



Palo Alto Fire Department First Semi-Annual Performance Report Fiscal Year 2021

Highlights

- 18% reduction in call volume from previous year due to Coronavirus Pandemic Shelter in Place
- EMS Incidents accounted for 58% of all calls, totaling 2120
- Response time goals for EMS calls were met
- Fire Response times and containment continue to not meet goals
- 26% increase in fire incidents
- 48% increase in hazardous material incidents
- The Fire Prevention Bureau completed less Inspections due to reduced staffing and had a longer completion rate for plan check.
- Eliminated 7 of the 8 Sworn Positions identified for budget reductions through attrition

Fire Station 2 Brown Out

In response to the economic recession brought on by the Coronavirus pandemic, 5.0 FTE Line Firefighter positions were frozen and Fire Station 2 (College Terrace) was browned out. A brown-out is when a fire station is temporarily shut down. When fire suppression takes leave from a shift, i.e. sick leave, vacation, etc. the engine/ambulance is temporarily taken out of service to compensate for budget shortfalls instead of filling that vacancy with overtime personnel. Fire Station 2 is browned-out every weekday from 8:00 PM to 8:00 AM and on weekends. The table below shows the number of days in each month that Station 2 was shut down, beginning on August 1, 2020:

Month	Count of Days	Percentage
August	29	94%
September	22	73%
October	30	97%
November	26	87%
December	27	87%
5 Month Total	134	88%

When Fire Station 2 is browned-out, response times into this district are increased as fire engines and ambulances from other districts are the first-due units for emergencies in Station 2's response area. Engine 62 typically responds to 62 calls per month on average, when in service full time. As a result of the brown out, Engine 62 has missed approximately 44 calls each month. In each of these emergency calls for service, another Engine or Unit must be dispatched from a further location increasing the response time to the call.

From August to December 2020 the 90th percentile response time in the Fire Station 2 area increased by an average of 31 seconds when compared to travel times from January to July 2020. There have been several significant fires that Fire Station 2 units did not respond to during the brown-out period including a 3 acre grass fire at the Stanford Dish. Engine 62 did respond to a few fires that occurred when in service, including a 2nd alarm Electrical fire, and a 2nd alarm residential fire that displaced the occupants.

Calls for Service

The Palo Alto Fire Department (PAFD) responded to a total of 3,678 calls for service in the first six-month period of Fiscal Year 2021. This includes responses within Palo Alto, Stanford, and neighboring cities to provide Automatic Aid and Mutual Aid. Approximately eighty-seven percent (87%) of calls are generated from Palo Alto, eleven percent (11%) from Stanford, and the remainder, from neighboring cities or requests for regional and statewide resource requests.

The majority of calls were for Rescue and Emergency Medical Services, making up fifty eight percent (58%) of the responses. The table below shows the main categories of the calls to which PAFD responded. Call types are classified based on the outcome of the call and not necessarily the call type reported in the initial dispatch.

Call Type	FY20 JUL-DEC	FY21 JUL-DEC
Rescue and Emergency Medical Services Incidents	2792	2120
Good Intent	666	610
False Alarm and False Call	601	494
Service Call	312	277
Hazardous Condition, No Fire	71	105
Fire	57	72
Grand Total	4,499	3,678

Good Intent and False Alarm calls make up the second largest types of responses. Calls for service that may be thought to be a true threat of fire, gas, or other emergency hazard are actually found to be nonemergent after Firefighters investigate the situation. These calls are coded as Good Intent calls. As well, many fire alarm activations are from causes other than fires or emergency hazards. These situations are categorized as False Alarm calls.

Emergency Medical Services and Rescue

Emergency Medical Service (EMS) is the primary service that the Palo Alto Fire Department provides to Palo Alto and Stanford. While this shift toward EMS is being seen across the industry, the Palo Alto Fire Department is the only Fire Department in the County that operates its own ambulance transport services.

Of the 2,120 Emergency Medical Service calls the PAFD responded to in the first period of Fiscal Year 2021, the overwhelming majority were for medical, trauma and cardiac emergencies that did not involve a vehicle accident.

