

SAN DIEGO COUNTY FIRE

STRATEGIC PLAN
2020-2025

ONE TEAM,
ONE MISSION.





2020—2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

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MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE WARDEN

The vision and leadership of the Board of Supervisors led to the creation of the San Diego County Fire Authority in 2008. Since 2008, the Board has continued to support improvements in providing fire and emergency medical services to the residents of and the visitors to the unincorporated areas of San Diego County. The Fire Authority and CAL FIRE work closely together to form a blended organization working as one unified system of professionally trained staff and firefighters to provide around-the-clock service to 1.5 million acres of the unincorporated county. The San Diego County Fire Authority’s 2020—2025 Strategic Plan builds on that strong foundation and advances the County’s Strategic Initiatives of *Building Better Health, Living Safely, Sustainable Environments, and Operational Excellence*.



The Fire Authority’s 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan offers a vision for the future of the San Diego County Fire Authority. This plan sets forth objectives for our workforce and for the continued delivery of high-quality services in support of resilient communities. The plan identifies the outcome objectives and indicators that will be used to measure progress. The strategic planning process is continuous and will be reviewed annually as part of the Fire Authority’s commitment to continuous quality improvement.

Ron Lane, San Diego County Fire Warden
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Public Safety Group



The County Fire 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan, and the goals outlined therein, are an extension of the County of San Diego Strategic Initiatives and CAL FIRE’s Strategic Goals.



INTRODUCTION

MESSAGE FROM COUNTY FIRE LEADERSHIP

On behalf of the dedicated men and women of San Diego County Fire, we are very proud to present the 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan. Since 2008, County Fire has evolved into an all-risk organization with great assistance from the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. Through their leadership, the Board has invested more than \$500 million to boost fire and emergency service capabilities.

Today's fire service faces an ever-increasing challenge to provide diverse services in our communities while competing for limited financial resources. Still, we are optimistic about the economy and remain committed to seek innovative ways to continue to provide the needed services expected by our citizens.

The Strategic Plan was developed with input from all the different levels of our organization. We are grateful to all those that participated, providing critical feedback and honest suggestions to improve our organization. The candid feedback and suggestions allowed us to take a broad look and develop specific goals and objectives to efficiently achieve our mission.

This Strategic Plan is comprised of four goals and twenty objectives. These goals and objectives are aligned with the County's Strategic Initiatives and CAL FIRE's Strategic Goals. The Plan will prepare County Fire for the future, while focusing on maintaining a well trained, staffed, and equipped organization.

Please accept the San Diego County Fire Strategic Plan for 2020 - 2025 with special thanks to the staff and elected officials for their continued support and dedication to public safety.

Sincerely,

Herman Reddick, Program Director
San Diego County Fire

Tony Mecham, Fire Chief
San Diego County Fire





MISSION, VISION, VALUES

MISSION

Coordinate, regionalize, and improve fire protection and emergency response services provided to the unincorporated areas of San Diego County.

VISION

Provide comprehensive fire and emergency medical services delivered effectively and efficiently through agency collaboration and leadership.

VALUES



Integrity

We are committed to honest and ethical behavior and will lead through an ability to be trusted.



Competency

We strive for excellence and demonstrate a high level of professionalism, with training and education as our foundation.



Accountability

We take responsibility for our actions and provide undivided commitment to the goals of the Organization.



Customer Service

We respect each person as an individual and treat all internal and external customers with the utmost consideration.



Safety

We are committed to protecting our own health and ensuring the safety and well being of our team and those we serve.



Leadership

We will be strong, ethical, and effective leaders within our organization and within our community.



ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

A CHANGING ORGANIZATION

At the start of 2013, San Diego County Fire was responsible for the coordination of 19 Volunteer Reserve Fire Stations, 5 Career Fire Stations, and 5 CAL FIRE Amador Stations. As the Organization’s Volunteer Reserve Program developed there was an increase in the levels of training, health, and safety requirements for the volunteer firefighters that had previously governed themselves.

This changing dynamic greatly reduced the overall number of Volunteer Reserves and the length of time Volunteer Reserves participated in the program. The program struggled to regularly staff stations with Volunteer Reserves trained to the level

needed to operate fire apparatus, ultimately leaving fire stations uncovered. The communities of unincorporated San Diego County could no longer depend on a Volunteer Reserve program for the delivery of fire suppression and emergency medical services.

Starting in 2013, San Diego County Fire added career Advanced Life Support (ALS) staffing at one station each year for three years. In 2016 the growth rate escalated; three stations received career staffing that year followed by four more in 2017. By the end of 2018, with the completion of the Hybrid Plan, County Fire had grown to 17 Career Fire Stations coordinated

