



Tracy Rural County Fire Protection District

Board of Directors

Jeff Ramsey
Craig Miller
Matt Kopinski
Pete Reece
John Vieira

Clerk of the Board

Raychel Jackson

Board of Directors – Special Board Meeting Agenda Monday, July 1, 2024 at 4:00 PM PST

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86251778410?pwd=d1hcimyxo1rh64iBsaaBsdCPuEn3jq.1>

Call In Number: [1 \(669\) 900 6833](tel:16699006833)

Meeting ID: 862 5177 8410

Passcode: 738634

**Location: 835 N. Central Avenue
Tracy, CA 95376
2nd Floor**

1. Roll Call and Pledge of Allegiance

2. Public Comment

Please, give your name, entity (if any), and address as well as what agenda item you wish to speak about to the Clerk of the Board so that your comments may be heard at the appropriate time. Comments must be limited to 3 minutes.

3. Regular Agneda

3.1 Receive Information and Provide SSJFCA Board of Directors Direction Concerning the Need to Place a Surge Ambulance in Service and the Estimated Cost to Place a Surge Ambulance in Service

4. Public Comment

For any items not on the agenda.

5. Board Member Comment

For any items not on the agenda and requests for future agenda items. No action will be taken on any questions or matters raised by the Board at this time.

6. Adjournment until Next Regular Session – July 9, 2024

Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (US Code Title 42) – Assistance for Those with Disabilities: If you have a disability and need accommodation to participate in the meeting, please contact the Administration Office (209-834-7269) or email (raychel.jackson@tracyruralfire.org) at least 72 hours prior to the meeting to inform us of your needs and to determine if accommodation is feasible.



**Tracy Rural County
Fire Protection District**

STAFF REPORT

Meeting: Special Meeting
Date: July 1, 2024
To: Board of Directors
Prepared by: Randall Bradley, Fire Chief
Approved by: Jeff Ramsey, Chairperson

Re: Receive Information and Provide Staff Direction Concerning the Need to Place a Surge Ambulance in Service and the Estimated Cost to Place a Surge Ambulance in Service

RECOMMENDATION

Action Item Non-Action Item

The Tracy Rural Fire Protection District (District) to discuss and provide direction, by motion, to its delegates on the South San Joaquin County Fire Authority (SSJCFA) Board of Directors whether they should approve, on behalf of the District, SSJCFA's implementation of a surge ambulance in Zone-26, resulting in a District commitment to fund an estimated annual net cost of \$247,717 for such service.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 15, 2024, South San Joaquin County Fire Authority (SSJFCA) Fire Chief, Randall Bradley, recommended and received direction from the SSJFCA's Board of Directors (Board) to recommend that the delegates of its member agencies recommend to their respective bodies that they approve the SSJFCA providing a surge ambulance in Zone-26 (Surge Ambulance). The SSJFCA anticipates that the total annual operating costs of such ambulatory service would be \$1,150,000, of which \$479,469 would be recovered through private and public insurance reimbursements (less collection fees). Based on the foregoing estimates, the District would have an annual estimated expenditure of Two Hundred and Forty-Seven Thousand and Seven Hundred and Seventeen Dollars (\$247,717) as its portion of the annual cost, as a member agency of the SSJFCA.

The proposed Surge Ambulance would respond to incidents within Zone-26 pursuant to a subcontract, negotiated by the SSJFCA Fire Chief Bradley, with American Medical Response (AMR). AMR has contractual rights to exclusively provide ambulatory services in Zone-26 (and other areas of South San Joaquin County). As AMR is unable to provide ambulatory services in this zone at peak periods within adequate response times, AMR is amenable to SSJFCA providing the Surge Ambulance.



Tracy Rural County Fire Protection District

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

As noted above, the District is a member agency of the SSJFCA pursuant to the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) for the SSJFCA executed on February 20, 2018. The second member of the JPA is the City of Tracy. Pursuant to the JPA, the District, as a member agency, is responsible for a portion of the annual costs of maintenance and operations for fire protection services, fire dispatch services and any associated or ancillary emergency services provided therein. Based on a formula set forth in the JPA, the District's portion of the total costs, currently, is 37.5%, and the remainder is the City of Tracy's portion. The JPA further provides that the SSJFCA may perform additional or higher-level services pursuant to an agreement between the SSJFCA and the member Agency(ies).