Rescue and EMS Performance Measures	FY20 JUL-DEC	FY21 JUL-DEC
Emergency Medical Service Incident	2729	2097
Extrication, Rescue	54	19
Lock-In	4	2
Rescue or EMS Standby	4	1
Water and Ice-Related Rescue	1	1
Total	2,792	2,120
Transports		
Number of Transports	1958	1502
Percent of EMS Calls resulting in transport	70%	71%
Response Times		
Percent of first responder arriving on scene to EMS calls within 8 minutes	91%	90%
Percent of paramedic responder arriving on scene to EMS calls within 12 minutes	99%	99%
Average response time for first responder arriving on scene to EMS calls	5:14	5:46

This period reflects a slight decrease to the number of Rescue and EMS Incident calls. The number of EMS calls that resulted in an ambulance transport to a local hospital or care facility, accounted for seventy one percent (71%) of all EMS calls. This is the primary source of revenue generated from emergency medical services, and the Department has seen a small decline to revenue from the decrease of EMS calls over the last period.

- ★ **Response Time Goal Met:** At least 90% of first responder arriving on scene to EMS calls within eight minutes.

This period the PAFD first responder arrived on scene to EMS calls within eight minutes, ninety percent (90%) of the time.

- ★ **Response Time Goal Met:** At least 99% of paramedic responder arriving on scene to EMS calls within 12 minutes.

This period the PAFD paramedic responder arrived on scene to EMS calls within 12 minutes ninety-nine percent (99%) of the time.

Fire Suppression

Very few of the potential fire calls coming into dispatch turn out to be a real fire once PAFD investigates the scene and cause of the concerning elements. This period PAFD responded to seventy-two (72) calls where fire was present, with fifty-four in Palo Alto and five that occurred on Stanford Campus. There were seven (7) building fires that the Department responded to where 71% of which were contained to the area of origin.

Significant fires for this period are:

7/30/20: Small fire in building under construction. Fire contained to area of origin


8/10/20: Brush fire involving car port. Confined to carport and contents.

9/15/20: Exterior fire that extended into the interior of the property. Fire spread through the walls to the attic of the two-story structure


11/10/20: Fire in mechanical space between first and second floor on Stanford Campus.

11/19/20: Fire in public parking garage. Fire contained to materials involved, no structural involvement

Fire Suppression Measures	FY20 JUL-DEC	FY21 JUL-DEC
Structure Fire	18	19
Outside rubbish fire	8	18
Natural vegetation on fire	6	12
Fire, Other	5	12
Special outside fire	14	5
Mobile property (vehicle) fire	6	4
Fire in mobile property used as a fixed structure	-	2
Total	57	72
Response Times		
Percent of first responder arriving on scene to Fire calls within 8 minutes	86%	88%
Average response time for first responder arriving on scene to Fire calls	5:48	5:54
Fire Containment		
Percent of building and structure fires contained to the room or area of origin	71%	71%

 **Response Time Goal Not Met:** At least 90% of first responder arriving on scene to Fire calls within eight minutes.

This period the PAFD first responder arrived on scene to Fire calls within eight minutes eighty-eight percent (88%) of the time.

 **Fire Containment Goal Not Met:** At least 90% of building and structure fires contained to the room or area of origin.

This period, there were six building or structure fires within Palo Alto or Stanford, of which seventy one percent (71%) was contained to the room or area of origin.

Hazardous Materials

The Fire Department responded to a total of 104 calls related to hazardous material incidents. The number of biological hazards significantly increased due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. A portion of the forty-seven (47) responses were from decontamination calls from exposure to the virus.

Hazardous Materials Response Measures	FY20 JUL-DEC	FY21 JUL-DEC
Biological hazard	3	47
Combustible/Flammable spills and leaks	44	22
Electrical wiring/Equipment problem	15	20
Hazardous Condition, Other	-	5
Chemical release, reaction, or toxic condition	5	4
Accident, potential accident	3	3
Attempted burning, illegal action	1	3
Total	71	104
Response Times		
Average response time for first responder arriving on scene to Rescue & Hazardous Materials calls	6:40	6:24

Mutual and Automatic Aid

The Fire Department previously held automatic aid agreements with five regional Fire Departments, including Mountain View, Menlo Park, and Santa Clara County Fire. At the request of the City of Mountain View, the automatic aid agreement was modified at the beginning of January 2018. The Palo Alto Fire Department continues to advocate for the closest unit response and collects objective data to support improved services to all of our communities under the previous automatic aid agreement.