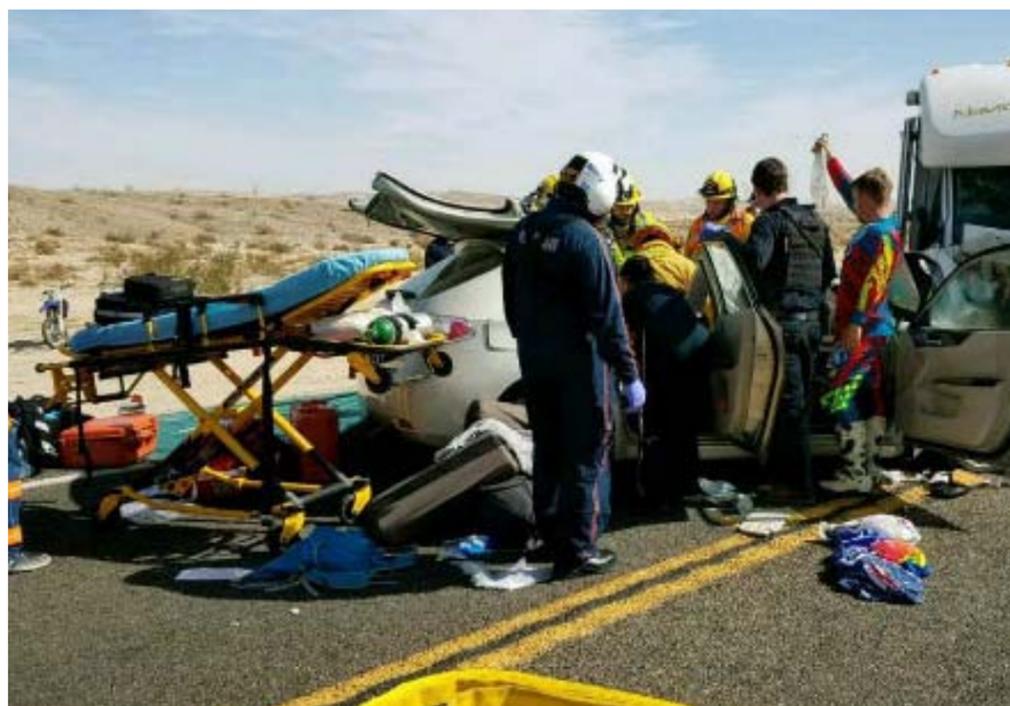
with 5 CAL FIRE Amador stations and 13 CAL FIRE State-funded fire stations to provide fire suppression and ALS emergency medical or expanded scope BLS (Basic Life Support) services to communities that had previously only received part time, on call protection from community based Volunteer Firefighters.



BACKGROUND

San Diego County Fire (the “Organization”) was originally formed in 2008 to unify the administrative support, communications, and training of 15 rural fire agencies and extend “around the clock” protection to 1.5 million acres of the unincorporated county that previously had either limited or part time, on call protection.

