MESCAL-J6 FIRE DISTRICT

448 N. Warren Rd. Benson, AZ 85602
Phone (520)586-4690 Fax (520)586-8598

Fire Chief Report
November 2024
Presented at December 2024 Board Meeting

Incidents: 28 total; fire (4); EMS (18); other (6). Mutual aid received -0; given -2.
Total up to Nov 30 for 2024 – 544 same time last year 2023 - 476 – up 68 calls. **This represents a 13% increase.**

Hazard Mitigation Collections: $1111.20 collected in and deposited since the last Board meeting. Just over $12K still working on.

	Last Month (Nov)		All Year (2024)	
	# Claims	$ Amount	# Claims	$ Amount
Claims Submitted	3	$5,045.80	32	$28,205.00
Payments Received By FRUSA	2	$1,111.20	10	$12,199.53
Claims Denied	0	$0.00	4	$1,918.40
Non-Billable (Other)	0	-	1	-
In Progress	3	-	14	-
NON-BILLABLE - (INADEQUATE INFO PROVIDED BY FD)	**0**	**≅ $0.00**	**3**	**≅ $1,310.40**

Apparatus:
I have tasked Jason Santos from JRS Diesel/Fabrication to do a complete evaluation on every apparatus for any issues and to create a list of red (immediate, safety), yellow (can wait but needs done soon) and green (can wait until other repairs are done list). He should be starting this week. We can then be more efficient and have an idea of potential costs per issue for budgeting purposes as we move into the remaining months of this fiscal year.
Brush truck parking brake fixed
Anode rods need to be replaced in tenders, other water carrying apparatus
Chief's truck taken to prison for decals and paint

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Smaller vehicles are coming up on biannual oil changes. Normally done in-house to save money.
Equipment: fire extinguishers brought up to par.
Gas powered exhaust fan failed, repairs underway using local small engine repair company.
Ladder testing was done this month.
Airpack facepiece testing was done. MSA working with us on facepiece seal issues.
Once issues are resolved, we will be donating older packs to Caborka FD, MX.

Buildings: Admin roof – Total roof replacement was completed November 13, 2024. Total cost $12K. VFIS- insurance carrier covered $11,997K, so basically a new roof without money coming from operating budget. Will be replacing yellowing, damaged and water-stained ceiling tile soon.

Helipad and Repeater: We have two goals in these projects: 1- Crew safety and 2-Fiscal responsibility. Capt Olander and I met with Mr. Linc, Chairperson Law and Board Member Nervik on potential solutions to our communication issues. It appears placing mobile repeaters into vehicles will assist in the problem, however, it won't fix it. Our communications functions on a "line of site" model. When that is lost, there's not much you can do except place repeater in more advantageous position, or place mobile repeaters in the vehicles and try to get "a vehicle" to stage at higher than area working to use them to boost signal to handheld. Before we can say we are being fiscally responsible by placing a repeater on Haystack, we will be conducting tests and developing a map to assist in our decisions. We are currently preparing to attempt to gain mobile repeaters in a grant, asking for 5 repeaters, working on costs, but looks like approx. $2700/vehicle. This is an important piece, however, because of all the dips and valleys, especially on I-10. We need to conduct our own tests along our response area, not just our district area. This testing is scheduled tentatively for Dec 20. We need 4-wheel drive capable vehicle to get to site, so it will be based on whether Chief's vehicle is back from prison. After that, we can assess where the trouble spots are and then will be able to determine what areas will be potentially improved by Haystack. We pretty much know we will not be able to cover every nook and cranny, but this will give our crews vital information, so comm plans and SOG's can be created.

Helipad fencing, low-cost lighting and tree trimming to be done to get helipad into certified condition. We will see exactly how much of the grant money is left and ask the grantor for permission to utilize it in another area that is approved by them.

We conducted MANDATORY board training on Saturday December 7, 2024. This is a State mandate and all board members and new fire chiefs must complete it within 1 year of appointment. We conducted it now as it educated us on items that put us all on the same page and will be of great benefit as we move forward toward kicking off our strategic plan project. It should be noted that our Board members actually put in 11 hours of training, when only 6 were required. That is because not only were the mandatory videos watched, but the in-person training conducted by an AFDA official and another area fire chief added an additional 5 hours to training. This was by all indications very well received and much was learned. I have personally changed, altered or improved several items

that were found to need attention. The idea going forward is that beginning in January, the Board will meet for one half hour to 45 min prior to regular board meetings for a mini-training session. If we do this each month, we will not only keep fresh on the topics, but we will complete the mandatory 6 hours per year easily, and we can hold any additional, area specific training as needed. KUDOS to our board for being willing to take this on. Being a board member is truly not just a 3-hour meeting once per month. It requires more time than that and I am grateful to have a Board that is willing to be available if needed.

