



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

PALOMA AGUIRRE
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

MONICA MONTGOMERY STEPPE
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: May 05, 2026 and May 19, 2026

09

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING: ADOPT ORDINANCES RELATED TO FEES AND RATES FOR COUNTY FIRE AND MEDICAL EXAMINER EFFECTIVE FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 (05/05/26 – FIRST READING; 05/19/26 – SECOND READING UNLESS ORDINANCE IS MODIFIED ON SECOND READING) (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

Two County of San Diego (County) Public Safety departments, San Diego County Fire (County Fire) and the Department of the Medical Examiner (Medical Examiner) recently conducted a review of fees and rates to ensure compliance with Board Policy B-29 *Fees, Grants, and Revenue Contracts – Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery* (Board Policy B-29), which requires County departments to recover the costs of providing services to agencies or individuals. As a result, both departments are proposing actions that support the cost of providing services, while ensuring fair and equitable fees for customers and the public.

County Fire, which includes Fire Marshal services, Emergency Medical Services Office (County EMS), acting as the Board of Supervisors (Board) designated Local EMS Agency (LEMSA), and County Service Area 17 (CSA 17) ambulance transportation zone is proposing to increase 22 fees/rates, decrease 16 fees/rates, and remove one fee as noted below. County Fire is also proposing 16 new rates, nine of which are for businesses and organizations requesting on-site and dedicated fire apparatus and staff, and seven for false alarm responses and inspection violations.

The Medical Examiner is proposing to increase two fees and decrease four fees. Fees are only charged for optional services, such as a family requested autopsy, as allowed by statute and approved by the Board.

The Auditor and Controller reviewed and approved the supporting documentation and methodology used to determine the proposed fees to be adjusted in both departments for Fiscal Year 2026-27.

Today's action requests that the Board approve amendments to Article XX of the San Diego County Administrative Code to fees charged for services by the County Fire Marshal, County EMS, and CSA 17 and find the project exempt from CEQA. Since 100% of the fees assessed on ambulance transports are not collected, full cost recovery for services will not be achieved in FY

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26-27 and a waiver of Board Policy B-29 is being requested. The Board last approved revisions to County Fire's, CSA 17's, and County EMS' fees on May 6, 2025 (3). Today's request is to also approve amendments to Article XX of the San Diego County Administrative Code to fees charged for services by the Medical Examiner, which last had Board approved revisions on May 6, 2025 (4). Today's request includes two steps, first the ordinances will be introduced on May 5, 2026, then they will be scheduled for consideration and adoption on May 19, 2026.

RECOMMENDATION(S)
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
On May 5, 2026:

1. Find the proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as specified under Section 15273 of the CEQA Guidelines and approve the findings in Attachment G pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15273 (a)(1), which provides a statutory exemption for the establishment, modification, structuring, restructuring, or approval of rates, tolls, fares, or other charges by public agencies that the public agency finds are for the purpose of meeting operating expenses.
2. Approve the introduction of the Ordinances (first reading):
 - a. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE XX OF THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE ORDINANCE CODE, RELATING TO SAN DIEGO COUNTY FIRE, SAN DIEGO COUNTY EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES, AND COUNTY SERVICE AREA 17 CHARGES AND FEES
 - b. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE ARTICLE XX SECTION 364.6, RELATING TO MEDICAL EXAMINER FEES AND CHARGES
3. Waive Board Policy B-29, *Fees, Grants, and Revenue Contracts – Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery* which requires full cost recovery for services.

If, on May 5, 2026, the San Diego County Board takes action as recommended, then on May 19, 2026:

1. Consider and adopt the ordinances (unless ordinances are modified on second reading):
 - a. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE XX THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE ORDINANCE CODE, ARTICLE XX, RELATING TO SAN DIEGO COUNTY FIRE, SAN DIEGO COUNTY EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES, AND COUNTY SERVICE AREA 17 CHARGES AND FEES

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- b. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE ARTICLE XX SECTION 364.6, RELATING TO MEDICAL EXAMINER FEES AND CHARGES

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Services and oversight provided by San Diego County Fire (County Fire) are partially supported through a fee charged to individuals and agencies applying for new residential and commercial building permits, tenant improvement permits, gate and grading permits, and special event permits. County Fire provides this detailed level of oversight ensuring residents in the San Diego County and Deer Springs Fire Protection Districts receive equitable fire protection by appropriately inspecting residential and commercial properties and ensures compliance with the County Fire Code and California Fire Code.

