed annually by the District staff and approved and adopted by the District’s Board of Directors.*
- 3. A citizens’ oversight committee appointed by the Board will review and report on the expenditure of tax revenues.*

However, following SDCTA inquiries, it turned out that San Miguel failed to oblige by (1) and (3). That is, regarding (1), there wasn’t a separate financial statement for Prop E revenue, so where the funds went to directly wasn’t distinguished. Likewise, regarding (3), there had been a citizen’s oversight committee for some time following the implementation of Prop E. However, when ECFPD consolidated with San Miguel in 2008, the Board of Directors, for undocumented reasons, dissolved the committee.

After being questioned by SDCTA on the district’s current status in satisfying these requirements, San Miguel acknowledged their failure to oblige by the two criteria above and stated its full intentions to henceforth oblige. At the time of when this report was being made, the district started the process of creating separate financial statements for the stations that receive Prop E revenue and a new citizen’s oversight committee was formed.

2017 Recall Effort:

In 2012, the San Miguel Board of Directors voted to contract with Cal Fire because of unsustainably low revenue. In 2016, several newly-elected Board members, who each had campaigned on a slate that promised to break ties with Cal Fire and return to being a stand-alone district, successfully did just that with a 4-3 vote in favor of breaking ties.

In 2017, a district resident served recall notices to three of the Board members, arguing that they were turning the district into a stand-alone agency without doing an impartial analysis of whether this decision was financially sound. Cal Fire Local 2881, the Cal Fire firefighters' union, supported the recall. (1)

The three board members who were issued recall papers argued that this was a desperate effort by Cal Fire to keep control over the district through the "lucrative" contract. They then provided various pieces of data suggesting that this decision was beneficial financially, however it all came from an in-house study. They admitted the study was not independent, but argued they had the "best Chief Finance Officers in the business", and didn't want to "spend \$40-60k of taxpayer dollars just to tell her she is right". (2)

In the Comprehensive Independent Financial Report from June 5, 2017, LAFCO confirmed the financial soundness of the district CFO's findings and the Board's actions. They concluded that, under San Miguel FPD's then-existing CalFire contract "6-year Average" scenario, San Miguel would "not be a self-sustaining fire agency because total expenditures would exceed total revenues each fiscal year resulting in a negative net income by FY 2019/20..." and "...A deficit in the reserve balance [was] projected to occur starting in Year 6 (FY22/23)" of a continued contract. Additionally, under the then-existing CalFire contract "2% Inflation Rate" scenario, LAFCO opined the District would be self-sustaining, however, "reserve funds would be required to balance future budgets starting in Year 5 (FY21/22)." (3) (4)

The recall ultimately failed because the San Diego County Registrar of Voters deemed the petition to be invalid (5) (6). The three board members who had been issued the recall papers subsequently won re-election in the following cycle.

Present Day

Like most other public agencies within California, one of the major challenges San Miguel is currently facing is its ever-increasing liability costs, which is currently sitting at around \$65 million (2020). The majority of these liability costs can be attributed to its rising pension liability, which by itself is nearly \$40 million (2020). This has resulted in the district being \$24 million in debt. San Miguel is currently in the process of pursuing pension strategies, such as a Pension Obligation Fund, for the purpose of restructuring its debt.

Performance Data

Calls and Response Times

These data only go as far back as FY18, as that was the first year of independent operations since ending the contract with CalFire. This report does not contain the CalFire data for FY12-FY17, but even if it did, there would be limited utility as one should not derive comparative conclusions pre- and post-independence without more context.

The data from Stations 18 (Crest) and Station 19 (Bostonia) were requested to be isolated from the rest of the district for comparative purposes since those stations were what made up the former ECFPD.

Calls	FY18	FY19	FY20
Station 18	213	218	215
Station 19	1065	1295	1511
All District	12,203	13,135	13,220

Response Times	FY18	FY19	FY20
Station 18	5:54	6:32	6:32
Station 19	4:53	5:05	5:07
All District	5:39	5:30	5:40

ISO and Homeowner Insurance Information

ISO

(For a description of what ISO is, see Appendix)

As of July 1st, 2017, SMCFPD received an ISO classification of 03/3x. It received 77.39 credits out of 105.5 available credits (73%).

In the report, it scored high on criteria relating to Emergency Communications, receiving 8.23 out of 10 credits.

It received most credits relating to Water Supply criteria (33.87 out of 40), with the exception of credit for Inspection and Flow Testing (2.24 out of 7). This criterion reviews the fire hydrant inspection frequency, and the completeness of the inspections.

Lastly, it received 34.27 out of 50 available credits for Fire Department criteria, wherein most points lost were for Deployment Analysis (4.82 out of 10) and Company Personnel (8.14 out of 15). The Deployment Analysis criterion examines the number and adequacy of existing engine and ladder-service companies to cover built-upon areas of its jurisdiction. The Company Personnel criterion reviews the average number of existing firefighters and company officers available to respond to reported first alarm fire structures in the city.

Homeowner Insurance Information

Homeowners' (Voluntary)	ZIP Code	92019	92020	92021	Total
2009	Premium	\$ 8,192,590	\$ 6,901,487	\$ 7,108,500	\$ 22,202,577
	Exposure	96,839	92,514	95,608	284,961
2010	Premium	\$ 8,664,709	\$ 7,192,976	\$ 7,490,869	\$ 23,348,554
	Exposure	97,724	93,376	96,730	287,830
2011	Premium	\$ 8,896,310	\$ 7,337,701	\$ 7,757,832	\$ 23,991,843
	Exposure	98,505	93,554	97,574	289,633
2012	Premium	\$ 9,024,984	\$ 7,410,767	\$ 7,898,611	\$ 24,334,362
	Exposure	98,372	92,683	97,103	288,158
2013	Premium	\$ 9,166,180	\$ 7,478,747	\$ 7,946,384	\$ 24,591,311
	Exposure	98,673	93,189	98,747	290,609
2014	Premium	\$ 9,125,070	\$ 7,527,143	\$ 7,821,450	\$ 24,473,663
	Exposure	97,294	91,330	96,843	285,467
2015	Premium	\$ 9,226,979	\$ 7,616,174	\$ 7,801,500	\$ 24,644,653
	Exposure	97,478	91,208	95,724	284,410
2016	Premium	\$ 9,733,100	\$ 7,951,873	\$ 8,251,744	\$ 25,936,717
	Exposure	98,985	93,107	97,439	289,531

2017	Premium	\$ 9,703,202	\$ 7,910,930	\$ 8,068,758	\$ 25,682,890
	Exposure	96,940	90,410	92,348	279,698
2018	Premium	\$ 10,108,077	\$ 8,183,185	\$ 8,360,507	\$ 26,651,769
	Exposure	95,972	88,967	92,195	277,134