The County Fire Hybrid Plan identified three steps for the improvement of fire services that included the dissolution and reorganization of five County Service Areas (CSAs) and two fire protection districts into San Diego County Fire. Step II of the Hybrid Plan was completed in 2012 with fire and emergency medical services being provided by Volunteer Reserve Firefighters augmented with a few career staffed County Stations and CAL FIRE Amador (partially County-funded) stations.



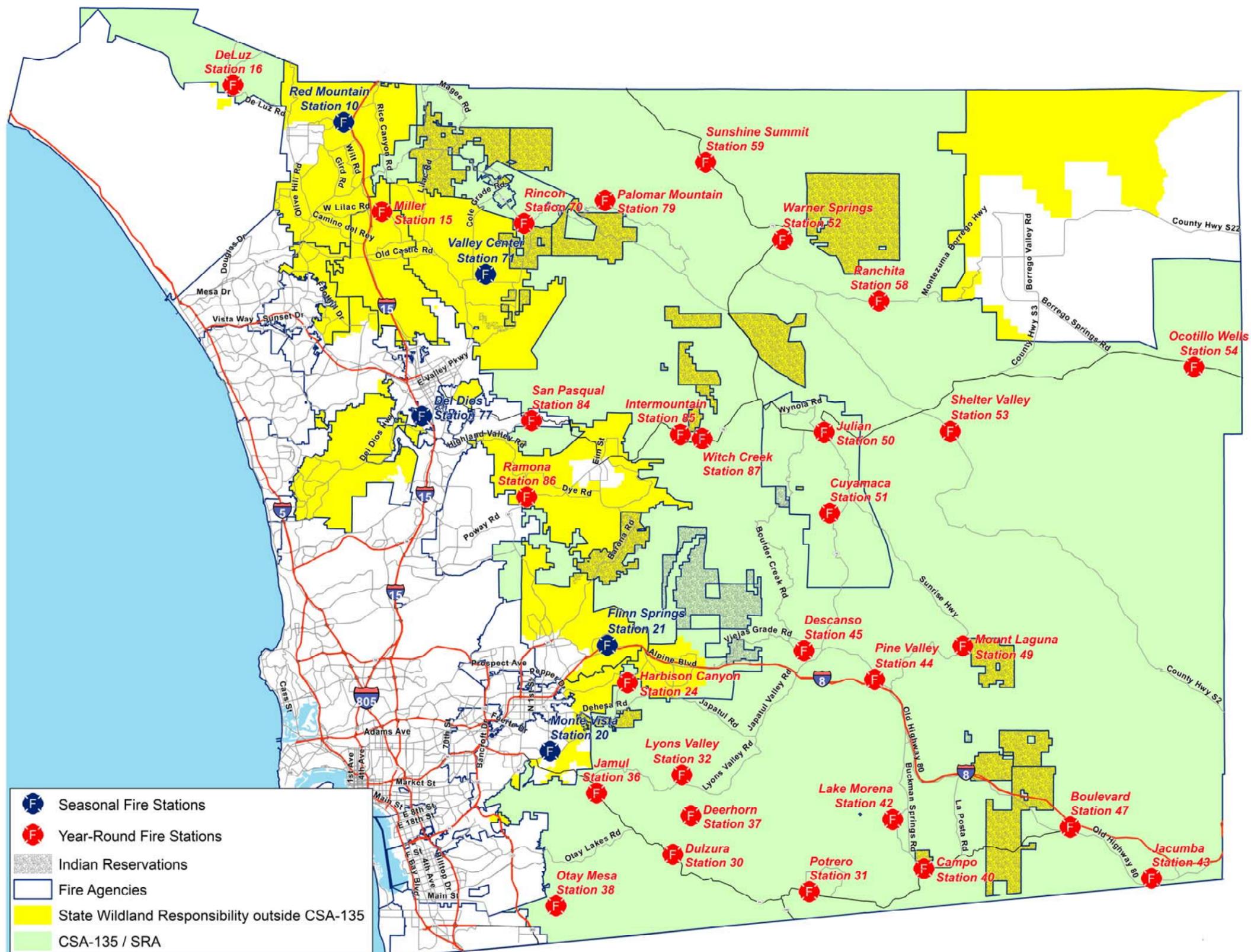
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Today, San Diego County Fire strives to provide the highest level of service using an Integrated Cooperative Regional Fire Protection System; delivering fire protection and emergency medical services to 42 communities through 35 fire stations, and over 500 first responders.

