



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

Submitted on:  
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: Fire  
Department No.: 031  
Agenda Date: October 7, 2025  
Placement: Administrative Agenda  
Estimated Time:  
Continued Item: No  
If Yes, date from:  
Vote Required: Majority

---

**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department Director: Mark A. Hartwig, Fire Chief/Fire Warden  
Contact: Garrett Huff, Deputy Fire Chief of Emergency Services  
**SUBJECT:** Regional Fire Communications Center Partner Cooperative Dispatch Agreements

---

**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Other Concurrence:**

As to form: Yes

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Recommended Actions:**

Acting as the Board of Directors for the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District:

- a) Approve, and authorize the Fire Chief to execute Cooperative Dispatch Agreements with partner fire agencies, the City of Lompoc and City of Guadalupe (Attachment A); and
- b) Approve, and authorize the Chair to execute a Second Amendment to the Cooperative Dispatch Agreements with partner fire agencies, the Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District, Montecito Fire Protection District, City of Santa Barbara, City of Santa Maria, City of Lompoc, and City of Guadalupe (Attachment B); and
- c) Approve and authorize the Fire Chief, or designee, subject to the Board's ability to rescind this delegated authority at any time, to make immaterial changes, subject to concurrence by the Office of the Auditor-Controller, to the agreement; and
- d) Find that the above actions are not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(2) in that they involve continuing administrative or maintenance activities, and CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(5), in that they involve organizational or administrative activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

**Summary Text:**

On November 16, 2021, the Fire District's Board of Directors authorized the Fire Chief to execute Cooperative Dispatch Agreements with partner agencies. Initially, agreements with the Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District, the Montecito Fire Protection District, the City of Santa Barbara, and the City of Santa Maria were presented and approved by the Board. Since these agreements

were established, modifications have become necessary due to changes in operational concepts and fiscal calculations. The Regional Fire Communications Center (RFCC) went operational on May 13, 2025, requiring amendments to the original agreements to reflect updated operational and financial details. Subsequently, agreements were sent to and executed by the City of Lompoc and the City of Guadalupe, and which now require approval by the Board.

**Discussion:**

As part of the development and implementation of the RFCC, partner agreements were sent to all local agencies. Due to scheduling and the ability of those various agencies to execute those agreements, some were returned later than others. The City of Lompoc and the City of Guadalupe are two of those municipalities. As such, the initial agreements with those cities have been executed by their city councils, and those agreements are now before the Board for approval. This is the first time these specific agreements have been before the Board.

Additionally, in the time since the original agreements were executed with other agencies, updates have been made to operational structures, including changes to alerting systems, radios, and mobile equipment, as well as modifications to the fiscal methodology. These refinements necessitate amendments to the existing Cooperative Dispatch Agreements to reflect current operational and financial considerations accurately.

**Background:**

The Fire District began conceptualizing administrative and operational procedures for the Regional Fire Communications Center (RFCC) several years before its formal establishment. This collaborative effort started with commitments from local fire agencies and their respective governing boards, demonstrating unified support for the regional dispatch model.

On November 16, 2021, the Fire District's Board of Directors approved Cooperative Dispatch Agreements with the Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District, Montecito Fire Protection District, City of Santa Barbara Fire Department, and Santa Maria City Fire Department. Additionally, the Lompoc City Council authorized the Lompoc City Fire Department's participation on November 2, 2021, and the Guadalupe City Council approved the inclusion of the Guadalupe Fire Department on August 23, 2022.

In 2025, the District entered into a First Amendment with all Partner agencies, specifying the Tablet Command use and a separate cost structure. Tablet Command offers mobile incident management software designed to be deployed in fire and other emergency response vehicles. Tablet Command software integrates with the Fire District's existing Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, providing emergency responders with incident mapping and resource deployment visibility. By adopting the same incident management software across all local fire agencies, dispatch services will have better visibility into the deployment of resources, allowing for optimized response times.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

The Fire District agreed to bear complete responsibility for the initial capital expenditures, equipment procurement, hiring, and training associated with establishing the RFCC. The Fire District will own, operate, and maintain complete authority over the dispatch center in cooperation with all Partners.

The previous cost allocation method for dispatch services did not properly reflect the differences between Fire suppression and EMS transport responses. Under the original system, costs were allocated disproportionately, failing to accurately represent the actual workload or call distribution between Fire and EMS. This led to an imbalance, with Fire covering a larger share of the costs compared to EMS Transport, even though both departments shared dispatch resources.