Dwelling Fire (Voluntary)	ZIP Code	92019	92020	92021	Total
2009	Premium	\$ 544,632	\$ 541,451	\$ 686,692	\$ 1,772,775
	Exposure	10,178	13,976	15,867	40,021
2010	Premium	\$ 545,731	\$ 584,875	\$ 719,485	\$ 1,850,091
	Exposure	10,612	15,080	17,128	42,820
2011	Premium	\$ 612,882	\$ 619,142	\$ 781,257	\$ 2,013,281
	Exposure	11,632	16,080	18,256	45,968
2012	Premium	\$ 577,662	\$ 568,327	\$ 751,526	\$ 1,897,515
	Exposure	12,209	16,917	19,067	48,193
2013	Premium	\$ 505,692	\$ 588,779	\$ 593,321	\$ 1,687,792
	Exposure	13,213	17,519	18,477	49,209
2014	Premium	\$ 521,081	\$ 577,726	\$ 590,729	\$ 1,689,536
	Exposure	13,280	18,110	19,070	50,460
2015	Premium	\$ 510,010	\$ 574,871	\$ 612,489	\$ 1,697,370
	Exposure	13,269	17,255	18,629	49,153
2016	Premium	\$ 488,531	\$ 544,758	\$ 610,282	\$ 1,643,571
	Exposure	13,070	16,651	18,101	47,822
2017	Premium	\$ 821,512	\$ 918,771	\$ 1,120,857	\$ 2,861,140

	Exposure	17,555	23,079	26,713	67,347
2018	Premium	\$ 773,242	\$ 866,084	\$ 1,023,273	\$ 2,662,599
	Exposure	17,212	22,441	25,469	65,122

Dwelling Fire (FAIR Plan)	ZIP Code	92019	92020	92021	Total
2009	Premium	\$ 7,464	\$ 4,705	\$ 9,705	\$ 21,874
	Exposure	171	129	232	532
2010	Premium	\$ 9,252	\$ 5,412	\$ 9,914	\$ 24,578
	Exposure	206	101	197	504
2011	Premium	\$ 15,273	\$ 6,582	\$ 12,247	\$ 34,102
	Exposure	264	126	226	616
2012	Premium	\$ 22,176	\$ 5,954	\$ 21,516	\$ 49,646
	Exposure	312	111	332	755
2013	Premium	\$ 30,948	\$ 4,043	\$ 27,728	\$ 62,719
	Exposure	425	85	407	917
2014	Premium	\$ 43,141	\$ 2,929	\$ 29,097	\$ 75,167
	Exposure	576	72	432	1,080
2015	Premium	\$ 41,477	\$ 4,223	\$ 33,965	\$ 79,665
	Exposure	559	90	442	1,091
2016	Premium	\$ 42,401	\$ 4,885	\$ 39,251	\$ 86,537
	Exposure	473	98	501	1,072
2017	Premium	\$ 35,668	\$ 4,661	\$ 51,666	\$ 91,995
	Exposure	448	93	578	1,119

2018	Premium	\$ 39,543	\$ 5,479	\$ 52,646	\$ 97,668
	Exposure	480	111	550	1,141

Financial Data

The following data derives from the district's audited financials.

Revenues and Expenditures

The District used different auditors in FY 19 and 20 than they did in FY 18, which caused discrepancies in the titling of certain items.

Total Revenues

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Total	\$21,843,079	\$25,749,274	\$26,262,937

Revenue by item

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Property taxes	\$ 20,739,672	\$ 19,811,643	\$ 21,003,443
Other revenue	\$ 682,966	-	-
Loss on disposition of assets	(285,848)	-	-
Redevelopment pass-through	-	\$ 131,748	\$ 162,800
Rental income	-	\$ 177,730	\$ 211,300
Investment earnings	-	\$ 395,321	\$ 508,017
Gain on sale of assets	-	\$ 149,843	\$ 33,001
Parcel tax	-	\$ 1,814,230	\$ 1,871,016
Property assessment	\$ 706,289	\$ 726,723	\$ 748,485
CSA-115 annexation	-	\$ 426,012	\$ 100,000
Cal-OES - Personnel	-	\$ 319,689	\$ 238,472
Cal-OES - Engines	-	\$ 75,248	\$ 27,462
Cal-OES - Administration	-	\$ 84,566	\$ 10,734
Fire prevention - plan check and inspections	-	\$ 196,919	\$ 250,321
Advanced life support - first responder fee	-	\$ 879,634	\$ 629,893

Weed abatement	-	\$ 140,311	\$ 83,826
Other charges	-	\$ 3,605	\$ 10,666
Reimbursements	-	\$ 203,281	\$ 175,738
Mitigation fees	-	\$ 194,603	\$ 178,447
Operating and capital grant funding	-	\$ 18,168	\$ 19,316

Total Expenditures

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Total	\$ 17,993,392	\$ 19,212,087	25,086,440

Expenditures by item

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Operations	\$14,816,619	-	-
Administration	\$2,308,243	-	-
Salaries and wages	-	\$ 8,956,618	\$ 10,033,868
Employee benefits	-	\$ 4,924,777	\$ 8,831,708
Materials and Services	-	\$3,804,542	\$4,005,008
Insurance	-	\$ 551,642	\$ 974,866
Depreciation expense	\$ 676,093	\$ 835,693	\$ 1,177,564
Interest expense	\$ 192,437	\$ 138,815	\$ 63,426

Debt
Total Liabilities

	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Total	\$ 61,338,312	\$ 59,428,450	\$ 65,047,076

Liabilities by item

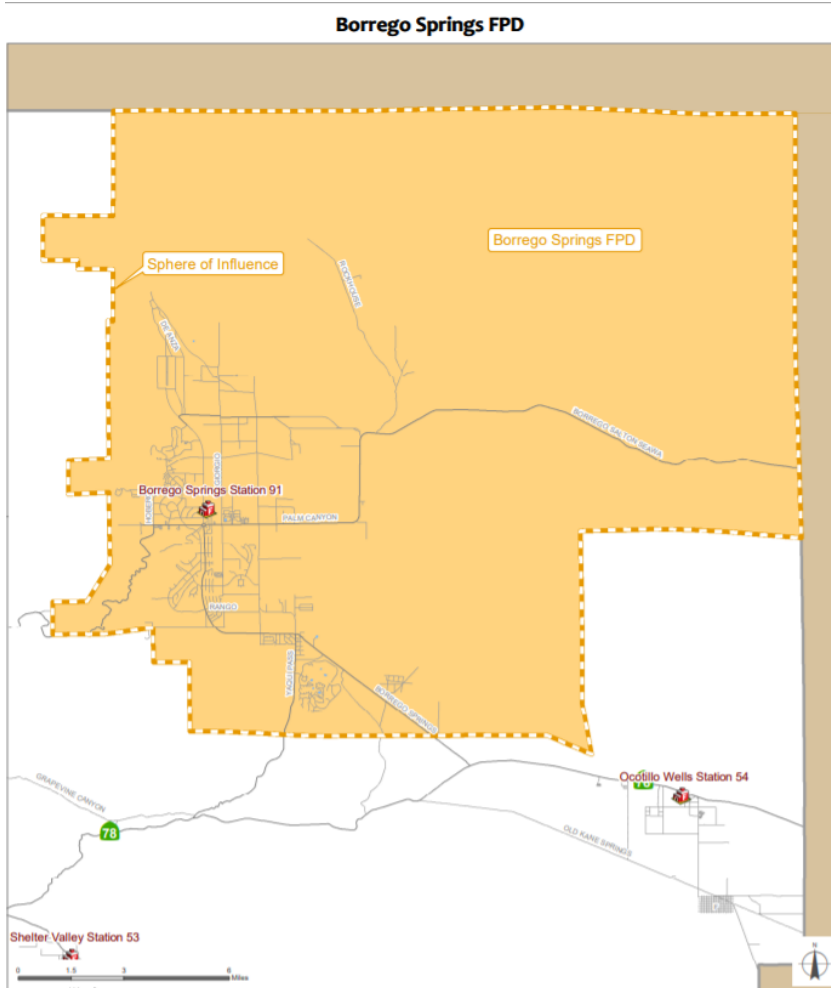
	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Current + Due in One Year	\$ 3,089,213	\$ 2,537,086	\$ 1,227,182
Due in more than one year	\$ 3,144,657	\$1,968,802	\$2,243,463
OPEB	\$ 18,658,019	\$ 18,429,183	\$ 22,648,185
Pension	\$ 36,446,423	\$ 36,493,379	\$ 38,928,246