With the sudden growth and change experienced by County Fire in recent years, a sufficient foundation was not able to be laid, creating gaps in the services being provided and the sustainability of those services. Steps have been taken to solidify the Organization’s foundation: responsibility for fire suppression was added to the County Charter, significant capital investments continue to be made including 5 major fire station constructions projects, and an ongoing total combined budget of over \$50 million. The goals and objectives outlined in this strategic plan will continue to chart the Organization’s path forward.



COUNTY FIRE SERVICE AREA

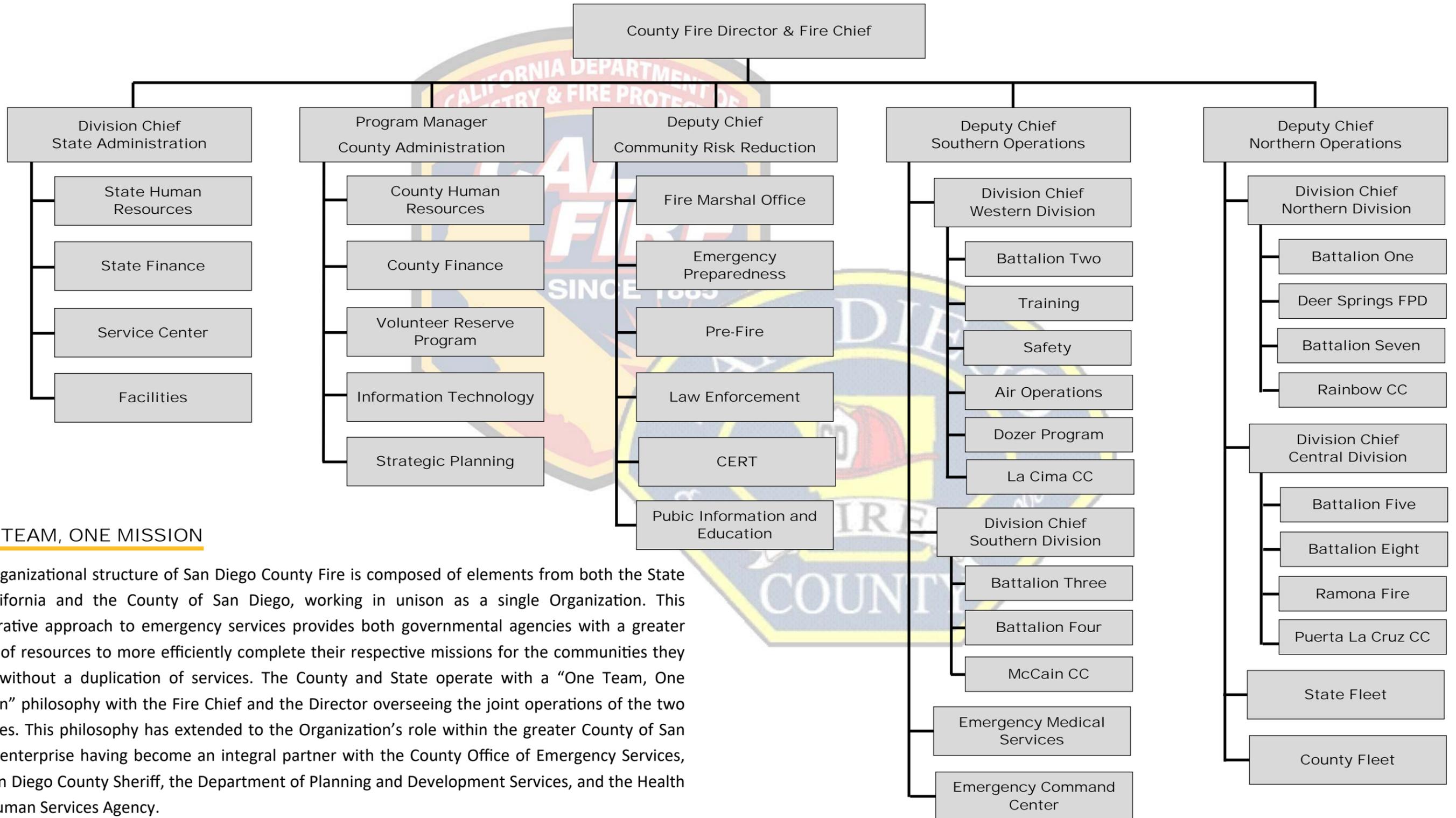


Proudly serving the communities of:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Agua Caliente | Lyons Valley |
| Ballena | Mount Laguna |
| Barrett Junction | Ocotillo Wells |
| Boulevard | Otay Mesa |
| Campo | Palomar Mountain |
| Canebrake | Pauma Valley |
| Cuyamaca | Pine Hills |
| De Luz | Pine Valley |
| Deerhorn Valley | Potrero |
| Dehesa | Ranchita |
| Descanso | Rincon |
| Dulzura | San Felipe |
| Four Corners | San Pasqual |
| Guatay | Shelter Valley |
| Harbison Canyon | Sunshine Summit |
| Intermountain | Sycamore Canyon |
| Jacumba | Tecate |
| Jamul | Tierra Del Sol |
| Julian | Warner Springs |
| Lake Morena | Wynola |
| Lawson Valley | Yuima |