On May 15, 2024, the SSJFCA Board received the attached (Exhibit A) SSJFCA Staff Report regarding the need for a Surge Ambulance to respond to Zone-26 pursuant to a negotiated subcontract with AMR. On June 12, 2024, the SSJFCA Board received the attached revised staff report (Exhibit B) which included a revised cost estimate for the District's portion reflecting 37.5% of the net cost of the Surge Ambulance for a total of Two Hundred and Forty-Seven Thousand and Seven Hundred and Seventeen Dollars (\$247,717). This number may increase depending on the number of calls and reimbursements actually received by SSJFCA. At the conclusion of SSJFCA staff presentation the Board accepted the report and by consensus moved to direct Chief Bradley to implement the surge ambulance program, contingent on the Member Agencies concurrence and funding approval.

ANALYSIS

The May 15 and June 12, 2024, SSJFCA reports include compelling data and anecdotal evidence, such as the number and frequency of lengthy delayed responses and the fact that the closest available responding ambulances are being dispatched from Escalon, Manteca, Ripon, and Stockton, to support the Surge Ambulance Program. The Chief, as required by the JPA, now seeks concurrence and funding approval from the District for a Surge Ambulance program for zone-26.

Should the Board, by motion, approve a funding commitment and direct its delegates to approve the implementation of a Surge Ambulance program by SSJFCA, the SSJFCA Board will then meet and discuss to whether to direct the Chief to implement the Surge Ambulance program. As identified in the staff report, the Chief would then receive approval to execute a subcontract with AMR, order a permanent Surge Ambulance, lease a temporary Surge Ambulance from AMR, and staff on an overtime basis the Surge Ambulance with firefighter paramedics and Emergency Medical Technician's (EMT's). Eventually SSJFCA will hire three paramedics and 3 EMT's to staff the ambulance.

Staff would note that, if by motion, this item is approved by the Board, the District will be required to provide its share of additional SSJFCA funding of owning and operating a Surge



Tracy Rural County Fire Protection District

Ambulance through future budget approval processes, on an ongoing basis, which amount would be in addition to any funding currently provided to the SSJFCA.

FISCAL IMPACT

This is a discussion item with direction to be provided by the Board to their delegates to the SSJFCA board. Should the Board determine that they will move to instruct their delegates to approve the program and, concurrently direct staff to identify funding, the fiscal impact to the Board will be at minimum Two Hundred and Forty-Seven Thousand and Seven Hundred and Seventeen Dollars (\$247,717). This amount is a minimum because the actual cost is subject to the SSJFCA's actual recovery of reimbursements, as identified in its staff report from Medi-Cal, Medicare, commercial insurance and private payers. Actual recovery amounts from the sources identified above may vary and the Member Agencies will need to provide any additional funding that may be required to appropriately staff, equip, maintain and train the Surge Ambulance team and equipment. Funding for the Board's share of the program is not included in the Fiscal Year 2024-25 operating budget and would require additional appropriation from General Fund reserves, once the SSJFCA Board approves the program and the Chief seeks to implement it.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/ INTEREST

Public Safety and Emergency response remain a topic of great public interest and discussion. As a public agency the SSJFCA is required to abide by public noticing requirements and appropriately noticed for discussion and discussed the request for a Surge Ambulance in an open public meeting.

COORDINATION

Staff has coordinated and discussed the presentation of this report with SSJFCA Fire Chief Bradley.

CEQA DETERMINATION

Review under the California Environmental Quality Act is not applicable for this report as only the grant of authority to the Board delegates to the SSJCFCA Board is being requested. The SSJCFCA would be the implementing agency.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE DISTRICT

Staff recommends that the District discuss and provide direction, by motion, to its delegates on the South San Joaquin County Fire Authority (SSJCFCA) Board of Directors whether they should approve, on behalf of the District, SSJCFCA's implementation of a surge ambulance in Zone-26, resulting in a District commitment to fund an estimated annual net cost of \$247,717 for such service.