Reserves

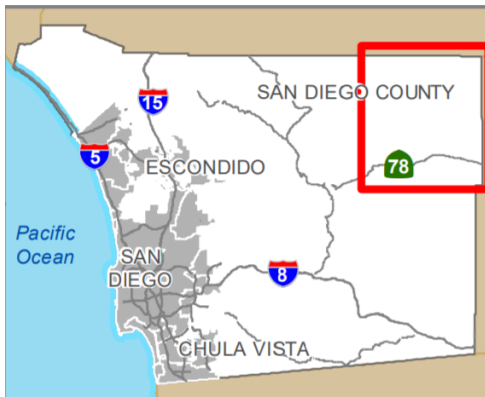
Cash Balances for Accounts held at County

	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21
General Fund	5,779,392	4,268,164	5,982,287	8,995,428
Fixed Equipment	234,998	374,598	559,378	754,971
Contingency Reserves	1,034,257	1,951,393	3,209,588	3,551,226
Uncompensated Leave	61,686	611,569	869,542	1,010,627
Capital Equipment	284,909	355,846	470,892	494,334
Facilities	1,148,543	2,233,896	2,398,829	3,264,098
Vehicle	1,027,921	1,826,979	2,201,715	2,006,395
Worker' Compensation	3,194	3,245	203,534	305,526
Fire Mitigation Fees	86,259	157,245	331,453	248,217
Total of Funds	\$9,661,159	\$11,782,935	\$16,227,218	\$20,630,822

Borrego Springs Fire Protection District



Map source: SD LAFCO



General Statistics

Year Established: 1961	Square Miles Covered: 310
# of Employees: 14	Borrego Springs, Anza Borrego Desert State Park
# of Households Served: 1617	
# of Businesses Served: -	

History and Background

General

Located in the North-Eastern corner of San Diego County is the unincorporated community of Borrego Springs. Borrego Springs Fire Protection District has the responsibility to provide fire prevention, fire suppression, and paramedic transport services.

BSFPD Formation

Borrego became a sought-after destination for the US. Military as well as developers. One of the needs of this growing rural destination was an agency to handle natural disasters, structure fires, and medical aids. The community started the Borrego Springs Fire Protection District in 1961 —prior to LAFCO’s origin— to provide fire protection and emergency medical services within approximately 310 square miles in the most northeast section of San Diego County.

BSFPD is governed by a five-member Board of Directors who are elected by the general population within the district boundaries. Directors must live within the district boundary and each serves four-year terms. The district is significantly surrounded by state parkland as well as Riverside County, Imperial County, and Tribal Reservation lands. This remote geographically isolated area is potentially subject to a number of natural disasters including earthquakes, flooding, and fires.

Current Operations

The Fire District provides fire prevention, fire suppression, and paramedic transport services. Originally an all-volunteer organization, the district has naturally progressed to offering a shift stipend, and now provides paid professional, full-time firefighters, emergency medical technicians (EMT), and paramedics.

The Borrego Springs FPD has one fire station located in the center of town that is staffed by a two-person paramedic engine, a two-person paramedic ambulance, a full-time paid fire chief, and one administration position. BSFPD does increase its staffing levels during high tourism times. Its equipment consists of two Type 1 fire engines, three ambulances, and one 4 wheel drive water tender equipped with a dump quick attack system to allow the crew to more effectively put out a fire when a fire hydrant is not near. Mercy Air ambulance is also stationed within the Borrego Springs FPD. Having an air ambulance stationed in the district is critical for allowing this geographically isolated

and remote district to meet the golden hour or critical transport times. Additionally, BSFPD has mutual and auto-aid agreements in place with San Diego County Fire Protection District that allows both agencies to exchange resources at no charge for up to 12 hours.

Population

The rural community of Borrego Springs has an estimated year-round population of 3000 and a seasonal population of roughly 4,500 that increased the population to approximately 10,000 in the winter months. The destination also attracts over a million visitors who travel to the area annually. Peak tourism times are the winter months, Borrego Days, and during spring wildflowers also known as super blooms (1) (3). It is also important to note that Borrego Springs has a high senior population, which directly impacts the district's call volume for emergency medical services.

Revenue and Proposition Z

Around 1.4 million of the district's funds come directly from property taxes. With a combination of the increase in the cost of living, the addition of paid staffing, and a relatively low increase in taxation as property values in the district stalled, more funding was needed. An additional special parcel tax was passed by voters in 1996 to fill the funding gap.

This proposition had a 10 year sunset period based on an ERAF shift that occurred. To avoid a staffing cut, the district approached the community to reauthorize the special parcel tax to keep the district whole. This reauthorization is commonly known as Prop Z and was approved by voters in 2004. Prop Z sets fixed tax rates and does not have rate escalators or a sunset. The current parcel tax rate for single-family residences is \$75.00 per year. Proposition Z currently generates an estimated \$250,000 annually for district personnel, equipment and operations.

In the 2018 general election, the District placed a measure on the San Diego County Ballot, Measure PP, an attempt to raise the rate of the special parcel tax. If passed, the District funding would have increased by \$720,000 per year or increased the district's parcel tax \$225 annually for single-family residences to cover the wage shortfall going forward. This proposition was intended to allow the District to annually put money into a capital replacement fund; for high cost equipment replacements such as fire engines, ambulances, heart monitors etc., as well as adjusting salaries to a competitive wage in order to attract and retain highly qualified employees. While a 56% majority of Borregans approved, it fell short of the two-thirds supermajority needed for passage per California Proposition 13. (4) (5) (6) (7)

An additional \$350,000 is brought in through cell tower lease contracts, use of property, charges for service, grants, as well as auto/mutual aid reimbursements. Future supplemental revenue options include service fees, revenues from staffing an additional water tender during fire season, revenue from staffing an additional ambulance, and leasing out property/equipment.

