

Response to Notice of Motion on Calgary Fire Department Plans and Budgets

RECOMMENDATION:

That Executive Committee recommends that Council receive this report, attachments, and presentation for the Corporate Record.



HIGHLIGHTS

- This report provides information in response to Council's Notice of Motion EC2022-0365, to help inform upcoming service plan and budget discussions related to fire and emergency response service levels in Calgary.
- What would this mean to Calgarians? Improving fire response service levels in Calgary would increase public and firefighter safety by improving the effectiveness of the fire service but would mean an increased cost to Calgarians.
- Why does this matter? This report provides Council with sound information to use when making decisions about fire response service levels in Calgary.
- 2021 represented the busiest year in Calgary Fire Department history, with unprecedented service demands to both fires and critical medical responses. With current resourcing, response times do not meet either National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 or Calgary's response time benchmarks.
- Whole-scale implementation of NFPA 1710 response time and staffing standards would be extremely costly and would likely take 15-20 years spanning several service plan and budget cycles as well as several Council election cycles.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A city of safe and inspiring neighbourhoods
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

In Notice of Motion EC2022-0365, Council directed Administration to:

1. Report back through the Executive Committee no later than June 2022 with:
 - a. A high-level overview of risks facing the Calgary Fire Department (CFD), and associated mitigation strategies currently in place along with a preliminary assessment of these strategies' effectiveness;
 - b. An estimate of resources (reflecting both operating and capital costs) required to meet the applicable staffing levels and service model recommended by NFPA Standard 1710;
 - c. Potential timelines for a phased approach for meeting applicable staffing levels recommended by NFPA Standard 1710; and
 - d. Options for approaches to Fire & Emergency Response service levels for the 2023-2026 budget cycle for discussion, informed by the above.
2. Report back, as part of the deliberations for the 2023-2026 budget cycle, with:
 - a. A recommended approach to Fire & Emergency Response service levels for the 2023-2026 budget cycle, informed by the above discussion at 1d; and

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b. A general overview of the relationship between municipal fire protection service levels and home insurance costs in Calgary.

2021 was the busiest year in the Calgary Fire Department's history. From 2020 to 2021, CFD saw an overall 167 per cent increase in call volume. With this call volume, the CFD currently struggles to balance frontline staffing levels with training needs, psychological and physical safety and wellness, as demands on frontline staff are higher than ever.

The CFD analyzes risks including increased call volumes on a regular basis, as outlined in Attachment 2.

NFPA 1710 Benchmarks

In response to Notice of Motion EC2022-0365, CFD analyzed the gap between Calgary's current fire response service levels and NFPA 1710. While NFPA 1710 is not currently a regulatory standard, it is recognized by the fire industry as a leading benchmark for emergency response service levels. CFD could use NFPA 1710 as an aspirational guiding document, but it is not feasible as a response standard for Calgary.

To meet NFPA 1710 benchmarks, CFD would need to almost double its annual operating budget and staffing complement and would need additional capital funds equivalent to a current year of operating costs. A very significant change to resource concentration and allocation would also be required. All these changes would take approximately 15 to 20 years. Attachment 3 includes more detail about the analysis of this gap.

Options for Fire & Emergency Response Service Levels

CFD is currently unable to meet the Service Level and Response Time Targets (SLRTT) for Calgary, approved by Council in 2008 and reaffirmed by Council in 2018. The SLRTT define response time goals for first-in resources (7 minutes, 90 per cent of the time) and assembling an effective response force, which means getting 12 firefighters to the scene of a fire within 11 minutes, 90 per cent of the time.

CFD is undertaking continuous improvement initiatives that will assist in getting closer to meeting the SLRTT, including reviewing dispatch protocols in collaboration with Calgary 9-1-1 to develop efficiencies to improve response time and continuing to review turnout time (the time from when firefighters are notified to when they are enroute to the emergency incident) procedures to find further efficiencies without compromising safety. CFD is also beginning to explore expanding secondary response agreements with surrounding municipalities to meet challenges with response coverage on the periphery that will continue to increase as Calgary grows. Further details can be found in Attachment 3. No investment would be required to conduct these reviews, but recommendations from the reviews may have future funding implications.