The County Emergency Medical Services Office (County EMS) provides regional leadership and regulatory oversight of the EMS delivery system and ensures that residents in all areas of the County have access to safe, effective, and equitable prehospital care from trained and verified EMS professionals. County EMS also ensures this through appropriately credentialing licensed and verified personnel, permitting and inspecting privately operated transport vehicles, and designating specialized hospital facilities as required by State statute.

The Department of the Medical Examiner’s (Medical Examiner) mission is to contribute to safe communities and to justice and equity for the residents of San Diego County by certifying the cause and manner of death for all homicides, suicides, accidents, and sudden and/or unexpected deaths in the county. The Medical Examiner has and continues to identify ways to reduce departmental costs to provide services to the public. Fees paid by customers ensure that Medical Examiner services benefiting a single agency or individual do not reduce resources available to the entire region.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Today’s actions are supportive of the County’s Sustainability goals to provide just and equitable access to County services by ensuring all residential and commercial properties are appropriately inspected and comply with County Fire Code and California Fire Code. The County Emergency Medical Services Office (County EMS) ensures all EMS responders are duly credentialed in a comprehensive and timely manner, all private ambulances (including air ambulances) are permitted and inspected, continuing education providers have accurate and current lesson plans and course records, and hospitals have the correct specialty care designations. The fees for ambulance transports ensure communities remain resilient and capable of responding to the immediate needs of individuals and families within CSA 17.

The proposed adjustments to the Department of the Medical Examiner fee structure are based on updated cost information, including salaries and benefits, services and supplies, and other

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departmental and countywide cost drivers. These updates ensure that fees accurately reflect the current cost of providing these services. The proposed actions support the County of San Diego’s Strategic Initiative of Sustainability to align the County’s available resources with services to maintain fiscal stability and long-term solvency.

FISCAL IMPACT

County Fire

There is no fiscal impact in the current fiscal year. If approved, this request will result in an estimated increase in revenue of \$0.2 million in County Fire, and \$0.4 million in CSA 17 in Fiscal Year 2026-27. Costs and revenue for this request will be included in the Fiscal Year 2026-28 CAO Recommended Operational Plan for County Fire and CSA 17. The funding source are fees paid by agencies or individuals for services.

A waiver of Board of Supervisor Policy B-29: *Fees, Grants, Revenue Contracts – Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery* is requested because the proposed fees will not cover all of the operating costs for services in CSA 17. The unrecovered cost, estimated at \$1.9 million, will be funded with existing CSA 17 property tax revenue. There is no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

Medical Examiner

There is no fiscal impact in the current fiscal year. If approved, revenue generated by the revised fees is estimated to decrease by \$1,140 due to decreases in four fees, partially offset by increases in two fees. Costs and revenue for this request will be included in the Fiscal Year 2026–28 CAO Recommended Operational Plan for the Medical Examiner. There is no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed Fire Marshal fees and rates for County Fire will have an impact on the business community within the San Diego County Fire Protection District and the Deer Springs Fire Protection District.

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

On March 2, 2026, with seven out of eight advisory board members being present, the San Diego County Fire Protection District Fire Advisory Board reviewed the proposed ordinance updating the Fire Marshal rates and fees, voted unanimously in support.

On February 10, 2026, the proposed fees to increase the CSA 17 ambulance transport fees to match the San Diego County Fire Protection District Ground Ambulance Service Area fees, were presented to the CSA 17 Advisory Committee.

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On March 26, 2026, the proposed EMS Office fees were presented to the Board of Supervisors Emergency Medical Care Committee (EMCC). The EMCC, with 12 of 17 members present, accepted a presentation on the proposed fees for FY 26-27 and took no further action.

BACKGROUND

The County of San Diego (County) is committed to maintaining the highest quality work product and customer service at the most efficient cost. Staff continually evaluate opportunities to streamline and improve processes, utilizing new technology as it becomes available. Public Safety Departments annually evaluate the fees and rates they charge to align with current costs, as required under the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) Policy B-29 *Fees, Grants, and Revenue Contracts—Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery* (Board Policy B-29). A fee is a fixed charge for a service provided, whereas a rate is an hourly amount charged for the total amount of time spent providing the requested service. The Auditor and Controller has reviewed and approved the supporting documentation and the methodology for establishing the fees in this proposal for FY 2026-27.