The external stakeholders' list of attendees for our strategic planning project is coming along. Still awaiting for some agencies to get back to me and contact info regarding who will be attending.

I have begun looking into our personnel work model. First though, I want to thank every single person who has ever volunteered in any capacity for our district. I will be considering "support" positions as a way to allow people to volunteer in a series of different roles. This will most likely be at least an objective under one of our pillars we will be creating in the strategic plan process. I will be looking at all aspects of our employment process. Everything from applications, records storage, and minimum requirements to the use of different types of personnel such as: non-firefighter support volunteers, full-time paid, position titles, part-time paid and certification-based pay ideas are just some of the topics we will cover. I have been in touch with other fire chiefs regarding their utilization of personnel to get additional working knowledge. I have some ideas moving forward that we need to vett out to see if they merit further consideration. More to come on this.

I attended the first re-entry program given in our State through our new medical direction team, IMD. The first one was for EMT. I just returned today from a 10-day total immersion course designed to update and prepare attendees to be authorized to take the National Registry Paramedic exam. I have passed all my practical, hands-on testing which includes everything from airway intubation to pediatrics, to major trauma care and more. The training was designed for individuals who previously had NREMT-P certification but lost it (as I did during COVID) or voluntarily let it expire. The entire nation is short of properly trained paramedic personnel and our area is not devoid of this. There are several agencies with open paramedic and FF/Paramedic positions in southern AZ. I am unsure of an exact date I will be taking the test, as NREMT is behind on applications.

I have worked with our ambulance provider HCI supervisors to help assist us in "standing up" our paramedic program. They are helping us with the initial equipment outlay so we don't have to take it out of our budget.
I have brought the drug boxes down with me from my training, so after the equipment is up, we will be able to utilize our reserve FF/PMs to render care at the PM level, then once I (hopefully) become certified, we will have the ability to deliver a higher level of care more often. Just another way we are attempting to take better care of our residents.
HCI has been a good partner in assisting us and it is very good that we are under the same medical direction team, as it makes many things very seamless (another reason I felt it best to move to IMD).

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I had a meeting with Doctor Chad Lewis, MD. He is our specific medical director. He grew up in Southern AZ, and returned to the area to work with IMD and their team of doctors. He is an extremely respected and yet a very approachable, down-to-earth person who is very interested in assisting us in continuing to deliver a high quality and level of care to our residents. He will be making a face-to-face trip down in Q1 2025 to meet with our providers. He believes it's important to meet in person with the folks under his direction. We will be doing what we can to have it at a time that most of our providers can get this face time with him. Also, if possible, I am trying to work this out on the same day as our board meeting, so the board and our residents have the opportunity to meet him in person.

Just a quick note on Public Records Requests. They are a part of the administration's job, and we do our best to be timely in response, however, sometimes we need to gain our attorney's take on things. This is because we truly do want it to follow the best practices and be transparent, while at the same time trying to be efficient. As we work to continue to improve the policy where advised, we ask for your patience as sometimes attorney timelines and district timelines don't always line up. When we report the dollars spent on this area, it is usually attorney fees that are represented.
Public records requests for Nov 2024 at $140. (have not received Nov bill as of yet) YTD since tracking began in Aug = $2447.49

I will eventually be meeting with the boundary mapping personnel to go over our area. An extreme, sudden illness has put the meeting off temporarily. In the meantime, I am asking CC GIS for updated and current maps of both our district boundaries and our "response area".