To address this unfairness, and with the assistance of the Auditor, a new fiscal method has been created. The updated approach ties dispatch costs more accurately to the number and type of calls handled by the Regional Fire Communications Center. By linking cost sharing to call volume and service type, the method makes sure that both Fire and EMS contribute fairly and proportionally.

This change increases transparency, accountability, and fairness in sharing dispatch expenses. The updated method more accurately reflects system usage, supports the sustainability of both Fire and EMS services, and creates a stable basis for long-term financial planning among all partner agencies.

### **Fiscal Analysis:**

The estimated annual cost of operating the RFCC is \$6,587,056, with expected revenue offsets totaling \$4,948,642. The remaining balance of \$1,638,414 represents the portion assigned to the Fire District and will be absorbed internally rather than recovered through billing.

As part of the cost allocation, the transport provider's contribution is capped at \$2.5 million. The difference above this amount, \$61,774, is reflected within the Fire District's portion. This approach ensures that the cost distribution is consistent with the established funding structure.

The cost allocation table reflects the anticipated distribution of costs among the participating agencies. These estimates are subject to change depending on the actual number of incident calls and the actual costs incurred in any given year.

Agency	Billable Calls	Annual Cost - Call for Service	Annual Cost - Fixed Expense	Cost Per Agency	Indirect Costs	Total Costs Per Agency	Adjusted Allocation
Santa Barbara Co. FPD	14,159	\$ 1,138,488	\$ 89,156	\$ 1,227,644	\$ 348,996	\$ 1,576,640	\$ 1,638,414
Transport Provider	29,241	\$ 2,350,629	\$ 89,156	\$ 2,439,785	\$ 121,989	\$ 2,561,774	\$ 2,500,000
City of Santa Barbara	7,786	\$ 626,011	\$ 89,156	\$ 715,167	\$ 35,758	\$ 750,926	\$ 750,926
City of Santa Maria	7,993	\$ 643,178	\$ 89,156	\$ 732,334	\$ 36,617	\$ 768,951	\$ 768,951
City of Lompoc	3,320	\$ 266,912	\$ 89,156	\$ 356,068	\$ 17,803	\$ 373,872	\$ 373,872
Carpinteria-Summerland FPD	1,555	\$ 125,033	\$ 89,156	\$ 214,189	\$ 10,709	\$ 224,899	\$ 224,899
Montecito FPD	1,321	\$ 106,218	\$ 89,156	\$ 195,374	\$ 9,769	\$ 205,143	\$ 205,143
City of Guadalupe	370	\$ 29,751	\$ 89,156	\$ 118,907	\$ 5,945	\$ 124,852	\$ 124,852
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>65,743</b>	<b>\$ 5,286,221</b>	<b>\$ 713,248</b>	<b>\$ 5,999,469</b>	<b>\$ 587,588</b>	<b>\$ 6,587,056</b>	<b>\$ 6,587,056</b>

The cost distribution among RFCC partner agencies will follow a mixed allocation methodology that includes both fixed and variable components. Fixed operational expenses are shared equally among

all partner agencies, while incident-based costs are allocated proportionally based on the number of billable calls for service. Indirect costs are allocated at a rate of five percent of the total cost per agency. Santa Barbara County is assigned the remaining balance of indirect costs after the partner allocations have been applied.

For EMS-related incidents involving both a fire apparatus and an ambulance, the associated cost will be equally divided between the respective agencies. Incidents requiring only a fire suppression response will be billed directly to the jurisdiction where the incident originated. Similarly, calls that involve only an ambulance response will be billed solely to the EMS ambulance provider.

An updated review from the Financial Reporting Division staff within the Auditor-Controller's Office reviewed the newly projected operational budget for the RFCC. Based on the review, it was determined that the estimated operating costs and the associated cost allocation methodology to participating agencies were reasonable.

**Special Instructions:**

Upon Board approval and execution, the Clerk is asked to please return a copy of the minute order and fully executed Second Amendments to the Fire Department, attention: Garrett Huff.

**Attachments:**

**Attachment A** - City of Lompoc and City of Guadalupe Cooperative Dispatch Agreements

**Attachment B** – Second Amendments for the Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District, Montecito Fire Protection District, City of Santa Barbara, City of Lompoc, City of Guadalupe, and City of Santa Maria.

**Authored by:**

Garrett Huff  
Deputy Fire Chief  
ghuff@countyofsb.org