



# 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:** April 21, 2026

**01**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE AND AWARD CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS FOR A NEW TRAINING TOWER AT THE COUNTY FIRE TRAINING CENTER, WORKOUT SHED AT PALOMAR MOUNTAIN FIRE STATION, FIRE STATION VENT REPLACEMENT, AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION (DISTRICTS: 2, 4 AND 5)**

### **OVERVIEW**

San Diego County Fire (County Fire) partners with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to provide fire protection and emergency medical services from 21 fire stations, including around-the-clock paramedic level staffing, specialized rescue services, and coordination of an ambulance transportation program. Fifteen County Fire stations were built prior to County Fire's formation in 2008, with the oldest station in Descanso being over 80 years old. Over time, County Fire and the Department of General Services (DGS) have made significant facility improvements and built new stations to ensure CAL FIRE staff are safe, healthy, and have the resources to provide life-saving services to residents. On January 13, 2026 (9), the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to authorize County Fire to pilot a major maintenance or capital construction project and determine if financial efficiencies can be realized by leveraging technical expertise and construction delivery methods utilized by CAL FIRE on state-owned fire stations.

One of County Fire's priority projects is the installation of a fire training tower. This project would enhance CAL FIRE staff's ability to respond to emergencies, including in multi-story buildings, to rescue the public while protecting staff. County Fire is requesting Board approval for the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to advertise and award a construction contract or contracts for the construction of Capital Project 1026822 San Diego Fire Training Tower estimated at \$3,650,000 and authorization for the Director, San Diego County Fire, or their designee, to serve as the County Officer responsible for administering the contract or contracts, and to find this project exempt from CEQA.

County Fire has determined the need for an additional workout shed at the Palomar Mountain Fire Station estimated at \$200,000 to provide for staff safety, and today's actions include requesting authority for the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to advertise and award a

**SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE AND AWARD CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS FOR A NEW TRAINING TOWER AT THE COUNTY FIRE TRAINING CENTER, WORKOUT SHED AT PALOMAR MOUNTAIN FIRE STATION, FIRE STATION VENT REPLACEMENT, AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION (DISTRICTS: 2, 4 AND 5)**

construction contract or contracts for the site work of a workout shed at the Palomar Mountain Fire Station, authorization for the Director, San Diego County Fire, or their designee, to serve as the County Officer responsible for administering the contract or contracts, and find this project exempt from CEQA.

On March 11, 2025 (3), the Board authorized County Fire to accept federal grant funding for fire station hardening projects. While most of this work has been exempt from public works contracting requirements, it has been determined that the vents on top of County-owned fire stations do meet public works requirements and therefore need Board approval to proceed. The estimated construction costs are \$300,000. Today's actions include requesting authority of the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to advertise and award a construction contract or contracts for the installation of ember-resistant vents on five County-owned fire stations, authorization for the Director, San Diego County Fire or their designee, to serve as the County officer responsible for administering the contract or contracts, and find this project exempt from CEQA.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. Find that the proposed project for the installation of a prefabricated fire training tower at the Fire Training Center located at 11880 Campo Road, Spring Valley, CA 91978 is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15303 and 15304.
2. Authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to advertise and award a construction contract or contracts and to take any action authorized by Section 401, et seq. of the Administrative Code, with respect to contracting for the site work and assembly of a fire training tower at the Fire Training Center.
3. Designate the Director, San Diego County Fire, or their designee, as the County officer responsible for administering the contract or contracts for the site work and assembly of a fire training tower at the Fire Training Center.
4. Find that the proposed project for the installation of a stand-alone workout shed at Fire Station (FS)-79 Palomar Mountain located at 21610 Crestline Road, Palomar Mountain, CA 92060 is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15303 and 15304.
5. Authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to advertise and award a construction contract or contracts and to take any action authorized by Section 401, et seq. of the Administrative Code, with respect to contracting for the site work of a workout shed at the Palomar Mountain Fire Station.

**SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE AND AWARD CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS FOR A NEW TRAINING TOWER AT THE COUNTY FIRE TRAINING CENTER, WORKOUT SHED AT PALOMAR MOUNTAIN FIRE STATION, FIRE STATION VENT REPLACEMENT, AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION (DISTRICTS: 2, 4 AND 5)**

