

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - CITY COUNCIL

Finding #1:

Despite fire departments throughout Orange County having evolved into emergency medical departments, most have not updated their emergency response protocols accordingly, but have simply absorbed emergency medical responses into their existing fire response models.

City Council's Response: Disagree

The Huntington Beach Fire Department leadership has addressed this finding in its response and the City Council agrees that the City of Huntington Beach has adapted appropriately to the changing environment of the fire service. We are proud of the accomplishments and the progressiveness of our fire department. The Fire Department demonstrated adaptability during the COVID-19 pandemic by taking on many new challenges and they proved to be capable of far more than firefighting and EMS. The talented and dedicated personnel of the HBFD have consistently progressed with the evolving needs of this community.

Finding #3:

ALS staffed ambulances or smaller squad vehicles are often the most appropriate response to medical calls and do not compromise the quality of medical care.

City Council's Response: Disagree

The City Council supports the current service delivery model which meets the needs of our dynamic community. As elected officials, we ensure that our department directors are innovative and display fiscal stewardship in their respective disciplines.

Finding #4:

There has been a breakdown of communication and trust between OCEMS and Orange County Fire Chiefs.

City Council's Response: Agree

The City Council has always been pleased with the way our Fire Department has collaborated with local stakeholders, partner agencies, the community at-large, and regulatory agencies in the protection of our community. Historically, our Fire Department has placed a strong emphasis on maintaining relationships which includes OCEMS, even in the midst of regional challenges.

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Finding #5:

Over-deployment of firefighters for medical calls contributes to the current climate of forced hiring and firefighter fatigue.

City Council's Response: Disagree

The Huntington Beach Fire Department is appropriately managed and staffed. The Fire Chief has been diligent in working with labor groups to address staffing and deployment to ensure the best service is delivered to residents and visitors to the city.

Finding #9:

OCEMS has the authority and responsibility to inspect all for-profit ambulances operating in Orange County; however, publicly-owned ambulances are not automatically subject to OCEMS oversight.

City Council's Response: Agree

The City Council sees no reason to invite a regulatory inspection process that we are not subject to and has already been deemed unnecessary by OCEMS.

Recommendation #1:

As recommended in the 2012 and 2014 OCFA Standards of Coverage and Deployment Plans, as well as other studies, the Grand Jury recommends that, by 2024, all Orange County fire agencies utilize criteria-based dispatch protocols and send a single unit response to those incidents triaged as non-life-threatening (BLS). FI, F2, F5

City Council's Response: Recommendation will not be implemented

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Explanation is provided in the Fire Chief's response.

Fire Chief's Response: Recommendation will not be implemented

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The Huntington Beach Fire Department has a recent independent third-party Standards of Cover (SOC) report by Citygate Associates that indicates our current deployment model is excellent and a standard for the fire service. The City of Huntington Beach has full authority to determine the level of service to provide its community. The Huntington Beach Fire Department will continue to work under the direction of the City Council to determine the most effective, cost efficient and appropriate way to deliver EMS in our jurisdiction.

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Recommendation #4:

While OCEMS should recognize how certain policy changes may pose operational challenges to emergency responders in the field, fire leadership should recognize and respect the independent oversight authority and expertise of OCEMS. F4

City Council's Response: Recommendation has been implemented

This recommendation has been implemented. Explanation is provided in the Fire Chief's response.

Fire Chief's Response: Recommendation has been implemented

This recommendation is already a standard practice. The Huntington Beach Fire Department acknowledges and appreciates the expertise and fully recognizes the medical oversight of OCEMS in accordance with the laws of the State of California and the duly established regulations of the California Emergency Medical Services Authority. We will continue to operate under the medical direction of OCEMS and will continue to respect and collaborate with this agency as a regulatory partner in EMS.

Recommendation #5:

Departments with publicly owned ambulances should allow OCEMS to inspect their ambulances for compliance with State EMS guidelines and adopt OCEMS recommendations. F9

City Council's Response: Recommendation will not be implemented

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Explanation is provided in the fire chief's response.

Fire Chief's Response: Recommendation will not be implemented

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The Huntington Beach Fire Department has never disallowed OCEMS to inspect our ambulances but we did come to a mutual determination that these inspections were unnecessary because the existing internal policies and standards of the HBFD far exceeded the OCEMS criteria in the inspection process. Should OCEMS change their prior position and express a desire to inspect our ambulances, we would give the request full consideration and work with OCEMS to determine if reinstating the process would be helpful and fiscally responsible.