

SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT****RIVERSIDE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT****RECOMMENDATION:**

1. *Adopt and continue to fund a 20-year replacement cycle for fire engines. Use the cost averaging method to spread the cost and eliminate fluctuations in the budget process.*

RESPONSE:

The Riverside County Board of Supervisors approved a fire engine replacement cycle program that was submitted by the Department in 1998. This plan modified previous Board approved fire engine replacement criteria of 20 years. The approved plan utilizing a 20-year replacement criteria dictates the planned purchase of six fire engines annually with funding support to enable the Department to spread the purchasing cost of such expensive apparatus over several years to avoid fiscal cycles where a large number of fire engines would need replacement.

RECOMMENDATION:

2. *Direct the County Fire Department to adopt a time-phased financial plan for replacement or relocation of fire stations that are no longer adequate due to their location, size and age.*

RESPONSE:

Typically, property where these stations are located was donated to the Department and construction costs (basically materials) were minimal. Through the nearly 35-40 years, these stations have been well maintained, but due to current operational needs, building standard needs (i.e., ADA), locations and rising maintenance costs, these stations need to be replaced. As the Department considers replacement of older facilities, an analysis of service demands in the station's primary response area is developed and examined to determine the need to relocate the facilities to sites for improved service response based on current and future growth.

A fire facility replacement plan will be prepared for presentation to the Board of Supervisors.

During the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 fiscal years, RCOFD will have fire station replacement projects in the following areas:

Supervisory District I

Lakeland Village #11 (Fire Mitigation)
Woodcrest #8 (Fire Mitigation)
Mead Valley #59 (EDA)

Supervisory District II

Home Gardens #13 (RDA)
El Cerrito/Joint w/Corona (Fire Mit/RDA?)

Supervisory District III

Winchester #34 (Replacing #27) (Fire Mitigation)
Cabazon #24 (RDA)

RECOMMENDATION:

3. *Provide a second HAZMAT team to cover the eastern County and relocate the team in Beaumont to the West County for more complete coverage and quicker response.*

RESPONSE:

The Department will explore funding options and prepare reports to the Board of Supervisors for review and consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

4. *Direct the County Fire Department to be proactive in seeking funds that may be available from empowerment zone grants to upgrade Desert Center fire facilities and others needed to serve the extended rural areas.*

RESPONSE:

The Department has applied for empowerment zone grant funding for replacement fire apparatus for two rural communities along the Colorado River north of Blythe. This grant request was not approved during the first round of grant funding. The Department will continue to seek this federal funding to upgrade services in the rural communities in the lower Coachella Valley and in the Palo Verde Valley. A priority for the Department is to apply for grant funding and add advanced life support (ALS-Paramedic) Services in the Desert Center area. Due to the remoteness and extended response times of ambulances to this area, the Department could provide a first responder ALS Limited Transport Rescue Program to improve emergency medical care in this extremely remote area of the County.