COUNTY FIRE

County Fire, which includes Fire Marshal services, Emergency Medical Services Office (County EMS), acting as the Board of Supervisors (Board) designated Local EMS Agency (LEMSA), and County Service Area 17 (CSA 17) ambulance transportation zone is proposing to increase 22 fees/rates, decrease 16 fees/rates, and remove one fee as noted below. County Fire is also proposing 16 new rates, nine of which are for businesses and organizations requesting on-site and dedicated fire apparatus and staff, and seven for false alarm responses and inspection violations.

Fire Marshal Fees:

County Fire recently conducted a review and is proposing adjustments to 12 fees and 13 rates, the addition of seven new fees for inspection violations and false alarm responses, and nine new rates for professional fire protection engineer services, and to ensure cost recovery for services provided. The new fees promote cost recovery when County Fire staff utilizes a contracted fire protection engineering firm to review specialized development projects like Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) for community safety, and the other new fees support fire inspectors, promoting fire safety at commercial and residential buildings. County Fire analyzed the services it provides to customers, including the tasks and functions performed as part of the service, and any direct and indirect costs associated with the service. The fees are charged to individuals, groups, or agencies within the San Diego County Fire Protection District (SDCFPD) and the Deer Springs Fire Protection District. Fire Marshal fees were last adjusted for Fiscal Year 2025-26.

County Fire's Community Risk Reduction Fire Marshal program includes annual business and State-mandated inspections, such as schools, medical facilities, jails, hotels, and childcare facilities. County staff inspect approximately 1,150 business and 250 State-mandated sites each year. The business inspection fee is an hourly rate that is pro-rated for the actual staff time

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associated with the inspection and completing mandated paperwork. On occasion, businesses fail to comply with the annual inspection. County Fire is proposing three new fees for inspection violations on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th inspections that have made no progress in correcting the violation, or if a business refuses to provide access for completing an inspection. In addition, County Fire is proposing three new fees for false alarms. This is when a business' alarm system is not functioning properly, initiates a 911 call, and County Fire First Responders are called to the scene. The three proposed fees are for the 3rd, 4th, and 5th false alarm response within a 12-month period. Finally, County Fire is also proposing one new fee when a business is found to be an immediate life safety hazard, and the business owner is not making progress towards a solution,

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Office Fees:

County EMS has the responsibility to credential Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics, authorize Mobile Intensive Care Nurses, inspect and permit private ambulances, permit air ambulances, approve continuing education providers, and designate Base Hospitals and Trauma Centers. On May 21, 2024 (21), the Board approved a three-year phased increase for County EMS fees. The phased approach was taken to lower the immediate impact of an increase in personnel, agencies and hospitals, but ensure full cost recovery by year three. The proposed fees before the Board today are the third year of the phased approach and take into consideration an annual analysis of staff time and costs for each service so that fees going forward stay consistent with an updated analysis. County EMS reviewed and analyzed nine existing fees and is proposing an increase to six fees and a decrease to three fees for FY 2026-27. Due to the Board's approved three-year phased approach, full cost recovery for services will be achieved in FY 26-27. The EMS Office engaged with impacted stakeholders from the Hospital Association of San Diego and Imperial Counties, the Ambulance Association of San Diego County, and the San Diego County Fire Chief's Association. The Emergency Medical Care Committee, the Board's advisory group, received several updates on anticipated fee changes.

County Service Area 17 Fees:

County Service Area (CSA) 17 is a voter-approved special district established in 1969, to provide ambulance services to the incorporated cities of Del Mar, Solana Beach, and Encinitas, the communities of Del Mar Heights and Del Mar Terrace, and the unincorporated areas of Rancho Santa Fe, 4-S Ranch, and a portion of Elfin Forest. CSA 17 is funded through dedicated property tax revenue, benefit fees, and ambulance transport user fees. There are four existing fees that staff is proposing for an increase to support cost recovery. With operating expenses increasing steadily year over year and property tax and benefit fees not increasing at the same annual pace, an increase to the ambulance transport fee, mileage rate, Treat-No-Transport rate, and Standby Hourly Rate are proposed to maintain current operations in CSA 17. In CSA 17, the average collection rate on fees assessed is about 26% due to various capped reimbursement rates from Medicare, Medi-Cal, commercial insurance, and patient private pay. Since 100% of the fee assessed on the estimated 7,000 ambulance transport is not collected, full cost recovery for services will not be achieved in FY 26-27 and a waiver of B-29 is being requested. The proposed increase to the fee schedule

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includes a 5% annual escalator through FY 28-29 to keep up with costs established in existing contracts with American Medical Response and various first responder agencies.