Tracy Rural County Fire Protection District

Attachments:

Exhibit A - SSJCFA Surge Ambulance Report May 15, 2024

Exhibit B - SSJCFA Surge Ambulance Report June 12, 2024



South San Joaquin County Fire Authority

835 Central Avenue, Tracy, CA 95376 | Tel: (209)831-6702 Fax: (209)831-6732

STAFF REPORT

TO: Board of Directors **MEETING DATE:** May 15, 2024

PREPARED BY: Randall Bradley, Fire Chief
APPROVED BY: Randall Bradley, Fire Chief

ITEM: RECEIVE INFORMATION AND PROVIDE STAFF DIRECTION CONCERNING THE NEED TO PLACE A SURGE AMBULANCE IN SERVICE, AND THE ESTIMATED COST TO PLACE A SURGE AMBULANCE IN SERVICE

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Board direct staff to provide information to the Tracy City Council and the Tracy Rural Fire District concerning the need to place a surge ambulance in service, the estimated costs to place a surge ambulance in service, and to recommend that both agencies approve the estimated expenditures for FY 2024/25.

BACKGROUND

South San Joaquin County Fire Authority's (SSJCFA) jurisdictional area is within Ambulance Response Zone X-26. Zone X-26 also includes Mountain House and areas of the south county that are not protected by a fire district. Zone X-26 is a subzone of an exclusive operating area that includes Stockton, Lodi and all unincorporated areas of northern and central San Joaquin County. American Medical Response West has the exclusive contract to provide ambulance services for Zone X, including subzone X-26.

During the past year, ambulance availability and response times have become a significant public safety concern in Zone X-26. For example:

- On-scene ALS engine and truck companies experience significant ambulance delays on a daily basis, with the closest available ambulances often responding from Manteca, Stockton, Ripon and Escalon.
- Manteca District Ambulances respond to medical emergencies in Zone X-26 at least 50 times each month.
- On Saturday, January 27, 2024, SSJCFA Engine 91 responded to a 3-year-old that was unconscious. After performing the ALS initial assessment, SSJCFA's Captain was advised by Stockton Dispatch that the closest available ambulance was a Manteca District Ambulance coming from Old Harland Road and J Street in Lathrop, an approximate 20

minutes from the patient location. The child’s father was distraught and, against medical advice, he decided to transport his daughter to the hospital in his private vehicle.

- AMR is placing more basic life support (BLS) ambulances in service. BLS ambulances are staffed with two Emergency Medical Technicians. Their ambulance carries no ALS equipment. When a BLS ambulance responds to a call and the firefighter paramedics determine the patient requires ALS care, they are required to maintain patient care and ride into the hospital with the BLS ambulance. The SSJCFA engine or truck company is required to be placed out-of-service until the paramedic returns.
- On Easter morning, SSJCFA Battalion 9, Engine 95, Engine 97, and Truck 91 responded to a head-on vehicle accident on I-580 near Corral Hollow Road. There were two critical patients (2-month-old and his mother) that required transport to the trauma center. The mother had to wait for an ambulance to respond from Manteca. The mother and the toddler, both died from their injuries.
- On Sunday, April 21, 2024, SSJCFA Battalion 9, Engine 96, Engine 92, and Truck 91 responded to a single vehicle accident at the intersection of Holly and Laguna. There were two critical patients and one delayed patient. The two critical patients both died from their injuries. The initial ambulance on scene ordered additional ambulances through their dispatch center. The only available ambulances were Manteca District Ambulance from Lathrop and Manteca. SSJCFA would wait over 19 minutes for the second ambulance to arrive.
- On Tuesday, May 7, 2024, SSJCFA Engine 97 was dispatched to a private residence for a patient with shortness of breath. The SSJCFA personnel arrived on scene and performed an ALS assessment. They initiated ALS care including an IV, 12-lead ECG, and CPAP. SSJCFA Engine 97s Captain requested an expected time of arrival for the ambulance and were advised the closest ambulance was coming from Interstate 5 and Louise Ave. SSJCFA would wait over 31 minutes for their ambulance to arrive.

