

4.0 CURRENT FIRE SERVICE STRUCTURE

The service area characteristics within the Study Area vary significantly, including densely developed urban area within Watsonville, lightly populated rural areas such as Corralitos, and isolated communities in wildland areas. Areas with higher density are generally more cost-effective to serve; conversely, large lot, low-density development increases population but not density and is relatively more expensive to serve. The Study Area contains State Highway Routes 1, 129 and 152, which increase the demand for emergency medical services.

4.1 Fire Service Funding

Fire protection services and capital improvements are funded through a combination of property taxes, Proposition 172 funds, fees, and special levies. The following *Table 4.1* summarizes the funding for each of the agencies:

Table 4.1
2006-2007 Budgeted Fire Service Funding

Agency	Total Land+Imp Value (in millions)	Property Tax Revenue for Fire Agency	Special Levies- Parcel Tax, Fire Suppression Assessment, etc.	Other Fees/ Revenues	Total Revenue 2006-07	Parcel Count
Watsonville	\$2,998.3	\$4,766,581 ⁽¹⁾	0	\$442,000	\$5,208,581	9,441
PVFPD	\$1,076.7	\$1,244,100	\$140,000	\$232,000 ⁽²⁾	\$1,616,100	4,148
CSA 4	\$263.3	\$521,633 ⁽³⁾	\$374,496	\$10,000	\$906,129	625
CSA 48 (Study Area only) ⁽⁴⁾	\$883.2	\$504,726	\$288,650	\$43,295 ⁽⁵⁾	\$836,671	2,935
Total	\$5,221.5	\$7,037,040	\$803,146	\$727,295	\$8,567,481	17,149

⁽¹⁾Watsonville General Fund allocation to Fire Services Budget – FY 2006/07

⁽²⁾PVFPD Other Revenue includes \$168,000 CAL-STAR Dispatch Contract

⁽³⁾Includes Secured, Unsecured and Supplemental property taxes, and Homeowners' property taxes

⁽⁴⁾CSA 48 Study Area data based on FY 2005/06 Adjusted Net Value

⁽⁵⁾Includes interest, inspection charges, and other charges budgeted for County Fire for FY 2006/07. County Fire other revenues and costs are assumed to be shared equally between the four year-round stations.

In addition to the budgeted revenues shown above, the PVFPD has approximately \$470,000 in reserves and CSA 4 has approximately \$330,000 as of the beginning of FY 2006/07.⁸ Anticipated property tax revenues that will accrue to the agencies for FY 2007/08 reflect an estimated 7% increase.

The FY 2006/07 budgeted revenues for County Fire include \$1.6 million in property taxes, \$940,000 in CSA fees and \$360,000 in other revenue. Per the calculations completed by the County for this study, the

⁸ The PVFPD reserves are typically \$200,000 to \$300,000; the \$470,000 is higher than normal due to a timing difference in recording CAL FIRE service charges.

assessed value of the Tax Rate Areas within the Study Area comprises approximately 32.8% of total assessed value for all of County Fire.⁹

4.2 Study Area Fire Service Providers

County of Santa Cruz and CAL FIRE

The County Fire Department, the Fire Marshal's Office, and the two CSAs are administered by the County's Office of Emergency Services. The County Fire Department is responsible for structural fire protection, first responder emergency medical services, Fire Marshal, public fire safety education, and inspection services for the unincorporated area of Santa Cruz County outside the boundaries of autonomous fire districts. CSA 48 was established to help finance the cost of fire protection within this area and CSA 4 was established to fund services for the Pajaro Dunes community. County Fire operates from 10 stations, including two in the Study Area (Corralitos and Pajaro Dunes). The State owns the Corralitos Fire Station, which provides a base to serve the State Responsibility Area shown in *Figure 2.1*.

The County contracts with CAL FIRE to provide operational and support services to fulfill its fire protection responsibility, including training and communications for the volunteer fire companies. CAL FIRE staffs and maintains 7 fire stations throughout Santa Cruz County during fire season (typically June through October). Four of these stations remain open throughout the rest of the year, including Corralitos (see *Table 2.1, County Fire Configuration*).

As discussed in *Section 3.1*, the Public Resources Code¹⁰ provides a means for local governments to contract with CAL FIRE to keep a State-owned facility staffed during the non-fire season (the Amador Plan) and to provide full service fire protection in facilities owned by the local agency (Schedule A Program). Under an Amador Plan agreement, CAL FIRE retains the right to assign fire protection resources to other areas of the state during periods of critical fire weather or major fires; these assignments take priority over agreements made with local agencies, although the State is obligated to backfill local staff when resources have been directed elsewhere.

