



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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First District

JOEL ANDERSON  
Second District

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Third District

NATHAN FLETCHER  
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND  
Fifth District

**DATE:** April 26, 2022

**04**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**COUNTY FIRE — MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH SAN DIEGO GAS & ELECTRIC FOR HELICOPTER UTILIZATION FOR FIRE SUPPRESSION (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

### **OVERVIEW**

On October 20, 2009 (11), the Board of Supervisors approved the first agreement with San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) to utilize a Helitanker for the region's aerial fire protection program. Since then, the agreement has been renewed multiple times as the County of San Diego (County) sought to increase aerial assets to strengthen its initial fire suppression attack capabilities. Over the past five years, these helicopters have responded to 144 fires for a total flight time of 333 hours.

Today's action will authorize the Director, Purchasing and Contracting to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County and SDG&E, adding two helicopters to the current MOU, for a total of five firefighting helicopters available to suppress fires. Under this agreement, SDG&E will continue to cover the costs to operate the helicopter during the first two flight hours of any new fire, and the County will continue to cover the second two flight hours up to the County's annual cost limit of \$150,000.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

#### **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. In accordance with Board Policy A-87, Competitive Procurement, approve and authorize the Director, Purchasing and Contracting, to enter into negotiations with San Diego Gas & Electric for firefighting-equipped helicopters for up to three years with up to two additional option years if needed, and to amend the agreement as needed to reflect changes to requirements and funding, and to execute any related agreements or documents.

### **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

More than 80 percent of the San Diego County Fire Protection District's (SDCFPD) jurisdictional area qualifies as a disadvantaged unincorporated community, based on a San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) report on the funding, administration, and performance of the former County Service Area No. 135 (now SDCFPD). San Diego County Fire continues to engage communities through the Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Division, established in 2019. The CRR Division strives to build, enhance, and maintain resilient communities within the SDCFPD's

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jurisdictional area through involvement with the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County, various community outreach opportunities, and by promoting local events aimed at creating safe and livable communities to improve the health and quality of life of residents.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for this request will be included in in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 CAO Recommended Operational Plan for County Fire. If approved, this request will result in costs and revenue of \$150,000 in Fiscal Year 2022-23, depending on flight time. The funding source is existing General Purpose Revenue. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

On February 28, 2022, with five advisory board members being present, the San Diego County Fire Protection District (SDCFPD) Fire Advisory Board voted unanimously in support of the execution of an agreement between San Diego Gas & Electric and San Diego County for the use of firefighting helicopters.

**BACKGROUND**

On October 20, 2009 (11), the Board of Supervisors approved the first agreement with San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) to utilize a Helitanker for the region's aerial fire protection program. Since then, the agreement has been renewed multiple times as the County of San Diego (County) sought to increase aerial assets to strengthen its initial fire suppression attack capabilities. Over the past five years, these helicopters have responded to 144 fires for a total flight time of 333 hours.

Today, SDG&E's fleet includes four helicopters available for County use, including: two Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawks, one Sikorsky S-64 Skycrane and one Airbus H145. In 2023, SDG&E will add another Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk. The S-64 helicopters can carry and unload more than 2,600 gallons of water per trip and stay airborne for up to 2 ½ hours before needing to refuel. Depending on the water source's location in proximity to the fire, these helicopters can potentially drop between 20,000 and 30,000 gallons of water per hour. In addition, the UH-60 has been fitted with an 850-gallon internal tank to dramatically enhance the aircraft's firefighting capabilities.

The helicopters will be based within San Diego County and will be available for dispatch to fires within the region. The helicopters will be available to all local agencies, cities and fire districts at no cost for the first four hours. For each fire, SDG&E will cover the cost of the first two hours of flight time, and the County will cover the next two hours. After the first four hours, jurisdictions requesting the services would be responsible for the flight time hourly rate cost. San Diego County Fire will coordinate all requests for the helicopters with other fire agencies within San Diego county. Should SDG&E exhaust its \$150,000 contribution, the County would pick up the first two hours, and the next two, up to the County's annual cost limit of \$150,000

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helicopters to the current MOU, for a total of five firefighting helicopters available to fight the region's wildfires.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today's proposed action to authorize an agreement between the County of San Diego and San Diego Gas & Electric for the use of firefighting helicopters supports the Community Strategic Initiative in the County of San Diego's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan by supporting safety for all communities by securing aerial firefighting resources to support regional readiness to respond to a disaster.

Respectfully submitted,



FOR

HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER  
Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

N/A