The following are the published ambulance response time performance indicators from January 2023 through February 2024 for Zone- X-26.

Month/Year	Number of Red Light and Siren Responses	Number of Delayed Responses	Percent Compliant Before Exemptions
Jan. 2023	514	100	80.54%
Feb. 2023	440	79	82.05%
Mar 2023	509	97	80.94%
Apr. 2023	518	122	76.45%
May 2023	518	93	82.05%
June 2023	507	92	81.85%

July 2023	499	106	78.76%
Aug. 2023	580	116	80.00%
Sept. 2023	503	101	79.92%
Oct. 2023	550	118	78.55%
Nov. 2023	532	130	75.56%
Dec. 2023	580	138	76.21%
Jan. 2024	540	108	80.00%
Feb. 2024	440	71	83.86%

Staff has analyzed ambulance response times within Zone X-26, and the data reveals a continued trend of extended waiting periods for ambulance services. The 90-percentile interval monthly response times have increased from a low in 2022 of 7:20 to a high in October 2023 of 12:28. While average response times have increased moderately, the substantial increase in the 90 percentile response times indicates that when ambulances are delayed, the delay is significant. There is also a direct correlation between 90 percentile performance and the number of monthly exemptions the EMS Agency is granting to the contract ambulance provider (exemptions are primarily for APOT). The total number of monthly exemptions have increased from 529 in March 2023 to a high of 1,089 in October 2023.

DISCUSSION

A shortage of paramedics and ambulance patient offload time (APOT) delays at hospitals appear to be the primary factors for the increase in ambulance response times. SSJCFA personnel recently met with Brian Hajik, American Medical Response (“AMR”) District Manager, who indicated that recruiting and retaining paramedics will continue to be a challenge. SSJCFA is confident that the APOT issue will not be solved in the near future. AMR has placed additional Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances into the EMS system which has helped somewhat, but their introduction has also created negative, second-order effects. On Advanced Life Support (ALS) calls, firefighter paramedics are often required ride into hospitals with BLS ambulances to ensure proper patient treatment and care, which results in the firefighter paramedics’ engine and truck companies being taken out of service for prolonged periods of time.

Other factors contribute to the long ambulance response times in SSJCFA’s area and Zone X-26. Tracy is in a unique geographical EMS area; located on the periphery of the County of San Joaquin, not being contiguous with other AMR EOA sub-zones. Tracy is also located 17 miles from a trauma center and 23 miles from a cardiac hospital, which creates significant challenges to providing efficient ambulance services. Those challenges are further exacerbated by the greater demand for services in Zones X-24 and X-25. After completing transports to the trauma center or cardiac hospital, ambulances often cannot return to their posting locations in Zone X-26 because they are then the closest available ambulance to calls in Zones X-24 and X-25 and are dispatched accordingly.

AMR Subcontract

To place a surge ambulance in service, staff has negotiated a sub-contract with AMR and will return to the Board for contract approval. The subcontract would allow SSJCFA to place an ambulance in service through May 2026. Staff has worked with AMR to develop the following criterion (rules of engagement) concerning when the surge ambulance would be utilized:

Subcontractor

1. Subcontractor may furnish standby coverage at emergency law enforcement or fire incidents within Zone X-26 at the request of the on-scene public safety agency Incident Commander (IC), if in the opinion of the IC, the situation poses significant potential danger to emergency personnel or to the general public, separate to this agreement.
2. Subcontractor shall not self-assign and only respond at the direction of Valley Regional Emergency Communication Center (VRECC-AMR Dispatch).
3. Subcontractor may be requested to "Echo" level responses outside Subcontractors jurisdictional boundaries as a closest unit through VRECC.
4. Following delivery of patient(s) to the appropriate receiving hospital, Subcontractor's ambulance will return to Zone X-26 before notifying VRECC that is available to respond to emergency calls.

Surge Ambulance Ordering

1. VRECC shall dispatch Subcontractor under the following circumstances:
 - a. Response time by AMR or Automatic Aid agency exceeds contractual response time standard by two (2) minutes or greater, and
 - b. Subcontractor ambulance is the closest non-AMR ambulance, and
 - c. Delta or Echo level response determinate
2. Subcontractor may, but is not required to, respond to calls within zone X-26 upon request by AMR through VRECC.