Based on this review, County Fire proposes changes to the fees for Fire Marshal, County EMS, and CSA 17, detailed in Attachment H – Summary of Proposed Fee Schedule. The proposed fees and rates are intended to match anticipated operational expenses, including wage rates and fringe benefit costs for County employees that work on these fee programs. The overall analysis results in the following fee recommendations (see Attachment A and Attachment B for additional details).

Fire Marshal		
Action	Number of Fees/Rates	Description
Increases	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Building Permit without Fire Sprinklers from current \$232 to \$352 • Residential Building Permit with Fire Sprinklers from current \$451 to \$640 • Commercial Tenant Improvement from current \$384 to \$504 • Grading Plan Review from current \$143 to \$286 • Alternative Fire Suppression System from current \$460 to \$470 • Firefighter I Hourly Rate from current \$40 to \$41 • Firefighter II Hourly Rate from current \$49 to \$50 • Firefighter II (Paramedic) Hourly Rate from current \$56 to \$58 • Fire Apparatus Engineer Hourly Rate from current \$54 to \$56 • Fire Apparatus Engineer (Paramedic) Hourly Rate from current \$62 to \$63 • Fire Captain Hourly Rate from current \$61 to \$62 • Fire Captain (Paramedic) Hourly Rate from current \$69 to \$70 • Battalion Chief Hourly Rate from current \$71 to \$72
Decreases	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Building Permit without Fire

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sprinklers from current \$493 to \$376 • Commercial Building Permit with Fire Sprinklers from current \$1,315 to \$914 • Gate Plan Review from current \$84 to \$72 • Fire Safety/Site Inspection from current \$280 to \$260 • Special Event from current \$324 to \$231 • Fire Alarm System from current \$547 to \$461 • Initial Inspection and Re-Inspection Fee from current \$181 to \$164 • Fire Apparatus Standby - Type I Hourly Rate from current \$173.00 to \$162.44 • Fire Apparatus Standby - Type II Hourly Rate from current \$164.00 to \$115.72 • Fire Apparatus Standby - Type III Hourly Rate from current \$157.00 to \$90.66 • Fire Apparatus Standby - Water Tender Tactical I Hourly Rate from current \$148.00 to \$98.04 • Fire Apparatus Standby - Water Tender Tactical II Hourly Rate from current \$127.00 to \$97.76
Additions	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Apparatus Standby - Type IV Hourly Rate \$81.58 • Fire Apparatus Standby - Type V to VII Hourly Rate \$82.87 • Fire Protection Technician I (7/1/26-6/30/27) Hourly Rate \$170 • Fire Protection Technician II (7/1/26-6/30/27) Hourly Rate \$195 • Fire Protection Technician III (7/1/26-6/30/27) Hourly Rate \$300 • Fire Protection Engineer I (7/1/26-6/30/27) Hourly Rate \$220 • Fire Protection Engineer II (7/1/26-6/30/27) Hourly Rate \$255 • Senior Fire Protection Engineer I (7/1/26-6/30/27) Hourly Rate \$285 • Senior Fire Protection Engineer II (7/1/26-

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		6/30/27) Hourly Rate \$340 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection Violation (Failure to Comply) – 3rd Inspection No Progress \$90 • Inspection Violation (Failure to Comply) – 4th Inspection No Progress \$230 • Inspection Violation (Failure to Comply) – 5th Inspection No Progress and Subsequent Inspections \$500 • Immediate Life Safety Hazard \$900 • False Alarm (3rd Response Within 12-Month Period) \$90 • False Alarm (4th Response Within 12-Month Period) \$230 • False Alarm (5th and Subsequent Responses Within 12-Month Period) \$500
Removal	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Apparatus Standby- Type IV to VII Hourly Rate \$150
Total Fees & Rates	42	

San Diego County Emergency Medical Services		
Action	Number of Fees	Description
Increases	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambulance Provider Permit from current \$11,300 to \$12,761 • Annual Vehicle Inspection from current \$385 to \$407 • Continuing Education Provider from current \$4,100 to \$5,250 • Base Station Hospital Designation from current \$61,000 to \$73,255 • Trauma Center Hospital Designation from current \$66,000 to \$72,253 • Air Ambulance Fee from current \$5,500 to \$5,951
Decreases	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMT/Advanced EMT Initial/Renewal from current \$200 to \$198 • Paramedic Accreditation Initial from current \$200 to \$198

