

3.0 FIRE SERVICE CONCEPTS

This section provides an overview of concepts related to fire protection and emergency medical services in order to facilitate discussion and understanding of fire protection services. Definitions for additional fire service terms are included in the Fire Service Glossary in *Appendix A*.

3.1 State Contracting

The Public Resources Code (PRC) authorizes CAL FIRE to enter into cooperative fire protection agreements where there are economic and social benefits to the people of the state. This allows a local government to contract with CAL FIRE to provide year-round fire protection services. CAL FIRE may provide personnel for command, administration, training, fire prevention, or emergency command center services. Under an Amador Plan agreement (PRC §4144), existing CAL FIRE personnel provide contract off-season fire protection services within a local area from CAL FIRE facilities used to protect SRAs. The local government bears the cost for extended staff availability beyond the fire season, unplanned overtime, operating expenses and an administrative charge. A major change that went into effect July 1, 2006 places rank-and-file fire protection personnel on year-round duty. The State will now cover the costs during the non-fire season of three permanent employees (Fire Captain or Fire Apparatus Engineer staff type) and the local government is required to provide two firefighters. This ensures a minimum two-person staffing on each engine in an Amador Plan agreement.

A local government may also contract with CAL FIRE to provide year-round structural fire protection and emergency response services through a Schedule A agreement (PRC §4142). The local government owns the facilities and equipment; the personnel are provided by CAL FIRE and are employees of the State. The agreement stipulates service levels and costs for personnel, equipment maintenance, utilities, and other operating costs.

Under both types of agreements, CAL FIRE provides the administration and supervision of all staff. Salaries and expense rates are established by the State and are not negotiable. Within the South County, CAL FIRE is providing services under an Amador Plan agreement (Corralitos) and two Schedule A agreements (County Fire administration and operations, Fire Marshal, etc. and CSA-4 Pajaro Dunes). The PVFPD has a Schedule A agreement with CAL FIRE.

3.2 Automatic Aid / Mutual Aid

Automatic aid is assistance dispatched automatically by contractual agreement between multiple communities or fire agencies. Mutual aid occurs upon request on a case-by-case basis. The fire protection agencies within Santa Cruz County all participate in an automatic aid agreement such that resources and specially trained staff are shared as needed across all agencies in the event of an emergency. In addition, there is a statewide mutual aid agreement whereby resources throughout the state are dispatched to assist in major emergencies. Watsonville and the North County Fire Protection District of Monterey County have a formal automatic aid agreement in which Watsonville provides structural fire protection and emergency medical services in the Pajaro community and for a segment of Highway 1 in

northern Monterey County. In turn, the North (Monterey) County Fire Protection District responds to all confirmed structure fires in the Watsonville Station No. 1 area. Watsonville is working to expand this to be citywide in order to balance the reciprocity of aid.

3.3 Basic Life Support / Advanced Life Support

Basic Life Support: Basic Life Support (BLS) provides emergency first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation procedures. At a minimum this includes recognizing respiratory and cardiac arrest and starting the proper application of cardiopulmonary resuscitation to maintain life without invasive techniques until the victim may be transported or until advanced life support is available (Health and Safety Code §1797.60). County Fire and the PVFPD provide a BLS level of service.

Advanced Life Support: Advanced Life Support includes special services designed to provide definitive pre-hospital emergency medical care, including, but not limited to, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, cardiac monitoring, cardiac defibrillation, advanced airway management, intravenous therapy, administration of specified drugs and other medicinal preparations, and other specified techniques and procedures administered by authorized personnel under the direct supervision of a base hospital (Health and Safety Code §1797.52). Watsonville provides an ALS level of service, as does American Medical Response (AMR), the County's contract ambulance service provider.

3.4 Insurance Service Office Protection Class Rating

The Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating determines risk based on a number of factors within a specified service area, including fire protection resources, infrastructure and service area characteristics. The ISO evaluates local fire protection capabilities in service areas and assigns a protection class rating from 1 to 10. Class 1 represents exemplary fire protection, and Class 10 indicates that the area's fire-suppression program does not meet the ISO's minimum criteria. Split ratings are common; the first class usually applies to properties within five road miles of a fire station and within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant. The second class applies to properties beyond five road miles of a fire station with no fire hydrants.

The ISO requires that minimum facilities and standards be in place before an area is rated⁷:

- The community must have a fire department, organized permanently under applicable state or local laws. The organization must include one person responsible for the operation of the department, usually with the title of "Chief."
- The fire department must serve an area with definite boundaries. If a community does not have a fire department operated solely by or for the governing body of that community, the fire department providing such service must do so under legal contract or resolution. When a fire department's service area involves more than one community, each of the communities served should have a contract.
- The department must have sufficient membership to assure the response of at least four members to fires in structures. The chief may be one of the responding members.

⁷ Source: www.isomitigation.com

3.0 TERMINOLOGY

- The fire department must conduct training for active members, at least two hours every two months.
- Alarm facilities and arrangements must be such that there is no delay in the receipt of alarms and the dispatch of firefighters and apparatus.
- The department must have at least one piece of apparatus meeting the general criteria of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1901, Automotive Fire Apparatus.
- The department must house apparatus to provide protection from the weather.

Independent insurance companies use the rating to determine fire insurance premiums, with a lower rating providing financial benefit to local property owners. The level of service, funding, and resources committed to fire protection by a local government has a direct relationship to the ISO rating received. Currently, Watsonville has an ISO rating of 2/9 and Pajaro Dunes has a rating of 5. The PVFPD area has ratings of 6/8 as does the Corralitos area. Areas that are ten road miles out with no hydrants have a rating of 9.