Future Development and Growth

As previously mentioned, development in the district's jurisdiction has stalled, and many planned projects are at a standstill. In the event that development in Borrego Springs was to rejuvenate, the district has plans in place that would allow the organization to grow alongside the needs of the community. Borrego Springs FPD owns a lot adjacent to its current station as well as an additional lot

near the Rams Hill Golf Club where potential new fire stations could be built on these lots should the need arise.

Ransomware Attack

In mid-March 2020, the district was the target of a ransomware attack. While they contacted the FBI immediately, COVID-19 emergency protocols active throughout the United States prevented the FBI from sending field specialists to investigate. There was a telephone interview but no perpetrator was found. The FBI ultimately advised the district not to pay the ransom and to rebuild the computer system. The result was that all electronic data prior to 2020 was lost, with the sole exception of the district's financial data, which had been backed up off-site. Nonetheless, the loss of data was substantial and the database is still in the process of being rebuilt. This affected the district's ability to fulfill the entirety of SDCTA's public records requests.

Additional sources:

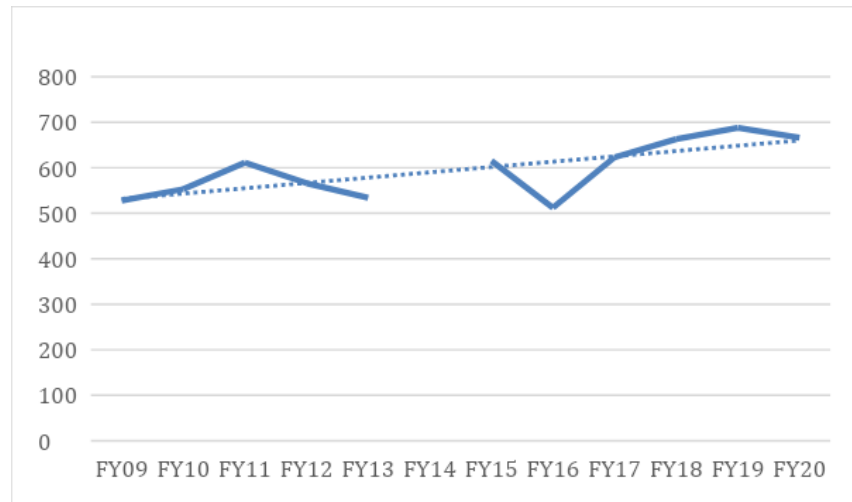
<https://www.sdlafco.org/home/showpublisheddocument/2446/636914596934400000>

<https://www.borregosun.com/story/2016/02/24/news/borrego-springs-ambulance-grant/1852.html>

Performance Data

Calls

Year	Calls
FY09	528
FY10	553
FY11	611
FY12	566
FY13	534
FY14	Unavailable
FY15	615
FY16	512
FY17	623
FY18	663
FY19	688
FY20	666



The trend line superimposed on the chart above is not a statistically-determined best fit line, but connects actual data points from FY09 to FY20.

That said, it does seem that the number of calls is increasing, on average, over the years. Using a four-year running average heuristic, calls increase year-over-year on average by 2.01% (standard deviation of 3.07%).

	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Running 4-yr averages	564.5	566	570.33	571.67	553.67	583.33	603.25	621.5	660
Year-over-year Increase		0.27%	0.77%	0.23%	-3.15%	5.36%	3.41%	3.03%	6.19%

Response Times

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Entire District	9:13 (based only on data available from February, March, April, and July 2018)	9:00 (based only on data available from March and July 2019)	Data Unavailable

ISO and Homeowner Insurance Information

ISO

(For a description of what ISO is, see Appendix)

As of January 1st, 2019 BSPD received an ISO classification of 05/5x. It received 56.65 out of 105.5 available credits (54%).

In the report, it received a high score on criteria under the Emergency Communications section (8.23 out of 10).

For Water Supply criteria, it received 30.17 out of 40 available credits. Most of the credits lost were from its Inspection and Flow Testing score. This criterion reviews the fire hydrant inspection frequency, and the completeness of the inspections.

Lastly, it lost most of its credit on Fire Department criteria, receiving 21.81 out of 50 available credits. The four sections it lost the most credits on were Engine Companies (0.87 out of 6), Deployment Analysis (1.83 out of 10), Company Personnel (6.67 out of 15), and Training (5.12 out of 9).

The **Engine Companies** criterion reviews the number of engine companies, their pump capacity, hose testing, pump testing and the equipment carried on the in-service pumpers. The **Deployment Analysis**

criterion examines the number and adequacy of existing engine and ladder-service companies to cover built-upon areas of its jurisdiction. The **Company Personnel** criterion reviews the average number of existing firefighters and company officers available to respond to reported to first alarm fire structures in the city. The **Training** criterion sets eight distinct requirements for the length of time the firefighters should receive training (with each requirement covering a separate area of expertise). BSFPD scored almost perfectly on all the requirements except Facilities and Use (0 out of 35 criterion-specific credits), which requires that each firefighter receive 18 hours of training per year in structure fire related subjects.

Homeowner Insurance Information

Homeowners' (Voluntary)	ZIP Code	92004		Dwelling Fire (Voluntary)	ZIP Code	92004		Dwelling Fire (FAIR Plan)	ZIP Code	92004
2009	Premium	\$ 1,491,222		2009	Premium	\$ 132,052		2009	Premium	\$ 7,930
	Exposure	15,707			Exposure	2,790			Exposure	159
2010	Premium	\$ 1,655,568		2010	Premium	\$ 140,993		2010	Premium	\$ 6,975
	Exposure	16,190			Exposure	2,824			Exposure	120
2011	Premium	\$ 1,717,041		2011	Premium	\$ 132,075		2011	Premium	\$ 7,319
	Exposure	16,429			Exposure	2,905			Exposure	121
2012	Premium	\$ 1,729,333		2012	Premium	\$ 130,405		2012	Premium	\$ 10,519
	Exposure	16,277			Exposure	3,040			Exposure	148
2013	Premium	\$ 1,689,589		2013	Premium	\$ 127,924		2013	Premium	\$ 14,947
	Exposure	16,247			Exposure	2,968			Exposure	168
2014	Premium	\$ 1,654,821		2014	Premium	\$ 125,092		2014	Premium	\$ 13,479
	Exposure	15,742			Exposure	3,074			Exposure	185

2015	Premium	\$ 1,674,423	2015	Premium	\$ 125,350	2015	Premium	\$ 15,952
	Exposure	15,737		Exposure	2,927		Exposure	209
2016	Premium	\$ 1,695,962	2016	Premium	\$ 122,917	2016	Premium	\$ 16,422
	Exposure	15,626		Exposure	2,898		Exposure	202
2017	Premium	\$ 1,720,269	2017	Premium	\$ 147,573	2017	Premium	\$ 16,294
	Exposure	15,791		Exposure	3,268		Exposure	213
2018	Premium	\$ 1,785,894	2018	Premium	\$ 153,193	2018	Premium	\$ 14,158
	Exposure	15,743		Exposure	3,196		Exposure	171

Financial Data

The following data derives from the district's audited financials.