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

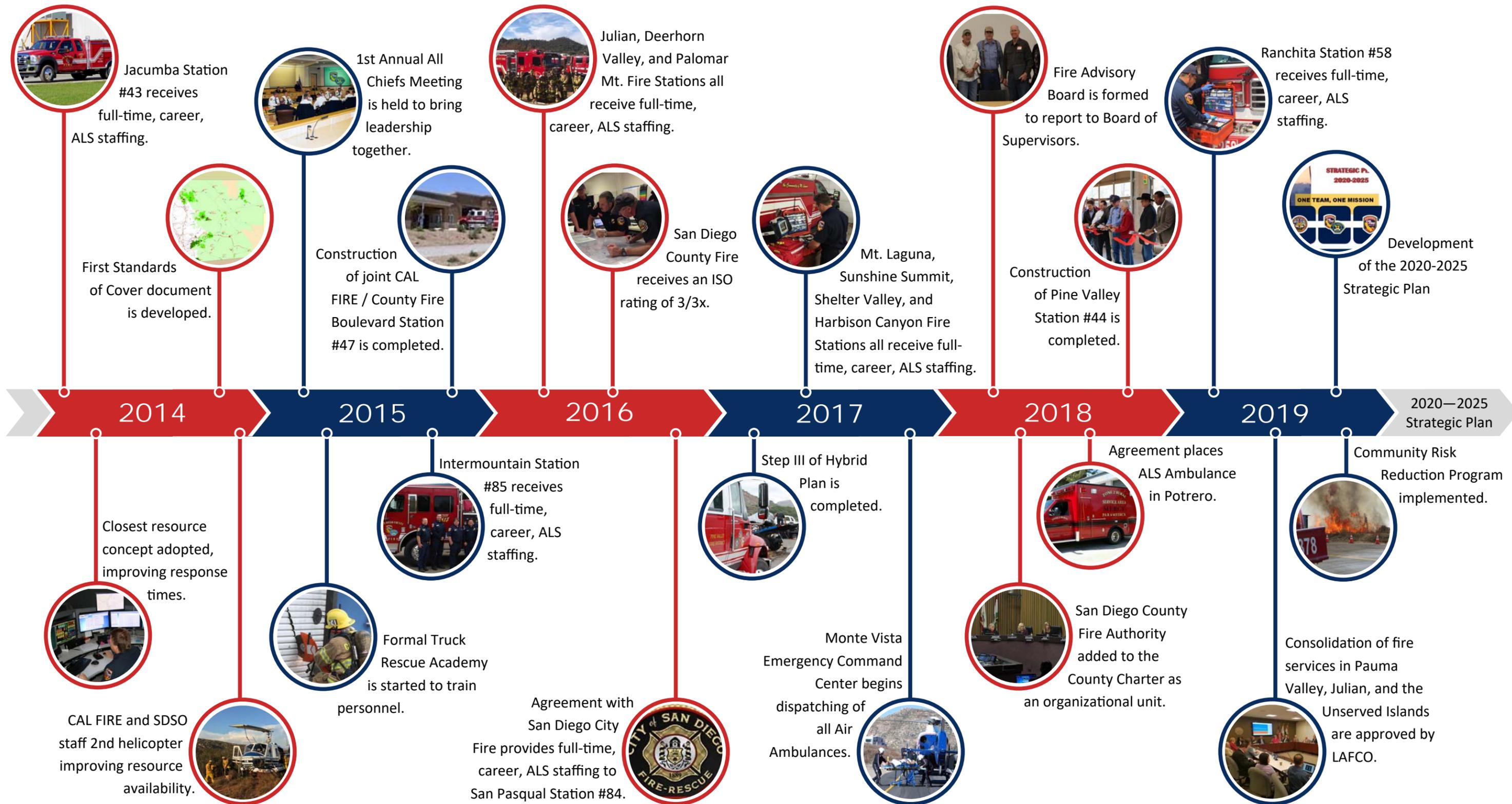


ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION

The organizational structure of San Diego County Fire is composed of elements from both the State of California and the County of San Diego, working in unison as a single Organization. This cooperative approach to emergency services provides both governmental agencies with a greater depth of resources to more efficiently complete their respective missions for the communities they serve without a duplication of services. The County and State operate with a “One Team, One Mission” philosophy with the Fire Chief and the Director overseeing the joint operations of the two agencies. This philosophy has extended to the Organization’s role within the greater County of San Diego enterprise having become an integral partner with the County Office of Emergency Services, the San Diego County Sheriff, the Department of Planning and Development Services, and the Health and Human Services Agency.



ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY



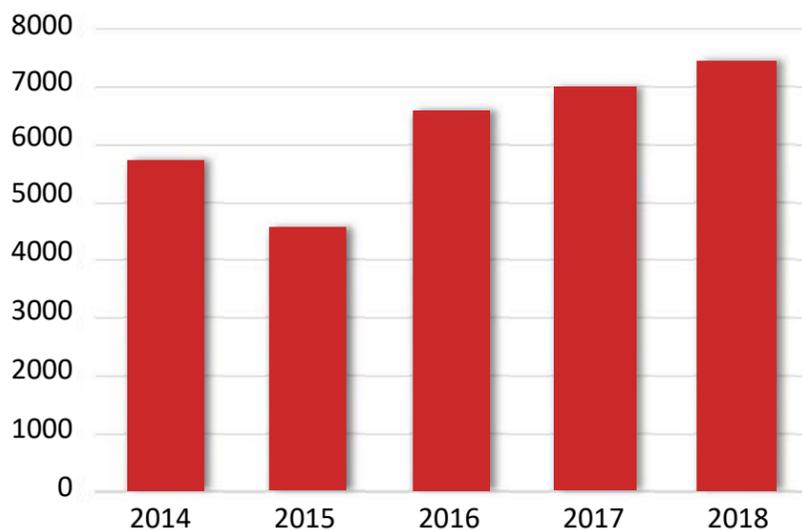


COUNTY FIRE BY THE NUMBERS

COUNTY FIRE SERVICE AREA DETAILS

-  35 Fire Stations
 - 17 County-funded
 - 5 Amador-funded
 - 13 State-funded
-  125 Fire Apparatus
-  1.5 Million Acres Protected
-  44,747 Residents Served
-  3,035 Road Miles
-  6,512' Highest Elevation (Cuyamaca Peak)
-  163' Lowest Elevation (Ocotillo Wells)
-  26" Average Snow Fall (Palomar Mountain)
-  500+ Sworn Personnel
 - 133 County-funded
 - 300+ State-funded
 - 70 Volunteer Reserves
 - 21 Emergency Command Center Staff
-  48 Non-Sworn Personnel

