

DISCUSSION CALENDAR –AGENDA ITEM #8
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
March 28, 2002

TO: Board of Directors, Orange County Fire Authority

FROM: Chip Prather, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: **Reserve Program Restructure**

Summary:

This agenda item is submitted for Board of Directors approval to authorize the Fire Chief to implement the restructure of the Orange County Fire Authority Reserve Program as presented during the February 6, 2002 workshop.

Recommended Actions:

1. Adopt the Definition of Purpose for the Reserve Program as follows:
“The purpose of the Orange County Fire Authority Reserve Program is to supplement response resources to ensure that adequate resources are available to effectively staff and equip emergency events occurring within the community. Except for select situations, this does not involve reserve resources contributing to first-due response performance, but contributing to overall emergency incident effectiveness by providing additional EMS coverage of select stations, and reinforcement through the staffing and operation of incident support resources and other specialty equipment.”
2. Adopt the EMS/Support role as the Major Operating Principle for the Reserve Program, with the following enhancements: Maintain full service role reserve companies (engines) at Stations 3, 11, 14, 16 and 23.
3. Approve the following station closures and consolidations:
 - A. Station 1: Close and consolidate personnel with Stations 21 and 23.
 - B. Station 12: Close and consolidate personnel with Station 13 in La Palma.
 - C. Station 29: Consolidate personnel with Station 30 in Dana Point.
4. Amend the OCFA Master Position Control List to add the following positions effective April 5, 2002:
 - A. One (1) Battalion Chief (Volunteer Services Coordinator), R02009
 - B. Two (2) Fire Captains (Assistant Fire Training Officers), R02010, R02011
 - C. One (1) Fire Apparatus Engineer (Assistant Fire Training Officer), R02012
 - D. One (1) Firefighter (Assistant Fire Training Officer), R02013
5. Direct staff to take the following budget actions:
 - A. Increase FY 2001/02 appropriations in Fund 133 in the amount of \$120,000 for vehicle start-up costs, and release reserves in Fund 133 in the same amount to fund increased appropriations.
 - B. Include funding for restructured Reserve Program in the FY 2002/03 budget update.

6. Designate the Executive Committee as having policy oversight for this program, and direct staff to provide monthly implementation status reports to the committee, until full program implementation has been completed.
7. Direct staff to present to the Board of Directors an Auxiliary Firefighter/Apprenticeship program ready for implementation at their January 2003 meeting, or reasons why such a program is not feasible within OCFA.

Background:

Goal #6 of the OCFA's Strategic Plan was adopted by the Board of Directors on July 26, 2001. This goal deals specifically with the OCFA's Reserve Program and includes the following goal statement: *"Maximize the utilization of reserve and auxiliary personnel within the jurisdictional boundaries of the OCFA, taking into consideration need, efficiency, effectiveness and reliability."*

Because of the importance of the Reserve Program within the OCFA, and issues related to training, attrition and service delivery, the Board of Directors determined that Goal #6 was a high priority and directed staff to immediately begin work on this goal, prior to final adoption of the Strategic Plan. As a result of this policy direction, and with concurrence from the Board, consultants from Emergency Services Education and Consulting Group (ESECG) were engaged to conduct a comprehensive study and analysis of OCFA's current Reserve Program, and to prepare a detailed report based on their findings that would enable OCFA to expeditiously accomplish this goal. **Attachment 1** provides historical attrition within the Reserve Program and service delivery challenges.

On February 6, 2002, ESECG presented their final report at a special workshop of the Board of Directors. ESECG's final report on the Reserve Program restructure contained a recommendation to adopt a Definition of Purpose for the program, and three alternatives for consideration as the Major Operating Principle for the program. In addition, consultants from Decision Research presented the results of three community focus group meetings held on the OCFA Reserve Firefighter Program.