The options outlined below would bring Calgary closer to meeting SLRTT goals and could be used to inform the recommended approach during the 2023-2026 budget cycle deliberations. Growth stations would be requested with funding to match SLRTT targets in the future. Each of these options can be implemented alone or combined to enhance the overall delivery of service. If these options were implemented together, CFD anticipates a 1 minute 15 second overall response time improvement in effective response force – the time it takes to assemble 12 firefighters at the scene of a fire.

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Option 1: Increase Staffing Levels

Cost: \$29.3M Operating, \$9M Capital

This option includes increasing staffing levels on existing aerial apparatus from two to four firefighters. This will help ensure that when an aerial apparatus arrives to an emergency, it is staffed with enough people that more critical tasks that preserve life, property, the environment, and extinguish the fire can be completed faster, without waiting for more firefighters to arrive on separate apparatus.

Option 2: Increase Aerial Apparatus Fleet

Cost: \$14.8M Operating, \$6M Capital

This option would include converting six current rescue apparatus to aerial apparatus and adding four aerial apparatus to CFD's fleet. Aerials are important because they offer unique functions such as an elevated water stream for firefighting, a safe exit route for firefighters and a way to rescue people who may be trapped above the ground floor of a structure.

Option 3: Add Fire Stations

Cost: \$7.6M Operating, \$36M Capital

This option proposes two additional stations, which will have a major positive impact on first-in response in the areas where the new stations are placed and will contribute to overall effective response force improvements.

These options combined are estimated to cost \$52M in operating and \$51M in capital funds.

Impact to Insurance Costs

It is unlikely there will be any changes to individual insurance costs in Calgary, as discussed in Attachment 4. This is because the city's overall insurance rating is already almost at the most favourable level and is unlikely to be affected by changing our fire response model.

Next Steps

CFD will bring to Council a request for allocation of funds through the 2023-26 Service Plans and Budgets process based on Council's discussion of this report.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

The 2021 Citizen Satisfaction Survey indicated that 100 per cent of Calgarians surveyed view the CFD's services as "Very Important" or "Important", while 99 per cent are "very" or "somewhat" satisfied with service levels. The CFD regularly engages Canadian municipalities to gain an informed perspective on best practice across Canadian municipalities, examples of which are detailed in Attachment 3.

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IMPLICATIONS

Social

An effective emergency response service is integral to a safe community and ensuring that citizens feel safe knowing that help is available when needed. Fire damage has a significant social impact, and can create physical loss, property damage and emotional distress for the affected citizens and the firefighters involved.

Environmental

Effective fire response can reduce the impacts of flame spread, and subsequently the release of contaminants into the environment. These include air contamination from the fire plume, contamination from water runoff containing toxic products, and other environmental discharges or releases from burned materials.

Economic

Fire response has a direct connection to the economy. Successful fire interventions and improved response times ensure business continuity and reduce the impact commercial productivity and operations. This includes impacts to businesses, employees, and citizens.

Service and Financial Implications

Without additional funding for resources as Calgary's communities grow and change, a degradation in service could result in financial liability for The City. However, increased funding to provide enhanced service levels would result in associated tax increases.

Existing operating funding - base

Net impact – \$0 - \$52M

Cost implications are described in the various options listed in Attachment 3 and will be brought forward for consideration as part of the 2023-2026 budget cycle.

RISK

In response to Council's direction in the Notice of Motion, a high-level outline of risks facing CFD is available in Attachment 2. There are several risks associated with this report, specifically:

Impact to Citizens, Property, Environment and Economy: Response times and assembling an effective concentration of resources influence outcomes for all types of emergency response including fires, critical medical interventions, hazardous materials incidents, and rescues. Insufficient resourcing creates a risk of service deterioration.

Financial Risk: Implementation of the above scenarios, and the associated operating costs would have an impact on taxation levels as they would require addition to existing tax supported funding.

Support Requirements: Decisions or increases associated with frontline fire service levels create need for additional support in non-frontline positions (training, wellness, scheduling, strategic and business support, etc.) to ensure long term service sustainability.

**Community Services Report to
Executive Committee
2022 June 29**

**ISC: UNRESTRICTED
EC2022-0538
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ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Background and Previous Council Direction
2. Calgary Fire Department Risk Register
3. Analysis and Options
4. Fire Underwriters Survey
5. Presentation

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
David Duckworth	City Manager	Inform
Carla Male	Chief Financial Officer	Inform
Executive Leadership Team	All	Inform
Denise Jakal	Law	Consult