COUNTY FIRE INCIDENT ACTIVITY



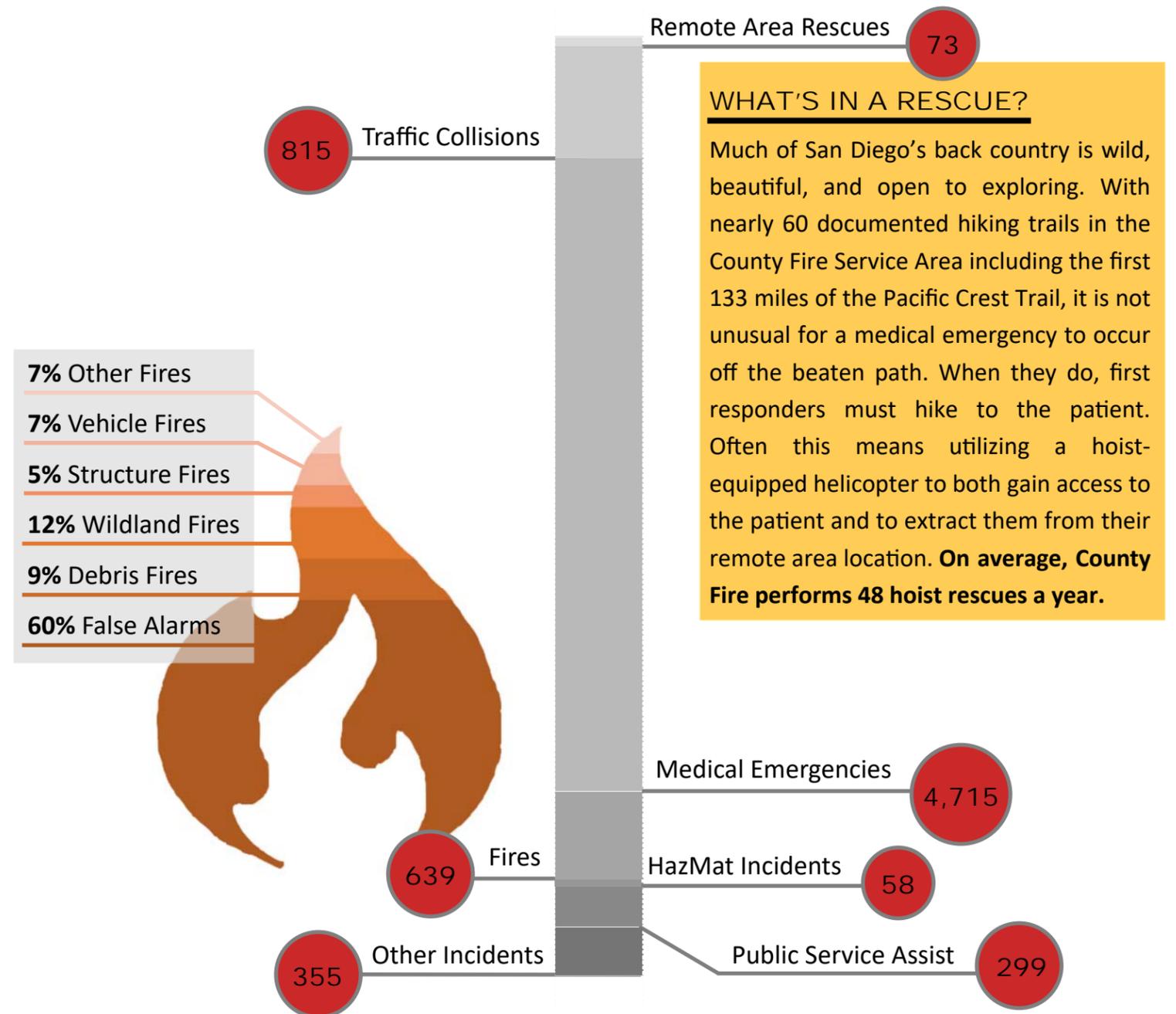
RESPONSE TIME PERFORMANCE

Average Total Response Time for first responders arriving on scene (MM:SS):

- 2014 10:36
- 2015 10:56
- 2016 10:27
- 2017 10:17
- 2018 10:16

COUNTY FIRE INCIDENT ACTIVITY BY TYPE

Each year the Emergency Command Center dispatches over 22,000 emergency incidents. On average, **6,954 of those emergency incidents** are within the County Fire Service Area:





STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

San Diego County Fire has developed its first five-year Strategic Plan to identify and improve upon the capabilities and services of the Organization; allowing the Executive Team to be transparent in its **goals, objectives, and decision making**; down to the lowest possible level.

The Strategic Plan will provide direction and build a vision for the future of the Organization, identifying the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future, and developing indicators by performance may be measured. The goals and objectives that have been identified are to be used as management tools and will become the focus of the Organization's efforts. Performance Indicators and Business Plans with critical tasks will be developed in support of each objective to measure progress and identify success.

The Strategic Plan was built using a bottom up approach, with over 20 SWOT analysis workshops, where staff from all levels of the Organization identified the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats affecting San Diego County Fire. That information was then used to identify critical issues and service gaps. Finally, the Organization's Executive Team performed a comprehensive review to develop the goals and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan.

The strategic planning process is continuous and requires a dedication to constant quality improvement. An annual review allows the Organization to be responsive to the changing environment, economy, and community needs. By implementing the building blocks described in the Strategic Plan, the Organization can achieve its desired future while having reduced the obstacles and distractions along the way.

4 Strategic Goals
74 Primary Drivers
20 Objectives



Critical Issues Identified



- Technology Infrastructure
- Communication Systems
- External Relationships
- Integrated Facilities Planning
- Integrated Fleet Planning
- Peer Support
- Recruitment and Retention
- Staffing Levels
- Individual Performance Standards
- Health and Wellness
- Process Improvement
- Promotional Readiness
- Availability of Specialized Training
- Training Logistics
- Internal Communications
- Project Management
- Leadership and Engagement
- Organizational Roles & Responsibilities
- Public Relations
- Organizational Structure
- Organizational Planning and Development
- Procurement Processes

GOAL 01 EMPLOYEE HEALTH & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Strategic Initiative



Building Better Health

County Fire Goal



Employee Health & Professional Development

Strategic Goal



Ensure Health & Safety

Build an engaged, motivated, and innovative workforce focused on the health and wellbeing of all employees through continuous mentorship and growth.

OBJECTIVES

1. Promote a culture of ethical leadership
2. Implement a career development strategy
3. Establish a permanent Wellness & Safety Bureau
4. Empower and engage the workforce to effectively accomplish the Organization's mission
5. Develop a succession management plan

01 EMPLOYEE HEALTH & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



The members of our Organization strive to provide the highest level of service every hour of every day. San Diego County Fire is committed to supporting them in that mission through an increased focus on employee health and professional development.

It is imperative that the Organization recognize the physical, mental, and emotional challenges faced by first responders today and provide effective solutions to ensure the health and well being of all our personnel. It is only by encouraging the development of the individual that the Organization can continue to thrive.