Management staff of the OCFA presented their recommendations at the workshop, which included endorsement of the Definition of Purpose proposed by ESECG with minor modification, and implementation of the EMS/Support role for Reserves as the Major Operating Principle for the program, with some enhancements. These enhancements include maintaining full service role reserve companies (engines) at Stations 3, 11, 14, 16 and 23. Additionally, staff recommended that all Reserves be trained and certified as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) to further enhance organizational EMS delivery capability. Staff was directed to finalize recommendations for presentation at the March 28, 2002 meeting of the Board of Directors.

The EMS/Support role with enhancements as the Major Operating Principle for the Reserve Program will provide a combination of full service engines, patrols, squads, water tenders and air re-supply units which would be staffed by Reserves, and used to

augment and supplement the response of career staffed resources. **Attachment 2** is a matrix that provides a station by station listing of equipment and apparatus.

After a comprehensive review and analysis, ESECG recommended the closure of Stations 1, 12 and 25, with Reserve personnel from these stations being consolidated into other stations. Staff agrees with the closures of Stations 1 and 12, but is not recommending that Station 25 be closed. This recommendation with Station 25 is based on further analysis by staff that indicates call volume for this station is significant and a conclusion that the long-term disposition of Station 25 is best decided through the system-wide deployment analysis objective of the Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan Goal #5). Further, because of the significant emergency call load presently handled by Station 25, staff will be relocating Engine 228 (formally Engine 27 which was relocated to Station 28 following closure of Station 27 located at the John Wayne Airport) to Station 25.

Under the Major Operating Principle of EMS/Support, the majority of Reserves will not be trained or required to enter burning buildings, hazardous environments (OSHA defined as Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health or IDLH environments) or perform dangerous tasks during emergencies. This redefined role will reduce the training time commitment required for Reserves, and more realistically align the program with achievable expectations. Similar to the reserve program found within Law Enforcement, the OCFA Reserve Program will have three distinct levels. **Attachment 3**, provides information regarding Law Enforcement's POST certification. Training programs for these three levels of Reserves will be customized to directly match the specific knowledge, skills and abilities with Reserve Program expectations. Training for the most part, would be delivered at a more local level (i.e., station level and within the battalion). This will decrease the time commitment for individuals, reduce driving and lessen the overall burden on those members of the community who wish to volunteer as Reserves. **Attachment 4** provides more detailed information on the three levels of Reserve training, and delivery methods.

Since most Reserve companies will no longer be relied upon for first response, the proximity of residence-to-station requirement will be expanded from the current 5 minute standard to 10 minutes. As indicated in the consultant's report, this increase in time will help to expand the pool of applicants interested in becoming Reserves. The recruitment area for Reserve crew members from the volunteer hand crews will be expanded to 30 minutes. Expanding these time frames for Reserves to respond to their respective stations will permit almost all interested persons living within Orange County to participate in the Reserve Program in some manner.

The recommended program changes will improve reliability by aligning the value-added benefits of the OCFA Reserve Program with realistic and achievable expectations. Safety, a critical factor with any reserve program, can be improved by decreasing unrealistic operational expectations placed on reserves.

Implementation of the EMS/Support role will require the acquisition of new vehicles. During the February 6, 2002 Board Workshop, staff had indicated there would be a need to purchase 14 squad type vehicles at a cost of approximately \$150,000 each. However,

in developing the final program implementation plan, staff has re-evaluated existing resources, and determined that some resources can be re-deployed to meet the EMS/Support role and that anticipated costs for squad type vehicles would be approximately \$135,000 each. As a result, the previously anticipated start-up costs were reduced by \$870,000. A total of 3 additional patrol type vehicles, and 6 squad type vehicles are needed to fully implement the EMS/Support role. **Attachment 5** provides additional detail regarding one-time start-up costs.

Members of the communities served by the OCFA who volunteer as Reserves represent a significant and valued resource to the OCFA. To meet ongoing program support and training needs, staff recommends additional positions be added. As recommended by ESECG, these positions will provide the program advocacy, top-level support, and enable needed/mandated training to be provided mostly at the local level which increases the availability of training and access. **Attachment 6** provides cost information for these positions, as well as other ongoing program costs.