Santa Clara County received the highest amount of aid from the Department this period accounting for forty-four percent (44%) of all mutual and auto aid provided. The Department received the most aid from Mountain View with a total of 20 incidents.

Mutual Aid Performances	FY20 JUL-DEC	FY21 JUL-DEC
Mutual and Auto Aid Provided		
<u>Agency</u>		
Santa Clara County Fire	33	25
Mountain View Fire	15	13
Menlo Park Fire	4	7
San Mateo County	2	4
Strike Teams	0	6
Other	0	2
<i>All Mutual and Auto Aid Provided</i>	57	57
Mutual and Auto Aid Received		
<u>Agency</u>		
Mountain View Fire	36	20
Menlo Park Fire	16	10
Santa Clara County Fire	1	7
Woodside	10	6
Santa Clara City		3
Sunnyvale	-	2
<i>All Mutual and Auto Aid Received</i>	63	48

Fire Prevention

The Fire Prevention Bureau ensures compliance with the Fire Code for the safety of occupants and protection of property. Fire Inspectors perform fire sprinkler and fire alarm plan checks, permitting, and field inspections with the goal of ensuring all construction complies with local, State, and national fire codes.

This period saw a decrease in the number of inspections and in plans reviewed on time due to a thirty-three percent (33%) reduction in staff from budget constraints from the Coronavirus pandemic.

Prevention Bureau Performance Measures	FY20 JUL-DEC	FY21 JUL-DEC
Permits		
Fire Permits Issued	214	166
Sprinkler Permits Issued	157	97
Solar Permits Issued	93	162
Electric Vehicle Permits Issued	0	0
Inspections		
Fire Inspections	5,288	3,836
Hazardous Material Inspections Completed	139	20
Number of Hazardous Material Inspections for the year	700	716
Percent of Hazardous Material Facilities Inspections Complete	20%	3%
State Mandated Inspections Completed	332	390
Number of State Mandated Inspections for the year	517	532
Percent of State Mandated Facilities Inspections Complete	62%	73%
Fire and Life Safety Plan Review		
Plans Reviewed	1,000	1,000
Percent of Reviews Completed On-Time	93%	88%

Workforce Planning

The Department operates daily emergency response operations with a total of 81.00 FTE line personnel, which includes 5.0 FTE positions eliminated as a result of budget constraints from the Coronavirus pandemic. This includes three battalions that staff six fire stations in the City and Stanford 24 hours each day. Over the last period, the Department has operated with 5.0 captain positions vacant and 12.0 employees off-line creating a total of 17.00 FTE positions that require backfill.

The Department worked closely with Human Resources and the City to obtain required eliminations through attrition. As of December 2020, seven of the eight total Firefighter positions required to be eliminated were vacant as employees retired or separated from the City.

This six month period also involved a Fire Captain promotional process, as many of the retirements were from the Fire Captain rank. Six Firefighters were promoted to fill the Fire Captain and Fire Training Captain positions. All other hiring activities are suspended at this time due to the fiscal crisis.

Vacancies and Off-Line Employees FY21 JUL-DEC					
Classification	Budgeted FTE	Vacancies	Off-Line Employees (Workers Comp/Light Duty)	Personnel On Line	Percent of Personnel On Line
Battalion Chief	3.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	100%
Fire Captain	21.0	5.0	2.0	14.0	67%
Fire Apparatus Operator & Fire Fighters	55.0	0.0	10.0	45.0	82%
TOTAL	79.0	5.0	12.0	62.00	78%

Succession Planning	FY20 JUL-DEC	FY21 JUL-DEC
Personnel		
Number of Shift Staff Currently Eligible to Retire	22	18
Number of Shift Staff Eligible to Retire in Five Years	16	15
Percent of all Shift Staff Eligible to Retire within Five Years	43%	40%
Number of Acting Battalion Chief Hours	0	0
Number of Acting Captain Hours	2,278	7,466
Number of Acting Apparatus Operator Hours	8,162	9,616
Hours of Training Completed	23,917	9,112
Average Hours Per Line Personnel	310	147