The district-owned water tender that was being stored north of the railroad tracks has been taken out of service. An inspection by our board chair (who owns water tenders and understands their mechanics), determined it was not in a safe enough condition where it could pass an NFPA serviceable condition evaluation. We attempt to have all our vehicles in this level of serviceable condition. One of the jobs of a fire chief is risk-management. I take this very seriously, and when people who know more than I do about a subject say something is not safe for our district, its residents and/or our personnel, I must take their opinion at the highest level—at least until further evaluation can happen. The consensus at this point is that we will be either saving it, so we can show need to a grant process as we write for a new tender or we may auction it off, as any repairs would be too costly to receive enough benefit back from the truck. The district must be extremely careful to ensure our equipment is as safe as possible so the operators as well as the public are not put in a potentially negative position. We will be endeavoring to work with certified Emergency Vehicle Technicians (where needed and/or required) to ensure this safety level is met. This is what is called for in NFPA 1901, the standard for apparatus. This is a national fire service consensus standard that we make effort to be in alignment with.

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I have been working on finding a more cost-effective annual pump test, which again must be done by an EVT. I am in talks with other area chiefs on this topic and attempting to make it as cost effective as possible, while still following safety standards.

We have begun our dispersal of free smoke detectors, donated by the AZ Burn Foundation. Will also be getting detectors that "shake the bed" for those hard of hearing. I sent out a holiday message for posting on website that explains the program. Residents can email info@mescalj6fd.com to request we come place one in there home.

Also available are residential lock boxes. This is a program in which the owner gives the firefighters a key and we lock it in the box and the box is affixed to a solid object like a water pipe near the entrance of the residence. NO ONE has access to the box, including the owner. These are designed to be used in the event we must make emergency entrance to a residence, be it for fire, or a medical emergency where the resident cannot make it to the door. We always endeavor to cause the least amount of damage to a property when we must make emergency access, and this is a good way for the residents to ensure we don't have to do unnecessary damage.

We are still awaiting our final notice of approval for our .gov web suffix. It has been approved, just making its way through AZ Dept of Homeland Security. Once received, we will begin the transition to a different webspace donated by our medical direction team. This will result in significant savings throughout the year.

No news on our Gary Sinese Foundation grant for 7 AED's and all accompanying equipment. Hopefully soon. Only time will tell how our needs stack up against others.

GOHS grant is being written. Will be asking for lighter, electrically driven extrication equipment. There are numerous benefits to this including: lighter, resulting in one person being able to carry and potentially operate, resulting in decrease in back or other injury. More power in spreaders and cutters, potentially decreasing extrication time, which in turn decreases time to surgical care, which then leads to very impactful results in patient outcomes as it pertains to the "Golden Hour". We are trying for RAMs and air bags, both of which our current ones are not reliable and are heavy, cumbersome and one person cannot move without risk of injury. New would be lighter but stronger.

Working on grants, funding potential with Special District Advocate Group. Initial information from contact is we "tick" several good boxes. We will see as I've already received notice that one source is severely limited this upcoming year. These grants are just so very competitive. That's why I've chosen the individual I have, to help us so far. He has garnered $30 million for other agencies all while being incredibly affordable. We will, as necessary, bring in others depending on specific areas of expertise.

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Meeting with VFIS, Volunteer Fire Insurance Services to gain understanding of how they can assist us. They have several programs we may take advantage of which will also help produce the best strategic plan possible.

Also looking into alternative insurance carriers to assure we are maximizing our dollars to coverage balance, and at the same time, looking at additional coverage that is included that could protect our employees in the event of a catastrophic injury or worse. More to come.

Since the last meeting where we heard from Joel Rudick on potential coverage for employee health, there have been conversations to clear up any misunderstanding regarding costing, coverage, etc. We will be looking at it again in January. More information is needed prior to making any decisions to be brought to the board. Also, the above-mentioned coverages for catastrophic injury, etc, may play into that. We want to be sure that we aren't duplicating coverages, and we are sure that every dollar is going to the right place before committing to anything. Again, more to come….

The AFG grant has opened. Initially, we were going to write for a new pumper, however, time constraints and the ability to make absolutely sure we knew exactly what things we could and could not order was difficult. I made the decision to wait until the next cycle, and we are instead writing for turnout gear that is going out of service one year from now. However, the grant is very specific on what you can and cannot write for. We will mostly be writing for helmets, gloves and boots. We will be also including some coats and pants, but we may have to go for an alternate grant to fill out our inventory to where we would like to be. The biggest obstacle is because we have new folks entering, we don't always have sizes that fit them. This can be a safety issue as they are not specifically built for them. We do all we can to make sure the fit is proper.

We will then again consider writing for the SAFER grant, asking to fund most likely between 3-6 personnel.

I will be instructing (gratis) an Incident Safety Officer course in February, and we will be sending at least one person to that.

END