



# AGENDA REPORT


**TO:** Edward D. Reiskin  
City Administrator

**FROM:** Dr. Reginald D. Freeman  
Chief, Oakland Fire Dept.

**SUBJECT:** Cost Of Responding To Fires That  
Occurred On California Department  
Of Transportation Property Within  
Oakland City Limits In Fiscal Year  
2022

**DATE:** November 7, 2022

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City Administrator Approval 

Date: Nov 8, 2022

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff Recommends The Finance and Management Committee Receive An Informational Report From The City Administrator And The Oakland Fire Department On The Cost Of Responding To Fires That Occurred On California Department Of Transportation Property Within Oakland City Limits In Fiscal Year 2022.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This informational report from the City Administrator and the Oakland Fire Department (“OFD” or “Department”) provides the Finance and Management Committee with a summary of the costs associated with fire emergency response on properties that are owned by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The information provided may shed some light on the costs associated with providing emergency services to jurisdictions that operate and exist inside the boundaries of Oakland.

In order to ensure that the significant multi alarm fire incidents that occurred in the Fall of 2022 were included and reflected in the analysis and total number of incidents, the Fire Department adjusted the time frame of the report slightly; with the data collection window extending from October 2021 to October 2022, rather than the requested fiscal year which runs from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022.

## **BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

On October 6, 2022, following a series of fires along the Interstate 580 freeway (I-580) in Oakland, Council President Pro Tempore Thao and Councilmember Fife made a request during the Rules and Legislation Committee to receive an informational report on the cost of responding to fires that occurred on Caltrans property within Oakland city limits in fiscal year (FY) 2022.

Finance and Management Committee  
November 15, 2022

## **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

To complete this report, the City's Budget Bureau worked with the Fire Operations Division and the Fire Dispatch Center to collect the following data in order to calculate totals. To approximate the total cost for OFD responses, the following metrics below were pulled from the Department's records management system:

- Total number of confirmed fire incidents on California Department of Transportation property within Oakland city limits (with focus on freeway fires, and fire incidents at Wood Street encampments).
- Average number of fire units (including personnel) that respond to fire incidents on freeways.
- Average number of fire units (including personnel) that respond to encampment fires incidents
- Average amount of time on scene for responding units dispatched to freeway fires
- Average amount of time on scene for responding units dispatched to encampment fires
- Total number of firefighters/personnel responding to each type of incident on average
- Total approximate costs for personnel per incident.

### ***Encampment Fires on Caltrans Property***

Based on data compiled by staff in the Fire Dispatch Center, from October 2021 to October 2022, OFD responded to a total of eight hundred and sixteen (816) encampment fires of varying sizes. During that same time frame, OFD was dispatched to sixty-three (63) encampment fire incidents on the Caltrans property adjacent to Wood Street. This figure is the best estimate available considering that encampments do not have an exact address which makes the initial reporting of fires on the property and the process for determining sufficient response capacity more challenging.

On average, for encampment fires, two (2) fire engines staffed by four (4) personnel in each apparatus are assigned, and customarily are on scene at the incident for approximately seventy-five (75) minutes. The hourly rate of an operational fire engine is approximately \$500 per hour.

With two (2) engines (8 firefighters) responding to sixty-three (63) encampment incidents, and each incident lasts approximately seventy-five (75) minutes, for a total of six hundred and thirty (630) hours on scene over the course of a year, the total costs for these services is estimated as \$78,441.

### ***Freeway and Vegetation Fires on Caltrans Property***

Based on data compiled by staff in the Fire Dispatch Center, from October 2021 to October 2022, OFD responded to a total of sixty-two (62) freeway fires of varying sizes. These incidents range from an overheated engine where a car was pulled over on the shoulder to a vehicle accident where the car is engulfed in flames to as well as the series of vegetation fires OFD responded to in the fall of 2022 where the causes ranged from arson to accidental, and to undetermined.

On average, for freeway fires, two (2) fire engines staffed by four (4) personnel in each apparatus are assigned, and customarily crews are on scene at the incident for approximately seventy-five (75) minutes. The hourly rate of an operational fire engine is approximately \$500 per hour.

With two engines (8 firefighters) responding to sixty-two (62) freeway incidents, and each incident lasts approximately seventy (75) minutes, for a total of 620 hours on scene over the course of a year, the total costs for these services is estimated at \$77,196.

While the state does utilize the California Highway Patrol for law enforcement purposes, OFD is the sole entity responsible for responding to fire and medical incidents on freeways and other State of California property inside Oakland's city limits.

The production of this report aligns with two City's priorities: **holistic community safety; responsive trustworthy government.** Holistic community safety is a sense of comfort that residents, businesses and visitors to Oakland should feel universally no matter where they live and no matter the location or jurisdiction. Similarly, and consistent with the mission of the Oakland Fire Department, if a person is traveling on a state highway and encounters a fire or has the unfortunate circumstance of being unhoused and living on state property when a fire occurs, the Oakland Fire Department is fully committed to being responsive to that incident and providing the highest quality and highest level of services to the people of Oakland.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

This item is for informational purposes only and does not have a direct fiscal impact or cost. Funding for fire protection and emergency medical services administered and delivered by OFD are appropriated as part of the City's biennial and annual budget processes.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

City Administration and the Fire Department are in frequent communication with Caltrans on a range of topics including planned freeway closures due to maintenance, medical and fire emergency incidents, training exercises, as well as coordination on encampment and vegetation management efforts, and other issues.

In recent months, starting in mid-September, Oakland experienced a series of multi-alarm fires along east and westbound I-580. While some structures were impacted and residents were displaced during a 4-alarm incident on September 16, 2022, no homes or residents were injured, or displaced by the four (4) subsequent incidents. The cause of the initial fire near 35<sup>th</sup> Ave remains undetermined. At least two (2) of the subsequent incidents were determined to be arson (September 20, 2022; and October 16, 2022). Lastly, an accidental vehicle fire spread to the hillside vegetation on the westbound side of I-580 near the Seminary Avenue exit on September 26 and initiated a 4-alarm incident that took seventy (70) firefighters and over several hours to bring under control. No homes were burned, or persons injured or displaced in that incident.

No additional outreach was deemed necessary for this informational report because no policy action or change is being proposed.

### **COORDINATION**

The Fire Department and Budget Bureau were in coordination on the development of this report.

### **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Economic:** There economic impacts to the City as result of providing services to Caltrans properties are described in the Analysis and Policy Alternatives section.

**Environmental:** There are no environmental impacts related to this informational report.

**Race & Equity:** There are no race and equity impacts related to this report.

### **ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff Recommends The Finance and Management Committee Receive An Informational Report From The City Administrator And The Oakland Fire Department On The Cost Of Responding To Fires That Occurred On California Department Of Transportation Property Within Oakland City Limits In Fiscal Year 2022.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Michael Hunt, Assistant to the Director, Oakland Fire Department at 510-238-6353.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Reginald D. Freeman  
Chief, Oakland Fire Dept.