Revenues and Expenditures

Total Revenues:

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Total	\$2,416,182	\$1,929,431	\$2,031,972

Revenues by item

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Property taxes	\$ 1,351,167	\$ 1,405,996	\$ 1,599,767
Use of Money and Property	\$ 69,187	\$ 81,476	\$ 82,634
Mitigation fees	\$ 4,167	\$ 1,375	-
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,712	\$ 2,876	\$ 1,112
Charges for Services	\$ 552,055	\$ 364,708	\$ 343,428



Grants	\$ 57,894	\$ 73,000	\$ 5,031
Contribution	\$ 379,000	-	-

Total Expenditures

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Total	\$2,358,077	\$2,071,444	1,923,030

Expenditures by item

	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Salaries and benefits	\$ 1,392,691	\$ 1,505,154	\$ 1,416,732
Insurance	\$ 6,316	\$ 10,947	\$ 12,402
Capital Outlay	\$ 505,555	\$ 54,355	\$ 10,660
Office and administration	\$ 453,515	\$ 500,988	\$ 483,236

Debt

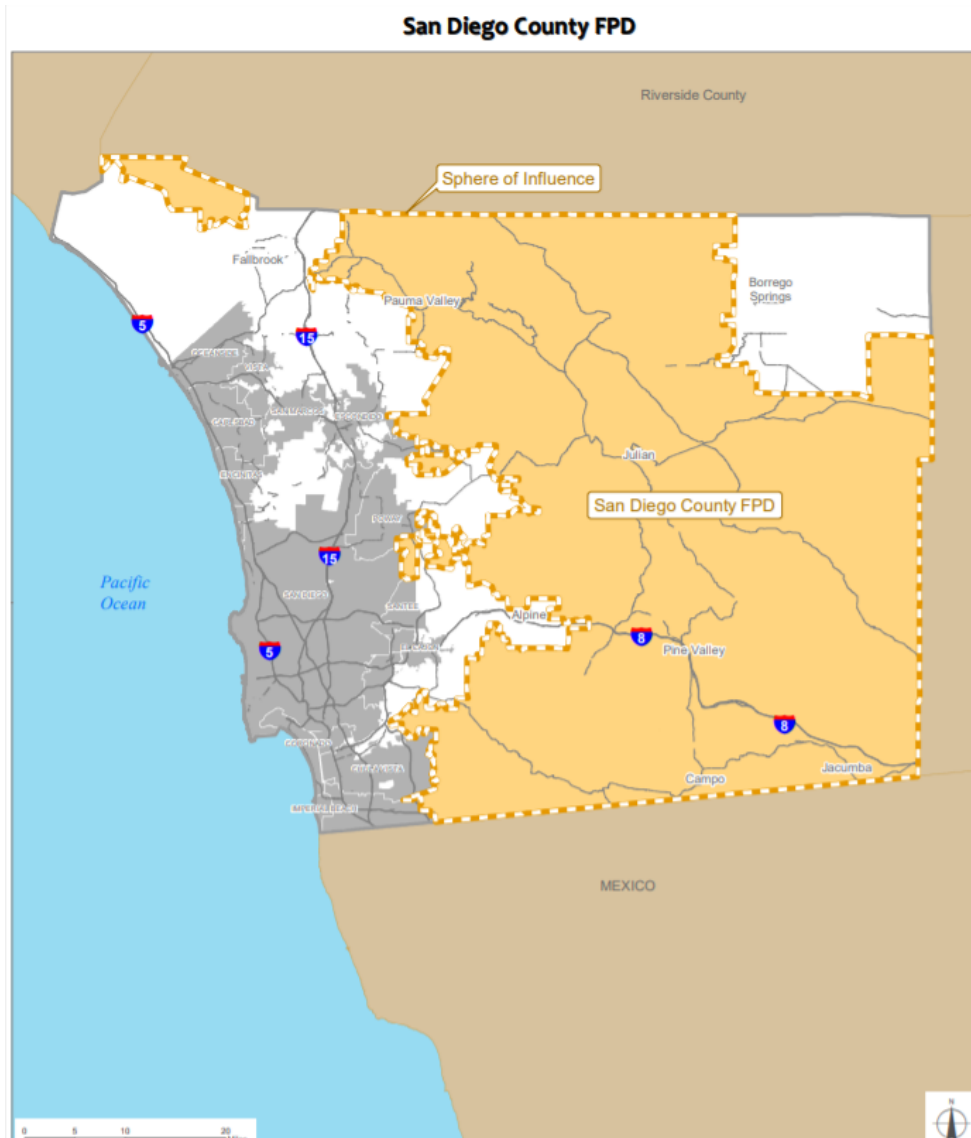
Total Liability

	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Total	\$1,527,411	\$1,498,551	\$1,659,600

Liability by item

	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Accounts Payable and Other Accrued Liabilities	\$ 18,293	\$ (558)	\$ 23,988
Compensated Absences	\$ 59,089	\$ 35,517	\$ 35,599
Net Pension Liability	\$ 1,450,029	\$ 1,463,592	\$ 1,600,013

San Diego County Fire Protection District



Map source: SD LAFCO

General Statistics

Year Established: 2020	Square Miles Covered: 2,656
# of Employees: 169	
# of Households Served: 17,420	
# of Businesses Served: 1,394	

History and Background

The history of fire protection in San Diego County is an ever evolving mixture of multiple organizations that provide fire protection service with varying degrees of effectiveness. Since the State does not mandate that cities and counties provide fire protection as part of their core services, there is no obligation for these entities to spend funds for this effort. Accordingly fire protection and the level of service has evolved with the willingness of communities to tax themselves or the availability of property tax revenue to provide this service. The County has historically considered fire protection to be a local issue and thus this service has ranged from “no service”; to unmanned volunteer fire stations with limited equipment; to well run and fully equipped organizations; and everywhere in-between.

In the 1920’s the County contracted with the California Department of Forestry (CDF) to provide wildland fire protection coverage during the non-fire season for unincorporated areas and in 1973 expanded that coverage to include structural fire protection for areas outside of other fire protections districts. After one year the County concluded it couldn’t afford the additional cost and announced it would phase out this support over a five-year period ending in June 1980. It anticipated that this service and funding would be picked up by nearby cities or special districts which were starting to occur. However in 1978, passage of Proposition 13 stopped the ability of special districts to collect property tax revenues and the transition to special fire protection districts came to a stop. Due to Prop 13, the County decided to extend its funding to local districts until 1982 when it closed down its Office of Fire Services and stopped all financial support.

