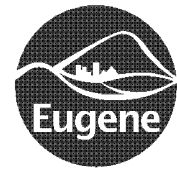


# EUGENE CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



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## Work Session: Metro Fire Department Merger Update

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Meeting Date: April 17, 2013  
Department: Eugene Fire & EMS  
[www.eugene-or.gov](http://www.eugene-or.gov)

Agenda Item Number: C  
Staff Contact: Randall B. Groves, Chief  
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### **ISSUE STATEMENT**

In July of 2010, the City Manager and Fire Chief took steps toward a functional consolidation of the Eugene and Springfield fire departments as a means of reducing costs and providing improved metro-wide service effectiveness. This move was supported by a 2009 consulting report that determined the proposed merger was both feasible and advisable for the two cities. At this point, while the two departments are not yet fully merged, they have made steady incremental progress towards the goal of becoming a fully-merged, single metro fire service agency.

### **BACKGROUND**

In an era of financial challenge, new and creative solutions are necessary for sustaining core community services such as fire prevention and suppression, rescue, and emergency medical services. To achieve this goal, the initiation of steps that feature new and more efficient ways to provide services includes the combining of strengths found in both the Eugene and Springfield fire departments, as well as the geographical positioning of response facilities and assets. The integrated system more efficiently utilizes multi-role, multi-skilled personnel and took advantage of attrition to eliminate a number of high-level positions that became redundant as the two departments evolve into one agency. The merger initiative has also taken advantage of the combining of resources to maintain a quality training program and leverages economies of scale in the purchasing of apparatus, equipment and supplies. To accomplish these purchasing efficiencies a set of common or, in some cases compatible, specifications were developed.

In June 2007, the two cities effectively eliminated jurisdictional boundaries for the purposes of emergency fire, rescue, first-response EMS, hazardous materials and ambulance transport. The system is designed to dispatch the closest and most appropriate resource regardless of jurisdiction. This approach, known as the 3-Battalion Integrated Response System, has resulted in an improved initial response to emergencies as well as better backup coverage to ensure that a safe level of resources are available throughout the metro area. The only tangible costs have been a limited amount of staff time and the minimal one-time cost of renumbering fire stations and vehicles into a single cohesive system.

To date, the departments have made significant progress toward a full merger of the two agencies. A majority of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been normalized between the two departments and provide a common set of operating standards. Employee development programs

have been merged and strong and cooperative relationships have been formed between the two cities and with both fire labor unions. In support of this effort, IAFF Locals 851 (Eugene) and 1395 (Springfield) have settled on a new three-year labor agreement that provides for a normalized contract in the third year. This agreement also provides the cities with ability to assign personnel in either city, as well as creating the possibility of negotiating a single successor agreement in 2015. The ability to assign personnel in either city will afford further efficiencies and allow the organization to better utilize its human resources. Currently, some exempt shift supervisors (battalion chiefs) have been assigned in the opposite city from which they are employed. These assignments have proved successful and have helped further the merger initiative.

The contractual agreement and the Intergovernmental Agreement merging the two fire departments are in addition to memorandums of understanding and other operating agreements enacted to merge individual work units. A new records management system and automated roster system are in the works. In addition, a task group has been working with Central Lane 911 during their regular computer-aided dispatch upgrade to ensure that response files reflect the 3-Battalion closest unit order. Other groups that have been working on the merger are training, fire prevention, policies and procedures (these are city groups), risk and benefits, recruitment and selection, and EMS to name a few. Recently, the Logistics Section began providing service to the Springfield side of the organization with Springfield paying for their share. This change is initially being done on a trial basis to see if centralized supply order and distribution is a more efficient and effective way to provide logistical support services that include supply, order, distribution and maintenance. Representatives from both cities' Human Resources Departments and the Chief of Departments have met with representatives from SEIU and AFSCME to discuss progress with the merger, and inform them of the intent to merge administration, ambulance billing and support functions into a single fire department model in the near future. At this point, no decisions have been made in regards to final outcomes including organizational structure under a fully-merged organization, timing and work locations. An internal cross-departmental employee group is currently collaborating on the development of a new name and logo for the new organization.

Although the work has been time consuming and challenging, the future of the fire service merger initiative continues to be strong and look good. Staff's hope is that a full and successful integration and merger can be achieved over the next couple of years.

Cumulative merger/budget reduction savings have progressed each year from FY11 and projected through FY14 are \$3,958,877. This number does not include the potential closure of Eugene Engine 2 which is assigned to the Whiteaker Fire Station.

### **RELATED CITY VALUES**

City of Eugene Goal #1: Safe community

City of Eugene Goal #2: Sustainable development

City of Eugene Goal #5: Fair, stable, and adequate financial resources

### **ELECTED OFFICIAL OPTIONS**

This is informational only to provide an update about the fire service merger initiative and the ASA changes.

**CITY MANAGERS' RECOMMENDATION**

None. This is an informational work session only.

**SUGGESTED MOTION**

None. This is an informational work session only.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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