Ambulance

AMR has agreed to lease an ambulance to SSJCFA for \$1,000 per month.

Ambulance Staffing

Initially (up to 90 days), the surge ambulance will be staffed by firefighter paramedics and EMTs on overtime. Staff will recommend, by resolution, the creation of a new non-safety Paramedic classification and the creation of a new non-safety Emergency Medical Technician. Three Paramedics and three Emergency Medical Technicians would be hired to staff the ambulance. Each crew would work a 48-hour workweek, and the seventh shift of each week would be covered with overtime or part-time employees. A salary survey was completed that established the pay schedule for each classification.

Staff will also recommend, by resolution, amending the Master Salary Schedule to reflect the proposed salary range; the Position Control Roster to include three Paramedics and three Emergency Medical Technicians; and The Unrepresented Pay and Benefit Plan to reflect the new positions.

FISCAL IMPACTS

The information below provides the estimated cost to staff and operate an Ambulance annually. SSJCFA can absorb the cost for the remainder FY 2023/24 due to savings from retirements and

unfilled FTEs.

Annual Operations Cost

Personnel	\$1,100,000
Fuel and Maintenance	\$20,000
Additional Insurance	\$20,000
Medical Supplies	\$10,000
Total Operating	\$1,150,000

Estimated Cost Recovery Estimates (Based on 500 annual transports)

Reimbursement	Percent	Rate	Number of Calls	Total
Medi-Cal (36%)	36%	\$744	252	\$133,952
Medicare (37%)	37%	\$581	259	\$107,485
Commercial Insurance (15%)	15%	\$3,260	105	\$244,489
Private Pay** (12%)	12%	\$204	84	\$12,224
Total Reimbursement				\$498,150
Billing Collection Fee	-3.75%			\$18,681
Reimbursement Minus Fees				\$479,469

Estimated Program Annual Cost Est. FY 2024/25

Annual Operating Cost	\$1,150,000
Cost Recovery Estimate	\$479,469
Estimated Program Cost	\$670,581

Cost recovery estimates are based on the estimated number of calls, allowable charges for services, and the estimated reimbursements from Medi-Cal, Medicare, commercial insurance and private pay. Estimated calls for services are based upon the number of times AMR has not been able to meet response times (1,292). Approximately 65% of responses result in transports (840). To be conservative, staff estimated that SSJCFA would respond and transport about 60% of the time when an AMR ambulance has delays that would result in transports (500). Cost recovery is estimated based on the best information available. If AMR ambulance availability increases, cost recovery will decrease.

Member Agency Estimated Costs

Estimated Program Costs	\$670,581
Tracy Rural Fire District (37.5%)	\$251,467
City of Tracy (62.5%)	\$419,113



South San Joaquin County Fire Authority

835 Central Avenue, Tracy, CA 95376 | Tel: (209)831-6702 Fax: (209)831-6732

STAFF REPORT

TO: Board of Directors MEETING DATE: June 12, 2024

PREPARED BY: Randall Bradley, Fire Chief
APPROVED BY: Randall Bradley, Fire Chief

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If the program expenditures are approved by the member agencies, staff will return to the board to request a budget adjustment, and to amend; the Master Salary Schedule to reflect the proposed salary range; the Position Control Roster to include three Paramedics and three Emergency Medical Technicians; and The Unrepresented Pay and Benefit Plan to reflect the new positions.

FISCAL IMPACTS

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unfilled FTEs.

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Estimated Cost Recovery Estimates (Based on 500 annual transports)

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Reimbursement Minus Fees				\$479,469

Estimated Program Annual Cost Est. FY 2024/25

Annual Operating Cost	\$1,140,000
Cost Recovery Estimate	\$479,469
Estimated Program Cost	\$660,581

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Member Agency Estimated Costs

Estimated Program Costs	\$660,581
Tracy Rural Fire District (37.5%)	\$247,717
City of Tracy (62.5%)	\$412,863