OBJECTIVE 1

Promote a culture of ethical leadership

- Empower Company Officers and Chief Officers to become ethical leaders and strong decision makers
- Promote effective personal and professional management practices
- Implement tools and trainings to improve leadership and project management skills

OBJECTIVE 2

Implement a career development strategy

- Update Individual Development Plans for improved performance management
- Develop a flexible and responsive team through the cross-training of personnel
- Increase the number of personnel pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree
- Improve training through continual program development for a skilled, adaptable, and engaged workforce

OBJECTIVE 3

Establish a permanent Wellness & Safety Bureau

- Staff the Wellness & Safety Bureau to meet current and future needs
- Develop a comprehensive wellness program for all staff to promote mental, behavioral, and physical health
- Implement the Cancer Awareness Prevention Program

OBJECTIVE 4

Empower and engage the workforce to effectively accomplish the Organizations mission

- Establish and maintain performance standards for each position
- Ensure workload balance and consistency through an annual review of roles and responsibilities
- Promote decision making at the lowest appropriate level

OBJECTIVE 5

Develop a succession management plan

- Implement a formal plan for organizational management inclusive of coaching, job shadowing, and mentoring
- Develop and implement an Explorer Program
- Foster and enhance the Volunteer Reserve Firefighter Program
- Create an environment to improve promotional success

GOAL 02

EXCEPTIONAL EMERGENCY SERVICES



Strategic Initiative



Living Safely

County Fire Goal



Exceptional
Emergency
Services

Strategic Goal



Improve
Our Core
Capabilities

Strengthen the delivery of public safety and emergency response services with a commitment to the ongoing quality improvement process.

OBJECTIVES

1. Improve the delivery of pre-hospital medical services
2. Enhance all hazard response capabilities
3. Provide operationally safe and efficient staffing levels
4. Ensure effective deployment of resources
5. Enhance community involvement and public communication

02 EXCEPTIONAL EMERGENCY SERVICES



County Fire established a Technical Rescue program in 2015. With an investment of over \$2 million the program has established a formal Truck-Rescue Academy for the training of personnel, and coordinates the staffing of four Urban Search & Rescue vehicles, two Ladder Trucks, and two Swift-water Rescue vehicles.

As an all-risk Organization these teams are essential to completing our mission; responding to remote area rescues, over-the-side rope rescues, vehicle extrications, structure collapses, water-based rescues, and many other complex emergency incidents. These specially equipped apparatus, and the highly trained personnel that staff them, provide exceptional emergency services to the communities served and the region as a whole. Continued incremental improvements in this and all programs will provide for better outcomes, a greater depth of resources, and improved regional coordination.

OBJECTIVE 1

Improve the delivery of pre-hospital medical services

- Enhance 9-1-1 dispatch services to be responsive to the evolution of the healthcare system
- Establish a clinically based focus on patient care through quality improvement measures
- Research alternative methods of pre-hospital care and delivery
- Ensure first response Advanced Life Support care throughout the service area, including fire-rescue helicopter

OBJECTIVE 2

Enhance all hazard response capabilities

- Establish an effective Urban Search & Rescue response across the region
- Complete buildout of the San Diego County Fire Training Center
- Enhance the Organization's ability to respond to a local act of terrorism
- Improve the Organization's ability to respond to and manage large scale incidents

OBJECTIVE 3

Provide operationally safe and efficient staffing levels

- Increase staffing factor to provide adequate relief personnel
- Implement three-person staffing on all Engine Companies
- Implement four-person staffing on all Truck and Urban Search & Rescue Companies
- Evaluate administrative support personnel needs in proportion with operations personnel

OBJECTIVE 4

Ensure effective deployment of resources

- Update the Standards of Cover Risk Assessment
- Identify nationally recognized and locally mandated best practices for benchmark measurements
- Utilize data and metrics to identify gaps in response strategies and explore response time improvements
- Maintain and continually improve response times

OBJECTIVE 5

Enhance community involvement and public communication

- Create a trauma informed County culture
- Develop a methodology for obtaining regular stakeholder feedback from patients, community members, and special interest groups
- Strengthen our relationships with community members and groups
- Be responsive to the changing environment, economy, and community needs

GOAL 03 RESILIENT COMMUNITIES



Enhance community resilience by anticipating and preparing for catastrophic emergencies and maximizing opportunities to lessen the impacts through education, engineering, and enforcement.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop and implement a more cohesive pre-fire strategy to achieve resilient communities
2. Reduce potential for loss in existing structures
3. Strengthen fire safety measures in new construction
4. Enhance pre-fire vegetation management
5. Improve pre-fire emergency planning

03 RESILIENT COMMUNITIES



A major disaster can take a high toll on a community and the impacts can often be felt long past the original event. County Fire seeks to make the communities that we serve more resilient to wildfire and other natural disasters by encouraging a higher level of community preparedness.

Implemented in 2019, the Organization’s Community Risk Reduction Program coordinates the local and State fire prevention activities for a more cohesive pre-fire strategy. With over 20,000 public interactions each year, the Community Risk Reduction Program educates the public on how to prepare for a disaster, coordinates the individual Fire Safe Councils and Community Emergency Response Teams, and enforces the County of San Diego Consolidated Fire Code. The formation and funding of this Program is essential to making San Diego County the most resilient County in the nation with a thriving environment for its residents.

