

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025**

**MINUTE ORDER NO. 15**

**SUBJECT: NOTICED PUBLIC HEARING:  
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 (4/22/25 - FIRST  
READING; 5/6/25 - SECOND READING UNLESS ORDINANCE IS MODIFIED  
ON SECOND READING) (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

**OVERVIEW**

San Diego County Fire (County Fire), which includes the Community Risk Reduction Fire Marshal services, Emergency Medical Services (County EMS) Office, acting as the Board of Supervisors (Board) designated Local EMS Agency (LEMSA), and the County Service Area 17 (CSA 17) ambulance transportation zone, 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), which requires County departments to recover the costs to provide services to agencies or individuals. As a result, County Fire is proposing actions that support the cost of providing services, while ensuring fair and equitable fee levels for customers and the public. After reviewing the current fees and rates, County Fire staff is proposing to increase 21 fees, decrease one fee, add one new fee, and remove 4 fees reflecting prior Board authorizations to dissolve County Service Area 69 ambulance transportation services. County Fire is also proposing 15 new rates for businesses and organizations requesting on-site and dedicated presence of fire apparatus and staff. For reference, 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 reviewed and approved the supporting documentation and the methodology for establishing the fees in this proposal for Fiscal Year 2025-26.

**Fire Marshal Fees:**

County Fire staff reviews residential and commercial projects in the San Diego County and Deer Springs Fire Protection Districts to ensure compliance with the County Fire Code and California Fire Code. Fire Marshal staff are also responsible for performing annual business and State-mandated inspections. While a fee currently exists in the administrative code for annual business and State-mandated inspections, those inspections are currently done at no cost to the businesses and other facilities, resulting in a shortfall of outside revenue in order to offset the cost of providing this service. Fire Marshal fees were last updated for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22. The revised fee package includes charging for those services beginning in FY 2025-26.

**Emergency Medical Services 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 updated fees before the Board today are based on the second year of the phased approach and take into consideration an annual analysis of staff time and costs for each service so that full cost recovery is achieved by year

three. Due to the Board's approved three year phased approach, full cost recovery for these services will not be achieved in FY 25-26 and a waiver of B-29 is requested as the fees collected will not fully cover the cost of services provided.

#### **County Service Area 17 Fees:**

County EMS is responsible for the administration of CSA 17, which provides contracted ambulance transportation services for 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. The proposed ambulance transport user fee received support from the CSA 17 Advisory Committee and would be consistent with the San Diego County Fire Protection District's Board of Directors approved fee for the SDCFPD Ambulance Service Area. In CSA 17, the average collection rate on fees assessed is about 26% due to various reimbursement rates from Medicare, Medi-Cal, commercial insurance, and patient private pay. Since 100% of the fee assessed on ambulance transports are not collected, full cost recovery for services will not be achieved in FY 25-26 and a waiver of B-29 is being requested. CSA 17 fees were last updated for FY 2021-22 when an Out-of-County fee for ambulance transports was added to the fee schedule. Prior to FY 21-22, the current resident and non-resident ambulance transport fees were approved by the Board on June 14, 2011 (7).

Today's action requests that the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approve amendments to Article XX of the San Diego County Administrative Ordinance Code to fees charged for services by County Fire's Community Risk Reduction, County EMS, and CSA 17. The Board last approved revisions to some of County Fire's fees on May 18, 2021 (1), County EMS fees on May 21, 2024 (21), and CSA 17's fees on May 4, 2021 (18).

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

##### **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

On April 22, 2025:

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 D 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 Ordinance (first reading):  
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
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 April 22, 2025, the San Diego County Board takes action as recommended, then on May 6, 2025:

1. Consider and adopt (unless ordinance is modified on second reading):

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

### **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

Services and oversight provided by San Diego County Fire is 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.

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.

### **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. By ensuring 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. Lastly, ensuring communities remain resilient and capable of responding to the immediate needs of individuals and families within CSA 17.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact in the current fiscal year. If approved, this request will result in an estimated increase in revenue of \$685,000 in County Fire, and \$3.5 million in CSA 17 in Fiscal Year 2025-26. Costs and revenue for this request will be included in the Fiscal Year 2025-27 CAO Recommended Operational Plan for County Fire and CSA 17. The funding source is fees paid by agencies or individuals for services. The proposed fees will not cover all the operating costs for these services in County Fire and CSA 17. Estimated unrecovered costs of \$1.9 million will be supported by existing General Purpose Revenue for County Fire (\$0.3 million), and existing property tax for CSA 17 (\$1.6 million). There is no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

### **BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

The proposed 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.

**ACTION:**

ON MOTION of Supervisor Anderson, seconded by Supervisor Lawson-Remer, the Board of Supervisors closed the Hearing and took action as recommended, introducing the Ordinance for further Board consideration and adoption on May 6, 2025.

AYES: Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe

ABSENT: Desmond; (District 1 Seat Vacant)

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