At this point in time, the County proposed establishing a Consolidated Rural Fire Protection District to bring together all volunteer companies in the unincorporated territory (that were outside of existing fire protection districts) and to provide it with partial funding. However this new district would have to obtain the majority of its funding from benefit fees, which would require approval of two-thirds of the voters.

This effort as well as two more attempts were not approved by the voters. While the state had responsibility for wildland fires, the County continued to look for ways to fund and assist locally established fire companies to cover structure fires. The County of San Diego had no fire protection responsibilities nor the legal obligation to provide these services and did not supply citizen lead fire companies with funding, leaving local agencies largely on their own.

The Formation of Independent Fire Departments

Many of San Diego’s incorporated cities established their own fire departments. With the absence of county-provided fire protection, the unincorporated areas formed 501C3 non-profit fire companies to provide fire protection in the communities of Mount Laguna, Shelter Valley, Ocotillo Wells, Sunshine Summit, Julian, Cuyamaca, Ranchita, Palomar Mountain, Campo, Pine Valley, De Luz, Harbison Canyon, Jamul, Deerhorn, Intermountain, Otay Mesa, Lake Morena, Descanso, San Pasqual, Jacumba, and Boulevard. These backcountry communities used grassroots efforts and grants to fund their stations. For staffing, local residents stepped up to become volunteer firefighters.

Valley Center established a Fire Protection District in 1981 which covers 84.5 square miles and is funded with a property tax assessment.

In 1984, the Julian Volunteer Fire Company and Cuyamaca Volunteer Fire Company came together to form a California special district, Julian-Cuyamaca Fire Protection District (JCFPD). With the passage of a flat \$50 property tax, the district had funds to support itself.

Pine Valley established a Fire Protection District.

Deer Springs Fire Protection District and Ramona Municipal Water District use parcel taxes to provide fire prevention services through contracting with CALFIRE. Lakeside Fire Protection District contracts with the County, but they provide fire protection using their own personnel.

The community of Borrego Springs established a special district in 1961 - prior to LAFCO's origin and the passage of prop 13 - to provide fire protection and emergency medical services within approximately 310 square miles in the most northeast section of San Diego County.

The Fallbrook Local Fire District was formed in 1953, which was later reorganized as the Fallbrook Fire Protection District. In 1987, the Fallbrook Fire Protection District reorganized with the Rainbow Volunteer Fire District (CSA-7) to form the North County Fire Protection District, covering the communities of Fallbrook, Rainbow, and Bonsall. NCFPD currently has 5 fire stations and its primary service area is approximately 90 square miles with an estimated population of 52,000 people.

Disaster Strikes

This all changed in October of 2003 when three large fires broke out in the county between October 25th and 27th. The largest was the Cedar Fire which started in the backcountry and was not stopped until it destroyed many homes in the San Diego suburbs. The Cedar Fire burned 273,246 acres making it the largest fire in California history at the time. In total the fires burned 3,231 structures, 376,237 acres (13% of SDC total land mass), 16 people died, and \$43,230,826 had been spent to suppress the fires. Four years later in October of 2008, the Witch-Guejito-Poomacha Complex Fire burned 247,800 acres and also destroyed many homes. At this point in time, the County and LAFCO conducted studies that recommended the County take responsibility for structure fire protection in unincorporated areas and consolidate the majority of outlying fire districts under a new organization managed and funded by the County.

Formation of SDCFA

In response, fire protection and emergency medical services (EMS) were added to County Service Area (CSA) No. 135 by formally establishing San Diego County Regional Fire Authority (SDCFA) in July of 2008. This county ordinance granted the agency jurisdiction over 1.5 million acres in unincorporated San Diego County.

In October 2008, CSA No. 135 was authorized to provide structure fire protection services as a

latent power within a restricted area of the CSA that represented approximately 60 percent of the SDCFA. Activation of latent powers fulfilled Step I of a three-part county plan to extend fire protection services throughout the SDCFA. Proposals to expand the latent powers area and authorize fire protection service within the remaining 40 percent of the SDCFA were authorized by LAFCO between 2011 and 2016. The sphere is still generally coterminous within the latent powers area and contains several special study areas. Services in the latent powers area are provided through contracts with CAL FIRE and volunteer fire companies and funded through the County Fire Enhancement Program, property taxes, and voter-approved assessments. LAFCO approved a sphere-of-influence for the latent powers area in 2008 that is coterminous with the restricted fire protection service area.

CSA No. 135 was formed in 1994 to support an 800 MHz communications system for public safety personnel in San Diego County. The CSA boundary includes unincorporated San Diego County and certain areas within 10 cities; additional cities and organizations contract for RCS services. Fiscal and operational oversight has been delegated to a member-agency Advisory Board. The RCS is staffed by the Sheriff's Department. (1)

Development of SDCFA

The County of San Diego hired a director for SDCFA and currently contracts with CALFIRE for staffing. The San Diego CALFIRE Chief wears double hats by also being the Chief of SDCFA. The Board of Directors for the SDCFA is the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. Additionally, SDCFA established an advisory committee to advise the BOS.

SDCFA bought a fleet of standardized equipment. Much of the equipment was loaned on contract to the already well-established fire companies. Dispatch contracts with Monte Vista Interagency Command Center were established. SDCFA started a reserve firefighter program, and reserve firefighters were required to complete SDCFA fire academy before they were assigned a set of gear and could begin taking stipend shifts at local stations. At one time SDCFA had over 400 reserve firefighters, but the program and the number of reserve firefighters has since dwindled. SDCFA began paying to staff CALFIRE stations through the winter months as well as for additional staffing during fire season to respond to all call types via mutual/auto aid agreements. Additionally, the county also had support staff contracts with a couple fire departments.

Growth of SDCFA

After being established, the County approached each of the fire departments about taking over jurisdiction. This decision was not taken lightly. Town Hall meetings were held, drawing large crowds, and local news stations' attention. Ultimately, it was discovered that because legal special districts were not formed, the non-profits operating fire departments had no legal authority to continue operating now that SDCFA had been established. One by one, the rural communities dissolved their 501C3s fire companies or signed their assets over to SDCFA on 100 leases.

In 2011, the fire protection latent powers were expanded by 136,818 acres upon dissolution of CSA 109 (Mt. Laguna); CSA 110 (Palomar Mtn.); CSA 111 (Boulevard); CSA 112 (Campo); and CSA 113 (San

Pasqual). In 2016, the fire protection latent powers for CSA 135 was expanded by 445,676 acres upon dissolution of the San Diego Rural FPD and again by another 44,460 acres after the dissolution of the Pine Valley FPD was finalized. The County built an \$8.2 million dollar fire station for PVFPD signing over to SDCFA. (2) (3)

Staffing at the newly acquired SDCFA stations ranged from some sitting dark to others having a standard type 1 fire engine staffed with a CALFIRE Engineer or Captain, and a SDCFA reserve firefighter(s). Certain rural areas where stations were either severely understaffed or unstaffed faced difficulties with receiving and responding to calls (4). After several controversial incidents relating to missed calls and increasing public pressure, SDCFA began staffing its stations with a minimum of a CALFIRE Engineer or Captain and firefighter on a standard type 1 fire engine.