The County of Santa Cruz contracts with CAL FIRE under both Amador Plan and Schedule A agreements. For the Corralitos station the Amador Plan agreement includes one Battalion Chief, one 3-person engine company, and 25% of the cost for three Emergency Command Center Fire Captains. In addition, under a Schedule A agreement, the County funds year-round countywide command and support services, Fire Marshal, and related operational functions. These agreements do not guarantee full coverage for Corralitos, 24 hours per day throughout the year. The Pajaro Dunes station is under a separate Schedule A agreement, with CSA 4 funding for 2-person engine staffing and related operational expenses. The Schedule A agreement requires continuous coverage; so, the Pajaro Dunes company is not deployed to wildfires in other regions of the state.

⁹ Data provided by County of Santa Cruz Assessor-Recorder's Office, April 2006

¹⁰ State of California Public Resources Code, Sections 4142 and 4144

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City of Watsonville

The City of Watsonville Fire Department has two fire stations, one located downtown near Second and Rodriguez Streets and the other adjacent to the airport. The Department has 3-person engine staffing, with one staff being a firefighter/paramedic. The Department also has a 3-person aerial ladder truck company. There is a Battalion Chief on duty 24 hours per day. All engine companies are able to provide first response to hazardous material incidents. The Department provides services by contract to the PVFPD for the Freedom community and areas north and east of the city as Watsonville has a much shorter response time than engines coming from the Corralitos or PVFPD stations. Watsonville is compensated at \$695 per call for this service and has budgeted \$157,000 in revenue for FY 2006/07 (approximately 225 calls).

The Watsonville Fire Department is the only fire agency in the Study Area that has firefighter/paramedics providing Advanced Life Support. American Medical Response (AMR), the County's ambulance service provider, provides ALS ambulance service. There is one ambulance stationed in South County, and when it is on a call the response time for the second ambulance can be lengthy. To meet an eight-minute response time for first responders to a medical emergency, the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency contracts for Watsonville Fire to staff one engine at each station with a paramedic at all times. Watsonville is compensated for this service, which essentially covers the cost for the paramedic pay increment and some equipment. The commitment to continuously staff two units requires nine paramedics. Watsonville's paramedic program has been chronically understaffed, with staffing covered by firefighter/paramedics working overtime. This situation is further impacted by increasing seniority as staff continues to accrue more vacation time. The City needs to hire/promote additional firefighter/paramedics in order to sustain its ALS program.

Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District

The Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District service area is primarily rural with low-density development and includes the unincorporated Freedom and Salsipuedes areas north and east of the City of Watsonville. The District has one fire station located on Casserly Road that is staffed full-time. The Mount Madonna Station is staffed by volunteer firefighters working under CAL FIRE supervision. The District contracts with CAL FIRE through a Schedule A agreement to manage and staff the district, including personnel, administration, communications, and fire protection planning services. The CAL FIRE contract includes a Battalion Chief, 2-person engine staffing, fire prevention, and related support and operational services. The District has added an additional staff person in order to provide coverage for sick time, vacations, etc. When available, this additional staff also serves as a third person for engine response; this is occurring on approximately 10% of calls. As noted above, the District has an agreement with the City of Watsonville for Watsonville to provide fire and emergency response to the Freedom community and other areas adjacent to the City.

4.3 Adjacent Fire Service Providers

Aptos-La Selva Fire Protection District

The Aptos-La Selva Fire Protection District serves the unincorporated communities of Aptos, Rio del Mar, Seacliff, Seascape, Day Valley and La Selva Beach. The District provides automatic aid for County Fire and Watsonville. The District's service area is mostly residential, with some light commercial and visitor recreational uses. The District has three fire stations located in Aptos, Rio del Mar and La Selva Beach. The District has 3-person engine companies at each of the three stations. The on-duty personnel are supplemented by off-duty response and automatic aid from neighboring districts. The Aptos-La Selva FPD provides Advanced Life Support services.

North (Monterey) County Fire Protection District

The North County Fire Protection District in Monterey County serves a 140 square-mile area extending from the coast eastward to the San Benito County line. The area has a population of approximately 40,000 persons. The North County FPD has three engine companies and the three fire stations are staffed 24 hours a day. Station No. 1 located in Castroville accommodates the administrative offices for the District and contains the most firefighting/emergency response equipment. Station No. 2 is located on Pesante Road in Prunedale. Station No. 3 at 301 Elkhorn Road, Royal Oaks, is located closest to Watsonville. Engine companies have been downsized from three to two permanent staff due to funding constraints. The District has ten reserve firefighters that can be used to augment permanent staff.