OBJECTIVE 1

Develop and implement a more cohesive pre-fire strategy to achieve resilient communities

- Establish unified countywide priorities and supporting objectives for pre-fire projects
- Standardize priorities, projects, and messaging among the 37 Fire Safe Councils
- Staff the Community Risk Reduction Program to meet current and future needs
- Develop a regional public wildfire information strategy

OBJECTIVE 2

Reduce potential for loss in existing structures

- Decrease defensible space inspection cycle from 5 years to 3 years
- Establish a County grant program that would allow a contractor to install ember resistant vents on homes
- Establish a cohesive Knox Box program to provide efficient fire protection services
- Enhance existing business inspection program

OBJECTIVE 3

Strengthen fire safety measures in new construction

- Evaluate construction related improvements, increased defensible space requirements, and landscape plan requirements for increased fire hardening
- Pursue amendments to building codes for new construction
- Adopt and implement 2019 California Fire Code

OBJECTIVE 4

Enhance pre-fire vegetation management

- Develop a comprehensive community wildfire preparedness program
- Locally fund high priority fuels projects
- Implement Battalion prevention plans and seek support from surrounding fire service agencies

OBJECTIVE 5

Improve pre-fire emergency planning

- Sustain Regional GIS Public Safety Database
- Leverage the use of data through the establishment of a pre-fire emergency response mapping program
- Enhance accessible transportation and evacuation services

GOAL ORGANIZATIONAL 04 EXCELLENCE & FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

Strategic Initiative



Operational
Excellence

County Fire Goal



Organizational
Excellence & Fiscal
Sustainability

Strategic Goal



Enhance Internal
Operations

Refine operations to ensure continued organizational excellence and provide for long-term financial stability through enhanced systems planning and technology utilization.

OBJECTIVES

1. Implement a unified and comprehensive budget process
2. Provide for the emerging needs and long-term sustainability of capital assets
3. Utilize technology to improve services and reduce costs
4. Maximize revenue and leverage resources
5. Create a sustainable system of internal communications



04 ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE & FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY



In the last five years, San Diego County Fire has more than doubled in size: increasing the number of first responder personnel, the number of career staffed fire stations, and the level of services being provided to the communities.

The time has come for the Organization to focus on building a solid foundation and refining its operations to ensure continued organizational excellence and fiscal sustainability for the next five years and into the future. The use of technology and system processes will be fundamental to our future success and continued, incremental growth.

OBJECTIVE 3

Utilize technology to improve services and reduce costs

- Fully develop and implement Inventory Management & Procurement program
- Complete a comprehensive technology assessment to identify future needs
- Implement tools to enhance incident management, situational awareness, and fire pre-planning
- Enhance communications to maximize safety
- Pursue opportunities to implement a Regional Dispatch Center

OBJECTIVE 1

Implement a unified and comprehensive budget process

- Reduce dependency on one-time funding sources for ongoing expenses
- Develop multi-year business plans at the Bureau level that address current and future budget needs
- Integrate County and State budget processes
- Ensure budget requests are in-line with the strategic plan, incorporated into business plans, and supported by performance measures

OBJECTIVE 4

Maximize revenue and leverage resources

- Identify opportunities for private and regional partnerships to increase efficiencies and provide for long-term cost avoidance
- Increase grant opportunities and funding
- Maintain efficiencies obtained through Cooperative Fire Agreements
- Coordinate with LAFCO to explore reorganization of governance structure

OBJECTIVE 2

Provide for the emerging needs and long-term sustainability of capital assets

- Develop facilities replacement plan and secure funding for recommended projects
- Implement the apparatus replacement plan by securing funding for recommended procurements
- Secure sufficient funding for facilities and apparatus maintenance needs
- Develop and fund a lifecycle and replacement plan for all capital assets including equipment

OBJECTIVE 5

Create a sustainable system of internal communications

- Facilitate sharing of information in a manner that is timely, relevant, and accurate
- Identify what information needs to be communicated to whom, by whom, and by what medium
- Increase the use of statistical analysis and business intelligence to communicate empirical data



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The development of the San Diego County Fire 2020-2025 Strategic Plan is just one step in the never ending quality improvement process that mirrors the County of San Diego’s General Management System. This process identifies how the Organization sets goals, prioritizes the use of resources, evaluates performance, ensures collaboration, and recognizes accomplishments in a structured, coordinated way. The quality improvement process can be simplified into four actions: Plan, Do, Study, Act.

Plan. The Strategic Plan provides direction and builds a vision for the future, with its completion the Organization is ready to take steps to meet the goals and objectives outlined herein.

Do. The goals and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan will be met through the development of Bureau Business Plans that will identify the specific actions and critical tasks necessary for success. The Bureau Business Plans will drive the larger Organization’s Operational Plan and budgetary needs.

Study. The Organization will measure its success through the development of baselines and benchmarks. A baseline identifies the status quo for a particular performance indicator while a benchmark identifies the target measurement. Progress will be measured regularly to recognize success and identify areas of opportunity for new strategies.

Act. County Fire will regularly review organizational systems and processes to maintain incremental improvements and identify those areas that need to be addressed in the next Strategic Plan.



Pictured above: Chief Officers gather for the two-day All Chiefs Planning Meeting