Between 2011 and 2018, SDCFA approached JCFPD three times about dissolving their district. Each time the offer was in exchange for JCFPDs assets and the yearly \$50 property tax, SDCFA would provide a \$1.5 million dollar yearly contract to staff the district with one standard type 1 fire engine, with two firefighters, and possibly a reserve firefighter.

After being approached by SDCFA for the fourth time, in February of 2018, the JCFPD BOD voted to petition to dissolve the district. LAFCO voted to accept the district's application for dissolution on September 10, 2018. Julian-Cuyamaca citizens collected enough protest signatures to get the dissolution of JCFPD on a special election ballot. CAL FIRE San Diego County Firefighters Union, IAFF Local 2881, heavily lobbied for the dissolution of the district. LAFCO voted to dissolve JCFPD immediately on April 8th, 2019. LAFCO gave all JCFPDs assets and authority to SDCFA. There was no transfer of power and many loose ties were never tied, including paying staff. (5) With the dissolution of JCFPD, SDCFA now had the 52,000-acre missing puzzle piece to become one consolidated agency with control of 1.5 million acres of the unincorporated county.

When consolidation occurs, all property tax assessments and taxpayer-funded assets previously held by the district being consolidated are absorbed by the expanding district.

From SDCFA to SDCFPD

On July 7th, 2020 the San Diego County BOS initiated proceedings with San Diego LAFCO to form the San Diego County Fire Protection District (SDCFPD). LAFCO finalized the formation of SDCFPD on December 7th, 2020, and it is now a separate legal entity responsible for providing fire protection and emergency medical services with CSA 135.

Today, SDCFPD covers 35 fire stations, provides funding to staff CALFIRE wildland stations during the winter months, and covers 40 communities including Mount Laguna, Shelter Valley, Ocotillo Wells, Sunshine Summit, Julian, Cuyamaca, Ranchita, Palomar Mountain, Campo, Pine Valley, De Luz, Harbison Canyon, Jamul, Deerhorn, Intermountain, Otay Mesa, Lake Morena, Descanso, San Pasqual, Jacumba, and Boulevard across 1.5 million acres of the unincorporated area of San Diego county. The district covers a diverse range of geography including desert and mountain climates with a peak elevation of 6,526 feet.

[Map of Stations](#) (CAL FIRE stations not considered a part of SDCFPD)

SDCFPDs staffing standard is three persons daily, with at least one Engineer or Captain, one firefighter-paramedic, and one firefighter, and possibly a reserve firefighter on a two-wheel drive type 1 fire engine. Volunteer Reserves are able to volunteer for stipend shifts at a number of fire stations to bring the total personnel count to four. Additionally, the apparatus deployed at each station is specific to the needs of the community and does vary across the service area. SDCFPD has a number of water tenders staffed through the county. In accordance with the ambulance ordinance established by the County of San Diego EMS Section, some fire stations like Julian, Warner Springs, Pine Valley, etc., house a contracted ASL ambulance staffed with one paramedic and one EMT. The County purchased a standard fleet of vehicles including 26 structural engines, 7 wildland engines, 12 patrols, 4 urban search and rescues, 14 water tenders, and 10 command vehicles. SDCFPD has an established Community Emergency Response Team also known as CERT. Training of community members will begin in early 2022.

Most recently, the Ramona Municipal Water District Board voted to transfer the responsibility for fire protection and emergency medical services to the County Fire. This action will be presented to the County Board of Supervisors on January 25th and then be brought to LAFCO for action.

Performance Data

Response Times

Regional Category	FY18	FY19	FY20
Urban	9:44	9:41	10:32
Rural	11:19	11:06	11:37
Outlying	16:35	16:12	16:50

Number of Calls

2018	2019	2020
7,376	8,004	7,811

Financial Data

Revenues and Expenditures

Total Revenue

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Total	\$ 37,413,998	\$ 41,841,466	\$ 48,758,421

Revenue by item

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Taxes Current Property	\$ 2,527,004	\$ 2,925,087	\$ 2,668,751
Taxes Other Than Current Secured	\$ 41,463	\$ 34,883	\$ 40,148
Fines, Forfeitures & Penalties	\$ 3,096	\$ 1,386	\$ 1,998
Revenue From Use of Money & Property	\$ 59,569	\$ 132,354	\$ 144,919
Intergovernmental Revenues	\$ 1,514,172	\$ 461,228	\$ 1,164,993
Charges for Current Services	\$ 3,462,623	\$ 4,056,603	\$ 3,964,565
Miscellaneous Revenues	\$ 3,253,588	\$ 656,453	\$ 5,022,833
Other Financing Sources	\$ 393,725	\$ 637,934	\$ 467,455
Fund Balance Component Decreases	\$ 36,398	\$ 47,020	\$ 1,073,966
Use of Fund Balance	\$ (1,390,628)	\$ 3,278,320	\$ 3,372,117
General Purpose Revenue Allocation	\$ 27,512,988	\$ 29,610,198	\$ 30,836,676

Total Expenditures

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Total	\$ 37,413,995	\$ 41,841,468	\$ 48,758,421

Expenditures by item

	FY18	FY19	FY20
--	------	------	------

Salaries & Benefits	\$ 2,662,595	\$ 2,789,379	\$ 3,417,879
Services & Supplies	\$ 32,144,228	\$ 37,306,758	\$ 41,484,938
Other Charges	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 435,114
Capital Assets			
Equipment	\$ 1,356,146	\$ 1,200,889	\$ 2,657,311
Expenditure Transfer & Reimbursements	\$ (28,703)	\$ (19,084)	\$ (12,222)
Operating Transfers Out	\$ 1,279,729	\$ 563,526	\$ 775,401

Appendix I – Additional General Information on Firefighting

SDCFPD’s Standards on Response Times

Fire and Medical Initial Response Time Benchmarks

Regional Category	Total Response Time (minutes)
Urban	8:00
Rural	13:00
Outlying	23:00
Desert	48:00

The times above represent the ideal response times from a fire/medical unit in each region type.

How Fire Response Generally Works

Auto and Mutual Aid Agreements

Automatic aid is assistance dispatched automatically by contractual agreement between two communities or fire districts.

Mutual aid is an agreement among emergency responders to lend assistance across jurisdictional boundaries. This may occur due to an emergency response that exceeds local resources, such as a disaster or a multiple-alarm fire.

Resources on auto and mutual aid are used for 12 hours with no charge. After 12 hours the agency can charge the agency with jurisdiction for services provided.