Watsonville and North County FPD have an automatic aid agreement for Watsonville to provide first due fire response in the Pajaro community and for emergency medical calls on a segment of Highway 1 in Monterey County. The North County FPD responds to all confirmed structure fires within the Watsonville Station No. 1 area. There is now triple redundancy in dispatch for this area, including Watsonville Fire, North County FPD, and County Fire. This redundancy improves response times and efficiency, ensuring that the nearest available unit is dispatched.

Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District service area lies within Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties. Within Santa Cruz, the District serves 70 parcels in a rural unincorporated area along Highway 129 and Rogge Lane. The District has one fire station located in the San Benito County portion of Aromas and contracts with CAL FIRE to operate it.

The fire service providers within the Study Area are summarized in *Table 4.2* below:

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Table 4.2
Summary of South County Fire Service Providers

Jurisdiction Size / Population est.	Contract	2006-07 Budgeted Revenues	2006-07 Budgeted Expenses	Annual Call Volume (First-in)	First-in Calls Outside Boundaries	On Duty Staffing	Stations/ Equipment*
Watsonville 47,927 pop 6.3 sq miles	None	\$5,208,581	\$4,794,982	3,372	168 to PVFPD 88 to Larkin Valley Area	3 per engine ALS	2 Stations 2 Type I 1 Truck
PVFPD 16,438 pop 47 sq miles	CAL FIRE 70%, Schedule A Watsonville 30%	\$1,616,100	\$1,866,489 (includes CAL FIRE carryover costs from prior year)	541	78 to Watsonville	2 per engine plus 5 volunteers BLS	1 Station 1 Type I 1 Tender
Mt. Madonna (PVFPD)			--Included above--			5 volunteer firefighters and staffed engine from PVFPD	1 Station 1 Type II
County Fire (CSA 48) Corralitos Station only 6,180 pop 39.5 sq. miles	CAL FIRE, Amador Plan and Schedule A, plus State engines during fire season	\$836,671	\$759,115	257	15 to Watsonville	2 3-person companies in fire season 1 3-person company remainder of year BLS	1 Station 1 Type II 2 Type III 1 Tender 1 Rescue 1 Light/Air
County Fire (CSA 4- Pajaro Dunes) 565 homes, 0.2 sq miles	CAL FIRE Schedule A	\$906,129	\$913,960	238	129 outside gates	2 per engine; sleeper program** and volunteers BLS	1 Station 2 Type I
Totals		\$8,567,481	\$8,334,546 (\$1,190,649 per company)	4,408	478	21	6 Stations 7 Companies

*Note: Equipment type is defined in Appendix B, Fire Service Equipment

**A sleeper program provides for a paid-call volunteer to be in the station, available to respond on calls with the permanent staff

4.4 Ambulance

The County of Santa Cruz contracts with American Medical Response (AMR), a private ambulance company, to provide Advanced Life Support emergency ambulance services countywide. One is stationed in South County. Fire agencies often provide the first response to emergency medical service calls. In 1997 the Santa Cruz County EMS Integration Authority (EMSIA) was formed as a joint powers authority to integrate fire-based medical resources with the County's ambulance provider so that there is efficient coordination for call response. As noted above, the County contracts with Watsonville to staff two units with paramedics at all times in order to meet an eight-minute response time for first responders to a medical emergency.

4.5 Dispatch

The current dispatch system operates on a boundary drop/closest engine response system. There are two dispatch centers: the Santa Cruz Consolidated Emergency Communications Center (SCCECC) and the CAL FIRE Emergency Communications Center. SCCECC uses Netcom, a state of the art system for countywide dispatch. The Netcom dispatch system has facilitated a "boundary drop" with respect to dispatching fire engines so that regardless of jurisdiction, the closest engine company available responds to emergencies.¹¹

For County Fire dispatching, the calls are transferred from the SCCECC to the CAL FIRE Emergency Communications Center. The SCCECC has reported that it takes between 10 and 25 seconds to transfer an emergency call. Pre-alert pagers have been issued to volunteer fire companies to reduce the dispatch time.

4.6 Fire Prevention

County Fire contracts with CAL FIRE to provide a Fire Prevention officer. The City of Watsonville recently approved a Fire Prevention Captain position to be funded from user fees. The effective start date is July 1, 2007.

4.7 Training

The CAL FIRE training officers and the station Captains are responsible for the training program for CAL FIRE personnel and the volunteer fire companies. Training for the Watsonville firefighters is done by the Shift Battalion Chiefs and station Captains. There is a training center in Watsonville at Station 2.

¹¹ The actual response assigns are shown on *Figure 2.2 First Due Map*, page 14.