During the Board Workshop in February, questions arose regarding depth of coverage within the OCFA's protection area. The restructure proposed for the Reserve Program will have minimal impact on depth of coverage, and no adverse impact on service levels. Over 98% of all emergency incidents to which the OCFA responds are handled with 3 units or less. Of the remaining 2%, only a small percentage of these pose a challenge with regard to depth of resources and/or station coverage. **Attachment 7** provides a more detailed briefing on the OCFA's current practices with regard to system status management of resources, and the various alternatives that are in place to ensure depth of coverage is maintained.

Restructuring of the Reserve Program will also result in a decrease in response times for Reserve units. Reserve patrols, and EMS/Support squads can be operated by as few as two Reserves. By reducing the number of persons, and required training needed before a unit can respond, Reserves can respond quicker and the reliability of response which is currently at unacceptable levels during peak call periods can be improved. Performance standards have been established for reserve resources. Reserve engines, patrols, and support squads will be required to staff for response within 10 minutes, 80% of the time. Water tenders will be required to staff for response within 20 minutes, 90% of the time. Additionally, reserves will be required to attend a minimum of 50% of all skills maintenance training and drills, attend all mandatory training, and maintain certification as an Emergency Medical Technician.

Other question areas that arose during the Workshop dealt with career opportunities for Reserves, and the implementation of an Auxiliary/Apprenticeship Program that would provide a career path for those members of the Reserve Program who desire to make the fire service their full-time profession. **Attachment 8** provides a historical overview of how the OCFA has provided career opportunities for reserves, and a go forward plan that includes entry level hiring, and expands the opportunity for members of the Reserve Program to obtain Firefighter I certification. Additionally, at the January, 2003 meeting of the Board of Directors, staff will present an Auxiliary/Apprenticeship program ready

for implementation or the reasons why such a program would not be feasible within the OCFA.

Staff is prepared to begin implementation of the restructure quickly, beginning with recruitment of new Reserves in April, station closures and consolidations in May and implementation of training programs by June. Time frames for implementation of significant activities are outlined in **Attachment 9**.

After the Board Workshop on February 6, 2002, two letters were received from partner cities (San Juan Capistrano and Seal Beach) expressing their view of the proposed changes to the OCFA's Reserve Program. These letters are included as **Attachment 10**.

The delivery of fire and emergency services is very hazardous and dangerous, and occurs in a constantly changing environment. Community growth, development of new risks through technology, changing social behaviors and many other factors impact the Orange County Fire Authority. Developing a clear and productive role for volunteers from throughout our communities to help the OCFA meet its mission requires considerable change, and a major restructure of the existing Reserve Program. As the Major Operating Principle for the program, the EMS/Support role will add value to the manner in which the OCFA provides service, while providing a safe, reliable and effective means for volunteers to augment professional firefighters and serve their local communities.

Impact to Cities/County:

For cash contract cities the FY 2002/03 charge will not exceed the 3.5% annual cap.

Fiscal Impact:

- FY 2001/02 – Staffing changes will remain within current Reserve Program budget. Increase to Fund 133 for \$120,000 start-up costs.
- FY 2002/03 - \$1.35 million start-up costs, and \$528,132 in on-going General Fund costs.

Staff Contact for Further Information:

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Attachments:

1. Historical Reserve Program Attrition and Service
2. Matrix of Station by Station Equipment and Apparatus
3. Law Enforcement POST Matrix
4. Training Levels and Delivery Methods
5. One-time Start-up Costs
6. Ongoing Program Costs
7. Depth of Coverage Briefing Paper
8. Reserve Firefighter Career Path and Employment Opportunities
9. Implementation schedule
10. Letters from San Juan Capistrano and Seal Beach