6. Designate the Director, San Diego County Fire, or their designee, as the County officer responsible for administering the contract or contracts for the site work of a workout shed at the Palomar Mountain Fire Station.
7. Find that the proposed project for the installation of ember-resistant vents at FS-36 (14024 Peaceful Valley Ranch Road, Jamul, CA 91935), FS-37 (2383 Honey Springs Road, Jamul, CA 91935), FS-56 (3407 Highway 79, Julian, CA 92036), FS-82 (3410 Dye Road, Ramona, CA 92065), and FS-85 (25858 Highway 78, Ramona, CA 92065) is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301.
8. Authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to advertise and award a construction contract or contracts and to take any action authorized by Section 401, et seq. of the Administrative Code, with respect to contracting for the installation of ember-resistant vents at FS-36 (14024 Peaceful Valley Ranch Road, Jamul, CA 91935), FS-37 (2383 Honey Springs Road, Jamul, CA 91935), FS-56 (3407 Highway 79, Julian, CA 92036), FS-82 (3410 Dye Road, Ramona, CA 92065), and FS-85 (25858 Highway 78, Ramona, CA 92065).
9. Designate the Director, San Diego County Fire, or their designee, as the County officer responsible for administering the contract or contracts for the site work of ember-resistant vents at County-owned fire stations.

**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The San Diego County Fire Protection District (SDCFPD) includes some of the region's most geographically isolated and lowest-income communities. CAL FIRE staff, who provide first responder services on behalf of the County, also partner with tribal fire departments to respond to emergencies and protect residents. Enhancing County Fire facilities supports further investment in our underserved communities.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The San Diego County Fire Protection District (SDCFPD) includes some of the region's most geographically isolated and lowest-income communities. CAL FIRE staff, who provide first responder services on behalf of the County, also partner with tribal fire departments to respond to emergencies and protect residents. Evaluating new service delivery methods for County Fire's stations can support further investment into our under-served communities.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for Capital Project 1026822 San Diego Fire Training Tower project are included in Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan in the Capital Program Funds for a total of \$4,500,000. The total cost for the training tower is estimated at \$3,650,000. Today's request to advertise and award construction is just for the Training Tower project. Funding sources for the Training Tower are Fire Mitigation Fees (\$1,650,000) and SDCFPD Fire Mitigation fund balance (\$2,000,000). Staff

**SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE AND AWARD CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS FOR A NEW TRAINING TOWER AT THE COUNTY FIRE TRAINING CENTER, WORKOUT SHED AT PALOMAR MOUNTAIN FIRE STATION, FIRE STATION VENT REPLACEMENT, AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION (DISTRICTS: 2, 4 AND 5)**

will return to the Board to advertise and award construction for the restroom in a future Board letter.

Total construction funds of \$500,000 are included in Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan in San Diego County Fire for an additional workout shed at the Palomar Mountain Fire Station (\$200,000) and the installation of ember-resistant vents on County-owned fire stations (\$300,000). The funding sources are existing General Purpose Revenue (\$200,000) and FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant (\$300,000). There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

If approved, this project will have positive impacts on the business community. At least one public works construction project will be made available for private construction companies to competitively bid and employ local residents.

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

On March 2, 2026, the San Diego County Fire Protection District's Fire Advisory Board received an update from staff on the Fire Training Tower and proposed delivery method and voted unanimously (with 7 members present) in support.

**BACKGROUND**

San Diego County Fire (County Fire), on behalf of the San Diego County Fire Protection District (SDCFPD) has a cooperative agreement with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to provide fire protection, emergency response, and emergency medical services at 21 County-owned fire stations. Fifteen County Fire stations were built prior to County Fire's formation in 2008, with the oldest station in Descanso serving the community over 80 years. Over time, County Fire and the Department of General Services (DGS) have made significant facility improvements and built new stations to ensure CAL FIRE staff are safe, healthy, and have the resources to provide life-saving services to residents.

On January 13, 2026 (9), the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to pilot a capital or major maintenance construction project and assess efficiencies from the SDCFPD coordinating with CAL FIRE and leveraging their technical expertise and construction delivery methods. This expands the partnership between County Fire and CAL FIRE by incorporating CAL FIRE's infrastructure expertise in construction project management. On September 29, 2015 (5), the Board authorized the Director, Department of General Services (DGS) to contract with the Otay Water District to lease land for a Fire Training Center at 11880 Campo Road, Spring Valley, CA 91978. County Fire/CAL FIRE staff complete most operational training at this site and is central to efficient and high-quality fire protection services in our region. One of County Fire's priority projects is the installation of a fire training tower at this location and on April 8, 2025 (21), the training tower was added to the County's Capital Improve Needs Assessment (CINA).

**SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE AND AWARD CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS FOR A NEW TRAINING TOWER AT THE COUNTY FIRE TRAINING CENTER, WORKOUT SHED AT PALOMAR MOUNTAIN FIRE STATION, FIRE STATION VENT REPLACEMENT, AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION (DISTRICTS: 2, 4 AND 5)**

County Fire and CAL FIRE have worked with DGS to assume responsibility for the fire training tower project. County Fire, through an architect, is nearing completion of the necessary design documents to issue a competitive solicitation(s) for site work. Separately, County Fire intends to purchase the prefabricated training tower and issue construction contract solicitation(s) to assemble the prefabricated components and complete the site work.