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4.8 Current Fire Response Configuration

The current response configuration for the Study Area is shown in Table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3

Current Fire Response Configuration

Jurisdiction	First Alarm Structural Fire Response #/Type of Units	Total Staffing on First Alarm Structural Fire and Total Time for all to arrive on scene	First Alarm Vegetation Fire Response #/type of units.	Total Staffing on First Alarm Vegetation Fire, and Total Time for all to arrive on scene	Fire Response Dependent upon Automatic/Mutual Aid?	EMS Response BLS or ALS Quantity and Type of Units (engine, squad, ambulance)	Driving Time of First-in unit; 90% of time to fire or EMS	Driving time for Medic Company or Ambulance; 90% of time
Watsonville	1 Battalion Chief 3-4 engines 1 truck	10 in 8 minutes, 12-14 within 14 minutes	1 Battalion Chief 2 Type I and 1 Type III engines 1 tender	7 in 8 minutes, 12 within 14 minutes	Yes	2 Type 1 ALS engines 1 ALS Ambulance	4:46 minutes	4:46 minutes AMR amb. 5:24 minutes from dispatch 2006=1,083 calls
PVFPD	1 Battalion Chief 2 Type I engines 1 Type II engine + possible volunteer eng	9 total (arrive time would depend on location – 47 sq mile district)	See text below	Total depends on dispatch level. Arrive time depends on location	Necessary for any fire requiring a 2-engine response	1 BLS engine 1 ALS ambulance 1 volunteer rescue for portions of district	9:35 average 7:10 median	AMR: 8:28 minutes from dispatch 2006 = 230 calls
Corralitos	1 Battalion Chief 2 Type III 1 Type II engines + volunteer eng	9 total (arrive time depends on location)	See text below	Total depends on dispatch level. Arrive time depends on location	Necessary for any fire requiring a 2-engine response	2 BLS engines in fire season; 1 in winter 1 ALS ambulance 1 volunteer engine	11:15 average 7:40 median	AMR: 8:50 minutes from dispatch 2006 = 111 calls
Pajaro Dunes	1 Battalion Chief 3 Type I engines + 1 volunteer eng	9 total (arrive time 12 minutes)	See text below	Total depends on dispatch level	Necessary for any fire requiring a 2-engine response	1 BLS engine 1 ALS ambulance	8:16 average 6:59 median	AMR: 5:57 minutes from dispatch 2006 = 16 calls inside gates and 47 calls outside gates (not in Watsonville)
Mt. Madonna	1 Battalion Chief 2 Type I engines 1 Type II engine + possible volunteer engine	9 total (arrive time dependent on location of alarm)	See text below	Total depends on dispatch level. Arrival time depends on location	Necessary for any fire requiring a 2-engine response	1 BLS engine 1 ALS ambulance 1 volunteer rescue or engine	N/A ; volunteer	AMR = 22 calls

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Vegetation fire response dispatch levels are based on the weather, location, and fuel conditions. Response for PVFPD, Corralitos, Pajaro Dunes, and Mount Madonna is as follows:

- Low dispatch level: 48 personnel, 6 engines plus air attack, bulldozer, 1 fire crew and overhead.
- Medium dispatch level: 67 personnel, 7 engines plus air attack, bulldozer, 2 fire crews and overhead.
- High dispatch level: 81 personnel, 9 engines, air attack, 2 crews, bulldozer and overhead.

4.9 Fire Employee Unions

Two unions are represented within the Study Area: CAL FIRE personnel are State employees and part of Bargaining Unit 8 and Local 2881. Watsonville firefighters are part of the Watsonville Professional Firefighters Local 1272. Both Locals are affiliated with the International Association of Firefighters. However there are key differences between the two labor contracts, including pay scales and work schedules:

**Table 4.4
Fire Service Union Comparison**

	CAL FIRE	Watsonville
Hours per week	72 hrs	56 hrs
Planned Overtime per period	19 hrs (paid at 1.5 time)	3 hrs
Shift	3 consecutive days on, 4 days off	24 hrs on , 24 hrs off
Schedule	12 24-hour shifts in a 28 day period	10 24-hour shifts in a 30 day period (avg)
Retirement Benefits	3% at 50	3% at 50
Benefit Rate – safety personnel	52.1%	58.0%
Benefit Rate - support personnel	45.24%	41.24%

CAL FIRE personnel are on duty for 72 hours (3 days) then off for 4 days. The shifts are staggered so all days are covered. CAL FIRE Battalion Chiefs hired prior to 2006 work a 72-hour week, followed by a 96-hour week.

Watsonville personnel work four 24-hour shifts (one day on, one day off) followed by four consecutive days off. This is followed by another four 24-hour shifts followed by 6 days off. This equates to a 56-hour week.