Aerial Resources

San Diego has two smaller-sized CALFIRE operated air tankers and a spotter based out of Ramona. The party at fault pays for the cost of the air attack.

San Diego Sheriff Special Enforcement Detail operates two helicopters often referred to as Astrea.

San Diego City Fire-Rescue has a helicopter for rescues.

There are at least two air ambulance companies that service the county, REACH and Mercy air. The patient (or their insurance) pays for their services.

What is ISO?

Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) collects and evaluates information from communities in the United States on their structure fire suppression capabilities. The data is analyzed using their Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) and then a Public Protection Classification (PPC) grade is assigned to the community. The surveys are conducted whenever it appears that there is a possibility of a PPC change. As such, the PPC program provides important, up-to-date information about fire protection services throughout the country.

Data collection and analysis is carried out through a combination of meetings between trained ISO field representatives and the dispatch center coordinator, community fire official, and water superintendent and is used in conjunction with a comprehensive questionnaire to collect the data necessary to determine the PPC grade. This questionnaire reviews three elements relating to fire suppression: Emergency Communications, Fire Department, and Water Supply. Each of these three sections have a list of specific criteria within them, each being worth a certain amount of credits.

Grand Jury Reports on Fire Protection

Grand Jury Report (2007-08): *The Fire Next Time - Will We Be Ready?*

In response to the 2003 Cedar Fire and 2007 Witch Creek/Guejito Fire, a Grand Jury Report focused on fire protection in San Diego County was filed on May 29th, 2008. The purpose of the investigation was, as stated:

- To examine and review the efforts, cooperation, and results of actions taken by authorities and personnel in charge of management and response to emergency disasters;
- To assess what lessons were learned from the Cedar Fire and ought to be learned from the Witch Creek/Guejito Fire;
- To make recommendations for improving the ability of the community to respond to the threat of wildfire;
- To commend the exemplary actions of front line responders who serviced the needs of 500,000 people affected by the wildfires.

The report focused on the six following discussion areas:

- Discussion #1 - Lessons Learned From the Cedar Fire?
- Discussion #2 - Needs v. Wishes
- Discussion #3 - Brush Management
- Discussion #4 - Funding Fire Protection

- Discussion #5 - Consolidation of County Fire Agencies
- Discussion #6 - Sheltering

Each discussion section goes into elaborate detail about its topic, and Discussions #4, #5, and #6 each contains a set of facts/findings and recommendations. Several of the major recommendations were:

- Approve and fund the consolidation of fire agencies according to the Phase I plan of LAFCO or a substantially similar plan.
- Prepare a ballot measure proposing a 2.5% increase in the Transient Occupancy Tax to be used solely for the purpose of improving fire protection levels including additional stations, engines, firefighters, training, equipment, etc.
- Reallocate existing funds and develop new revenue streams.
- Review the County Board of Supervisors Policy A-176 on the allocation of Proposition 172 funds with the objective of earmarking a portion of these funds for firefighting purposes.
- Create the position of San Diego County Fire Commander

For the complete details of the report's procedures, findings, and recommendations, you can [view the full document here](#). Additionally, these are the official responses to the report:

[County of San Diego Response](#)

[San Diego Mayoral Office Response](#)

[City of San Diego Response](#)

Grand Jury Report (2014-15): *Back-Country Fire Protection - Where We Are Today*

On May 11, 2015, a Grand Jury Report was filed focusing on the current status of firefighting capabilities in the unincorporated or "back-country" areas of the County. The report states there had been significant improvements had been made with the creation of the San Diego County Fire Authority (SDCFA) in that it provided support for unifying the administration, communications, training and equipping of rural fire agencies. However, the report also made it clear that there was still much work to be done.

The two main issues explored by this report were:

- How did the new organizational approach work during the 2014 wildfires and what were the lessons learned?
- What is the status of the consolidation effort to improve firefighting by bringing backcountry fire agencies under the governance of the County Fire Authority?

Following a detailed discussion examining these two issues and providing a compilation of facts and findings, the report delivered two final recommendations:

- Consolidate or establish agreements between the County Fire Authority and all backcountry fire agencies (including Indian Tribal agencies if possible) in order to maximize fire protection services to the backcountry.
- Identify and offer specialized services (such as vehicle maintenance, purchasing and contracting, business services, etc.) to backcountry fire agencies for the benefit of existing partners and to encourage other agencies to join the County Fire Authority.

For the complete details of the report's procedures, findings, and recommendations, you can [view the full document here](#).

Emergency Dispatch in San Diego County

Fire Dispatch Centers

There are nine fire dispatch centers in San Diego County (1):

- Military bases: Camp Pendleton; Miramar Air Station; and military bases around San Diego harbor area
- US Forest Service
- San Diego City: San Diego, Poway, and South Bay cities
- North Comm: Del Mar north and west of I-15
- Escondido City
- Heartland: La Mesa east to Alpine and Spring Valley north to Lakeside & Santee (San Miguel Consolidated FPD contracts with this dispatch center)
- Cal Fire (Monte Vista): all remaining rural portions of San Diego County (Borrego Springs FPD and San Diego County FPD contracts with this dispatch center)

How 911 Emergency Calls Are Processed

1. The Incident is reported to 911
2. 911 takes the report and assesses which agencies should respond (approximately 2-5 minutes)
3. The 911 operator contracts the dispatch for Fire Departments/Ambulance company, Sheriff's/Police, CHP, Air Resources, etc
4. Dispatch for each agency processes the call and then assigns units to call (approximately 3-8 minutes). For fire emergencies, once fire dispatch receives the location and nature of the emergency, that information is entered into the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. CAD automatically determines the appropriate units to send depending on the location and nature of the emergency.

The dispatch system is borderless, in that it automatically sends the closest fire units regardless of the jurisdiction. The closest unit is determined not by the closest fire station, but through the use of Automatic

Vehicle Locators (AVL), which know the location of every fire unit in San Diego County, whether it is in the station or out on the road (1).

5. Once the page goes out, units begin responding (those responding have about 2 minutes to go responding)
 - a. First responders drive to the incident (in urban areas travel response time is approximately 1-10 minutes. In rural areas travel response time is approximately be 5-25+ minutes)
 - b. The first responders then go through their dispatch to get any additional units needed.

There is a fairly substantial amount of time between when someone calls 911 and when first responders are notified. This is due to several reasons. Some agencies/dispatch companies get calls out at different rates.

- For example, CHP usually has the incidents on their website a couple of minutes before Monte Vista pages out the fire department.
- You can follow open CHP incidents on this website, <https://cad.chp.ca.gov/Traffic.aspx>
- You can also listen to Monte Vista Dispatch on the Pulse Point App.

Billing

Each agency has its own billing practice. Some districts charge residents/property owners an annual tax/fee and do not bill for services used. Non-residents who use services may be billed. Other districts only charge anyone who uses their services.

Anyone who starts a fire is 100% liable for all damages. In the case of wildland fires, CalFire charges the at-fault party for the entire bill. This includes the cost of air support.