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile Intensive Care Nurse Authorization Initial from current \$200 to \$198
Total Fees	9	

County Service Area 17				
Fee Description	FY 2025-26 Current Rate	FY 2026-27 Proposed Rate	FY 2027-28 Proposed Rate	FY 2028-29 Proposed Rate
Base Rate (per transport)	\$3,743	\$3,930	\$4,127	\$4,333
Mileage (per mile)	\$48	\$50	\$53	\$56
Treat, No Transport (per occurrence)	\$460	\$483	\$507	\$532
Standby/Special Event (per Hour)	\$235	\$229	\$240	\$252

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Staff recently conducted a review of all six department fees to ensure cost recovery for services provided and the review identified two customer fees to be increased and four fees to be decreased.

Fees are charged for optional services, such as a family requested autopsy, as allowed by statute and approved by the Board. The Medical Examiner’s customers include families of individuals whose deaths fall under Medical Examiner jurisdiction, law enforcement agencies, deputy district attorneys, deputy public defenders and other defense attorneys, health agencies and mortuaries. The current fee schedule was approved by the Board on May 6, 2025 (4). The Medical Examiner has continued to analyze and propose updates to the fees to include changes in County costs and will continue to return to the Board annually with updated fees, in an effort to achieve full cost recovery. The tables below show the County’s current fee and the proposed fee.

Fees in the Administrative Code to be Increased (2):

The proposed increases to Medical Examiner’s fees are based on negotiated salary and benefit increases and adjusted to achieve full cost recovery.

Fee	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
CD of Digital Photographs	\$29.60	\$45.37

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Histology (30-minute Use of Photo Microscope)	\$37.20	\$44.75
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The services for both fees require dedicated staff time from a Legal Support Assistant II. The fee for CD of Digital Photographs covers the production of case photographs for litigation or research purposes. The process of burning photographs to a CD is time-consuming as the use of this format limits our ability to further shorten the processing time. The fee for Histology (30-minute Use of Photo Microscope) covers access to a microscope to view case related histology slides. The Legal Support Assistant II must escort and remain with the requestor for the duration of the session to ensure security and chain-of-custody.

Fee in the Administrative Code to be Decreased (4):

The proposed decreases to Medical Examiner fees are based on reductions in staff time required to certify and photocopy documents, lower overhead costs associated with Family Requested Autopsies and decrease in direct supply costs for Observer Safety Clothing.

Fee	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Certification of Documents	\$3.75	\$2.98
Printing and Photocopying of Documents	\$2.00	\$1.55
Family Requested Autopsy	\$5,168.90	\$5,154.96
Observer Safety Clothing	\$7.20	\$7.10

Today’s action requests that the Board approve amendments to Article XX of the San Diego County Administrative Code to fees charged for services by the County Fire Marshal, County EMS, and CSA 17 and find the project exempt from CEQA. Today’s request is to also approve amendments to Article XX of the San Diego County Administrative Code to fees charged for services by the Medical Examiner. Today’s request includes two steps, first the ordinances will be introduced on May 5, 2026, then they will be scheduled for consideration and adoption on May 19, 2026.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today’s proposed action supports the Sustainability Initiative of the County of San Diego’s 2026 –2031 Strategic Plan by aligning services to available resources to maintain fiscal stability and ensure long-term solvency.

Respectfully submitted,

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Andrew Strong for

EBONY N. SHELTON
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

Attachment A: An Ordinance Amending Article XX of the San Diego County Administrative Ordinance Code, Relating to San Diego County Fire, San Diego County Emergency Medical Services, and County Service Area 17 Charges and Fees (Clean Copy)

Attachment B: An Ordinance Amending Article XX of the San Diego County Administrative Ordinance Code, Relating to San Diego County Fire, San Diego County Emergency Medical Services, and County Service Area 17 Charges and Fees (Informational Copy)

Attachment C: An Ordinance Amending the San Diego County Administrative Code Article XX Section 364.6, Relating to Medical Examiner Fees and Charges (Clean Copy)

Attachment D: An Ordinance Amending the San Diego County Administrative Code Article XX Section 364.6, Relating to Medical Examiner Fees and Charges (Informational Copy)

Attachment E: Summary of Proposed Ordinance – County Fire

Attachment F: Summary of Proposed Ordinance – Medical Examiner

Attachment G: CEQA Section 15273 Findings

Attachment H: Summary of Proposed Fee Schedule – County Fire