

**Dave Cortese**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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In light of the San Jose Fire Department's inability to meet emergency response time standards, Santa Clara County Supervisor Dave Cortese is urging the City to make adding firefighters a priority in the 2014-2015 budget.

Cortese also asked that the County conduct an audit of the SJFD to determine the accuracy of First Responder data as well as department management issues that might contribute to the failure to meet response time standards. The Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the audit at its meeting today.

Mayor Chuck Reed's March 6, 2014, Budget Message, which gives direction to the City Manager on preparing next year's budget, calls for trying out staffing changes and different models of deployment before considering hiring more firefighters. Reed recommends testing models such as expanding the use of two-person squads and motorcycle paramedics.

“Sometimes minutes are the difference between life and death when an emergency happens,” Cortese said. “This issue is too important for the City to experiment with. Restoring cuts to the Fire Department should not be seen as a last resort.”

In the 2014-15 budget, the San Jose Fire Department has requested that the City restore positions that were eliminated, which amount to a total of seven companies. The SJFD is also seeking the addition of 14 positions to provide the fire chief with the flexibility to help improve response times.

Improving San Jose Police and Fire Response was also among the top five priorities recommended by the public through a telephone survey and a budget priority workshop with neighborhood leaders earlier this year.

The County Board of Supervisors recently found the City in breach of its 911 emergency medical services agreement with the County because it has not met standards of responding to 90 percent of its emergency calls within eight minutes. The Board of Supervisors is also holding money it owes the city in a trust fund until response times improve.

For more information, please contact Supervisor Dave Cortese’s Office at 408-299-5030.