In addition to the training tower, another capital project County Fire has prioritized to pilot is the construction and installation of stand-alone workout sheds at six fire stations. Without dedicated exercise places, firefighters frequently exercise in the apparatus bay and breathe in potentially hazardous fumes. On January 28, 2025 (8) the Board authorized DGS to administer contracts for the installation of stand-alone workout sheds at six fire stations and on January 13, 2026 (9) the Board authorized County Fire to assume authority of those construction contracts. County Fire and DGS have determined that it would be inefficient for County Fire to manage the public works contract for these six workout sheds, and DGS will retain oversight of the sheds following the County's standard processes.

However, County Fire staff have determined the need to install an additional workout shed at the Palomar Mountain Fire Station to support CAL FIRE staff. To complete this work, County Fire will leverage existing Board authority previously provided to separately purchase the prefabricated shed, which includes installation, and is seeking authority from the Board for a competitive solicitation to complete the site work.

On March 11, 2025 (3), the Board authorized County Fire to accept \$1.2 million in federal grant funding for a fire station hardening project. Most County-owned fire stations were built prior to County Fire's formation in 2008 and more recent, stringent updates to building and fire codes subsequent to the 2003 and 2007 wildfires. Federal funding is to be used for replacing combustible landscaping with fire-resistant hardscaping materials and to retrofit, or replace all fire station vents with ember-resistant ones. Most of this work will be completed in partnership with DGS maintenance staff. However, some of the fire stations have inaccessible vents on the roof that require specialized tools beyond the scope of DGS staff. In addition, it has been determined that roofing work is subject to public works contracting requirements which necessitates a competitive solicitation to complete this work.

Today's actions include authorizing the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to advertise and award competitive solicitation(s) for the construction Capital Project 1026822 San Diego Fire Training Tower project (\$3,650,000), a workout shed at the Palomar Mountain Fire Station (\$200,000), installation of ember-resistant vents at County-owned fire stations (\$300,000), and find that all three these projects are exempt from CEQA In addition, the Board is requested to authorize the Director, San Diego County Fire, or their designee, as the County Officer responsible for administering the contracts for these projects.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

**SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE AND AWARD CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS FOR A NEW TRAINING TOWER AT THE COUNTY FIRE TRAINING CENTER, WORKOUT SHED AT PALOMAR MOUNTAIN FIRE STATION, FIRE STATION VENT REPLACEMENT, AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION (DISTRICTS: 2, 4 AND 5)**

The construction of a stand-alone workout shed at Palomar fire station and the assembly of a fire training tower at the Fire Training Center are categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15303 and 15304. Pursuant to Section 15303, the projects are exempt because they involve the construction or assembly of small structures. The workout shed at Palomar fire station is approximately 720 square feet and it will be placed on the existing 3.29 acres of the fire station site. The fire training tower has a total ground footprint of approximately 1,174 square feet and will be assembled on the existing 2.73 acres of the Fire Training Center. The projects are exempt pursuant to Section 15304 Minor Alteration to Land as they involve the minor trenching and backfilling and minor alteration of land and vegetation on slopes less than 10 percent that does not include the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees.

None of the exceptions to the exemptions described in Section 15300.2 prohibit the use of the categorical exemption for the proposed projects and there is no substantial evidence that the proposed projects involve unusual circumstances, including future activities, resulting in or which might reasonably result in significant impacts which threaten the environment. Any uses beyond existing uses of the properties will be subject to funding and environmental review.

In addition, the installation of ember-resistant vents at the five fire stations is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15301 because it involves the operation, maintenance, and minor alteration of existing public facilities, including retrofitting fire stations with ember- and flame-resistant vents, installation of ember-resistant mesh, and sealing of existing openings, with negligible or no expansion of existing use.

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

Today's requests support the Sustainability Initiative of the County of San Diego 2026-2031 Strategic Plan through a pilot project that evaluates efficiencies to better support existing revenues and maximizing public services.

Respectfully submitted,



*Andrew Strong for*

EBONY N. SHELTON  
Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

Attachment A – CEQA Notice of Exemption for San Diego County Fire – Training Tower Project

**SUBJECT:** AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE AND AWARD CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS FOR A NEW TRAINING TOWER AT THE COUNTY FIRE TRAINING CENTER, WORKOUT SHED AT PALOMAR MOUNTAIN FIRE STATION, FIRE STATION VENT REPLACEMENT, AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION (DISTRICTS: 2, 4 AND 5)

Attachment B – CEQA Notice of Exemption for San Diego County Fire Palomar Mountain FS 79 Workout Shed

Attachment C – CEQA Notice of Exemption for San Diego County Fire – Station Hardening Project (FEMA PMD FY24)