

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2026**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 9

**SUBJECT: STRENGTHENING FIRE PREPAREDNESS WHILE PROTECTING
TAXPAYER DOLLARS (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

San Diego County Fire (County Fire) delivers around-the-clock fire protection and emergency services across 1.5 million acres, operating twenty-two fire stations in one of the most fire-prone regions in California. Over the past decade, County Fire has made major investments to strengthen fire protection and improve readiness, and will continue to prioritize fire preparedness as wildfire seasons grow longer, hotter, and more severe.

Fire stations and training facilities are critical public safety infrastructure, shaping response times, operational readiness, and the health and safety of firefighters who live and work inside them. Many County fire stations were inherited decades ago and need to be renovated or replaced to meet current safety and operational needs. In recent years, County Fire invested over \$45 million to modernize fire stations across the region, including Boulevard, Pine Valley, Mt. Laguna, Palomar Mountain, and East Otay Mesa.

At the same time, delivering fire infrastructure has become more challenging.

- The cost of constructing new fire stations has increased sharply, driven by a 48% rise in construction costs since the pandemic and compounded by recent federal tariff policies. The County responded by anticipating and budgeting for above average construction price increases but initial estimates on recent projects have still come in high.
- The cost of fire trucks and other critical equipment has doubled in recent years, placing added pressure on County Fire's budget.
- Federal disinvestment in wildfire prevention and preparedness, including recent cuts to the U.S. Forest Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has weakened fire preparedness, increasing risk across the region and raising the stakes for local fire operations.
- Federal cuts and new administrative burdens stemming from the Trump Administration's H.R. 1 are projected to impact the County budget by up to \$300 million annually, constraining fiscal flexibility across core County services.

As wildfire risk grows and federal support pulls back, the County has a responsibility to protect public safety while carefully stewarding taxpayer dollars in the face of financial headwinds. Today's item advances two targeted actions to improve how County fire infrastructure is delivered and maintained.

First, the County will pilot a new approach by incorporating the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)'s fire-specific infrastructure expertise into the delivery of a small-scale County Fire capital project. In partnership with County Fire administrative staff, the pilot will draw on CAL FIRE's expertise in building hundreds of fire stations across the state to identify cost-savings and

efficiencies. County Fire already contracts with CAL FIRE for staffing and day-to-day operations. Today's pilot extends that partnership to construction project management and authorizes the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to move forward with procurement and construction for the fire station workout sheds project using the pilot flexibilities.

Second, the County will allow firefighters to handle clearly defined, non-technical maintenance tasks at fire stations to improve responsiveness and day-to-day conditions. Allowing on-site firefighters to address routine issues, such as painting, cleaning equipment, replacing light fixtures, and clearing downed trees, reduces delays and avoidable costs, particularly at remote stations. Major maintenance and repairs requiring technical skills will continue to be handled through established County processes.

Together, these actions reflect a disciplined approach to fire preparedness and public safety. As wildfire risk grows and federal support becomes less reliable, the County is acting as a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars, ensuring fire infrastructure investments deliver maximum readiness, safety, and value for firefighters and the communities who depend on them.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHAIR TERRA LAWSON-REMER

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to pilot a capital construction project for the fire station workout sheds project, subject to funding and approval by the Board, to assess efficiencies from the San Diego County Fire Protection District (SDCFPD) providing specialized project management services.
2. In accordance with Board Policy A-87. Competitive Procurement, approve and authorize the Director Department of Purchasing and Contracting to issue request(s) for quotations identifying the Tuff Shed brand of workout sheds to maintain standardization.
3. Designate the Director, San Diego County Fire, as the County Officer responsible for administering the construction contract(s) authorized by the Board of Supervisors on January 28, 2025 (08).
4. Direct the CAO to take the necessary actions to permit CAL FIRE staff to undertake specified non-technical basic upkeep activities at County Fire facilities.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

FEMA scores San Diego County as Relatively High on the Social Vulnerability Index, indicating that demographic and socioeconomic factors worsen community outcomes when disasters strike. By supporting County Fire infrastructure delivery, today's proposal helps to bolster the fire protections that at-risk residents of the unincorporated areas depend on most.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed action fosters climate resilience by streamlining the delivery of modern fire infrastructure capable of responding to longer and more intense fire seasons. The County remains committed to reducing its carbon footprint within its capital construction and major maintenance programs.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for these recommendations to enable a pilot project for San Diego County Fire administrative staff and CAL FIRE to perform construction management services and specified non-technical basic

upkeep activities are included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan in San Diego County Fire based on existing staff time funded by existing General Purpose Revenue and the existing cooperative agreement with CAL FIRE.

Funds for the workout shed projects are included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan in San Diego County Fire and budgeted at \$1.9 million based on existing San Diego County Fire General Purpose Revenue.

There may be cost avoidance, savings and/or efficiencies from using County Fire administrative staff and CAL FIRE construction management services on the pilot capital project and routine maintenance. County staff will analyze these activities and report the results of the pilot efforts to the CAO. Funds for this analysis and reporting are included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan in San Diego County Fire based on existing staff time funded by existing General Purpose Revenue. If additional resources are required, staff would return to the Board for consideration and approval.

There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Lawson Remer, seconded by Supervisor Anderson, the Board of Supervisors took the following actions:

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to pilot a capital construction project, such as fire station workout project, a training tower or similar project, subject to funding and approval by the Board, to assess efficiencies from the San Diego County Fire Protection District (SDCFPD) providing specialized project management services.
2. In accordance with Board Policy A 87. Competitive Procurement, approve and authorize the Director Department of Purchasing and Contracting to issue request(s) for quotations identifying the Tuff Shed brand of workout sheds to maintain standardization.
3. Designate the Director, San Diego County Fire, as the County Officer responsible for administering the construction contract(s) authorized by the Board of Supervisors on January 28, 2025 (08).
4. Direct the CAO, subject to successful negotiations and any necessary amendment to the agreement between the County and CAL FIRE, and subject to consultation with other impacted labor groups including, if possible, residents of the unincorporated communities, to permit CAL FIRE staff to undertake upkeep, repair, removal, and improvement activities at County Fire facilities consistent with the skillset of CAL FIRE staff and activities at State fire stations, to the extent allowed by law.

AYES: Aguirre, Anderson, Lawson Remer, Montgomery Steppe
ABSENT: Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter