



TODD HARMS
Fire Chief

Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District

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February 2, 2022

Honorable Russell L. Hom, Presiding Judge
Sacramento County Superior Court
720 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Response to Findings in 2021-22 Final Report of the Sacramento County Grand Jury

Dear Honorable Judge Hom,

The Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District (Metro Fire) appreciates the commitment of the Sacramento County Grand Jury to ensure that government agencies in Sacramento County are managed efficiently, honestly and fairly.

Attached is Metro Fire's response to the findings presented in the Grand Jury's 2021-22 Final Report.

We are proud of the hard work and integrity of the men and women of Metro Fire and welcome the opportunity to communicate our efforts to the Grand Jury. Please do not hesitate to contact my office at (916) 859-4501 if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Todd Harms
Fire Chief

cc: Ginger Derham, Grand Jury Commissioner
Endy Tapia-Bouthillier, Grand Jury Operations Supervisor

Findings 1: The DPMWD has abdicated its mission to “provide safe drinking water in accordance with California and federal regulations and to maintain a reliable water supply for water consumption and fire protection.”

District’s Response: In consultation with DPMWD’s general manager, Metro Fire has identified limitations with the water supply for this service area as it pertains to large-scale and extended fire-related incidents.

DPMWD provided details on the water supply available within the system for immediate use for fire protection purposes based on the two wells that currently supply the system. Metro Fire personnel conducted unscheduled random fire flow tests to verify the system supply and also gathered the water demands for all fire sprinklered buildings in DPMWD’s service area. Based on the information provided by DPMWD and Metro Fire’s fire flow tests, the water currently available within the system meets the minimum demand to supply the fire sprinkler systems and will provide adequate fire flow for the majority of residential structures.

Moreover, DPMWD currently has three wells on standby and three interties with Sacramento Suburban Water District, which is available to augment the water supply through manual activation process. The activation process for the standby wells (and/or water district interties) will take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete. Notification would need to be made to DPMWD to begin the manual augmentation process at the onset of a fire-related incident. The properties located within DPMWD’s service area have been noted at the region’s fire/EMS dispatch center.

Metro Fire’s operational personnel have also been provided maps outlining the DPMWD boundaries, well locations and underground water line locations (with pipe size). They are aware of the water supply available for immediate use, and the process to initiate system augmentation. All properties located in the DPMWD have been noted in our fire dispatch system to ensure that crews receive notification upon dispatch.

Per DPMWD, its temporary mitigation measures are projected to be in place until mid-summer. On a monthly basis, Metro Fire will contact DPMWD to receive updates on the status of the water district’s system and progress reports for final completion. Metro Fire’s status checks will continue until the system can supply a minimum of 4,000 gallons per minute for a duration of four hours, meeting the maximum required fire flow for any one building within DPMWD’s service area.

Recommendation 1: The DPMWD should publish and distribute district-wide a report, to meet its public transparency obligations, disclosing the extent of the District’s immediate and longer-term water quality, delivery, and fire flow infrastructure improvement needs, and the resulting cost impact to water district ratepayers. This report should be the subject of a Special Board Meeting as well. The Grand Jury recommends that this work should begin immediately and be completed within six months.

District’s Response: Metro Fire has no opinion or control over whether or how this recommendation is implemented.

Findings 2: The DPMWD has deferred action on the District’s 2009 Water Master Plan, the 2011 LAFCO Municipal Service Review, the 2021 HydroScience Strategic Water Solutions Technical Memorandum, and the July 2021 General Manager Final Recommendations Report, all of which outline the urgent need to address the District’s critical infrastructure needs for repair or replacement.

District’s Response: Metro Fire’s sole source of information to determine agreement or disagreement with this finding is the Grand Jury’s Final Report. Based on this report, Metro Fire is in agreement with this finding.

Recommendation 2: The DPMWD should address the findings and recommendations of the May 2021 HydroScience Strategic Water Solutions Technical Memorandum, originally authorized by the DPMWD as a Proposed Update to its 2009 Water District Master Plan; formal public involvement should be documented to meet the requirements of the Brown Act. This process should begin immediately and be completed within 60 days.

District’s Response: Metro Fire has no opinion or control over whether or how this recommendation is implemented.

Findings 3: The DPMWD Board of Directors awarded a \$56,830.00 contract to HydroScience Strategic Water Solutions, to complete a Water District Master Plan Update, without officially taking a public re-vote at its December 2020 board meeting to authorize the contract as required by the Sacramento County District Attorney.

District’s Response: Metro Fire’s sole source of information to determine agreement or disagreement with this finding is the Grand Jury’s Final Report. Based on this report, Metro Fire is in agreement with this finding.

Recommendation 3: A Municipal Service Review should be performed by LAFCO to study and analyze information about the Water District’s governance structures and efficiencies. The Grand Jury also recommends that DPMWD fully cooperate with LAFCO to initiate this process by January 31, 2022 for completion of a new Municipal Service Review by June 30, 2022.

District’s Response: Metro Fire has no opinion or control over whether or how this recommendation is implemented.

Findings 4: During its October 20, 2020 general meeting, the DPMWD Board of Directors failed to provide all of the meeting documents in its board packets to the public. Upon request from the public for the materials, the Board president denied their release to the public as required by both the Brown Act and the Public Records Act.

District’s Response: Metro Fire’s sole source of information to determine agreement or disagreement with this finding is the Grand Jury’s Final Report. Based on this report, Metro Fire is in agreement with this finding.

Recommendation 4: The DPMWD should notify ratepayers in the required timeframe for any Notice of Violation, including when a water sampling test result exceeds the water Maximum Contaminant Level, along with its corrective actions. The DPMWD Board of Directors and staff should be trained on the public notification requirements and procedures. A new section in the DPMWD Policy Manual should be added to address these public notification requirements. The Grand Jury recommends that the DPMWD complete this training by January 31, 2022, and the Policy Manual should be updated accordingly by March 31, 2022.

District’s Response: Metro Fire has no opinion or control over whether or how this recommendation is implemented.

Findings 5: The DPMWD failed to follow the California State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water guidance in publicly reporting notable Maximum Contamination Level violations in the required timeframe. Additionally, the DPMWD did not follow the prescribed reporting requirements in the Consumer Confidence Reports (2018, 2019).

District’s Response: Metro Fire’s sole source of information to determine agreement or disagreement with this finding is the Grand Jury’s Final Report. Based on this report, Metro Fire is in agreement with this finding.

Recommendation 5: The DPMWD should prepare its 2021 Consumer Confidence Report and all subsequent annual reports to fully comply with the requirements issued by the State of California. The DPMWD should request that its draft 2021 Consumer Confidence Report be reviewed by DDW to ensure that it meets all of the State requirements before its final release. The review of this draft public document should be completed in May 2022.

District’s Response: Metro Fire has no opinion or control over whether or how this recommendation is implemented.

Findings 6: The agendas for the public meetings of the DPMWD Board of Directors have provided inadequate and vague descriptions of the items to be discussed or acted upon at its General and Special meetings.

District’s Response: Metro Fire’s sole source of information to determine agreement or disagreement with this finding is the Grand Jury’s Final Report. Based on this report, Metro Fire is in agreement with this finding.

Recommendation 6: The DPMWD board meeting agendas and minutes should be reviewed by their legal counsel to ensure that the documents have clear and unambiguous descriptions. The Grand Jury recommends that reviews begin immediately and continue for every meeting.

District's Response: Metro Fire has no opinion or control over whether or how this recommendation is implemented.

Findings 7: The ambiguous agenda item descriptions of the DPMWD Board of Directors meetings violate the intent of the Ralph M. Brown Act, which is designed to properly inform the public of the business to be undertaken at public meetings by public officials and to encourage their participation.

District's Response: Metro Fire's sole source of information to determine agreement or disagreement with this finding is the Grand Jury's Final Report. Based on this report, Metro Fire is in agreement with this finding.

Recommendation 7: The DPMWD board members and staff should attend annual and detailed Brown Act training sessions with an emphasis on developing unambiguous agenda descriptions. That Brown Act training could include participation in the California Special District Association's Certificate of Excellence Program for District Transparency. The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Directors conduct its first training session by January 31, 2022, particularly as more than half of the Board members are new.

District's Response: Metro Fire has no opinion or control over whether or how this recommendation is implemented.

Recommendation 8: The DPMWD board members and staff must ensure that all materials in the board meeting packets are available to the public 72 hours prior to any Board meeting to avoid any Brown Act violations. The Grand Jury recommends that this begin immediately and continue for every meeting.

District's Response: Metro Fire has no opinion or control over whether or how this recommendation is implemented.