



CONFIRE

STAFF REPORT

DATE: July 23, 2024

FROM: Nathan Cooke, Interim Director

TO: Administrative Committee

SUBJECT: Cost Apportionment for Non-Emergency Call Types

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Discontinue the current practice of excluding the non-emergency calls listed in Attachment A from each agency's annual call count as used for cost apportionment of CONFIRE's annual operating budget of universal costs.
2. Direct staff to establish contracts with San Bernardino County Dept. of Public Health and San Bernardino County Road Dept. to reimburse CONFIRE for dispatching services annually on a cost-per-call basis.
3. Direct staff to negotiate with ICEMA for a cost-per-call reimbursement requirement for privately operated air medical transport agencies that receive dispatching services from CONFIRE.

BACKGROUND

At the January 2024 Administrative Chiefs meeting, staff brought forward a proposal to change the method by which certain non-emergency call types were billed to both CONFIRE and non-CONFIRE agencies. The purpose was to ensure that costs associated with processing calls were distributed among participating agencies in a fair and equitable manner. Prior to this proposal, some non-emergency calls were not included in the annual calculations of fees for each participating agency. This resulted in the cost of processing these calls for one agency being spread among all agencies instead of the agency of origin. During the discussion of this proposal, the Chief's decided that more analysis would be beneficial and directed staff to facilitate an ad hoc committee of Admin. Chiefs members to review options and bring back recommendations to the administrative group. This committee convened in May 2024 and developed the recommendations herein.

After evaluating the calls that are currently not billed for, the committee developed recommendations to include the calls as outlined in Attachment A. This also includes recommendations for recovering some of the costs for dispatching resources for non-CONFIRE agencies. The resulting impact for CONFIRE agencies can be determined by using the process described in the CONFIRE JPA agreement Section 7 for fiscal contribution. In summary, this process takes the total number of billable calls in each member's jurisdiction and uses it to establish their percentage of total billable calls processed by CONFIRE. Each agency's percentage is then

applied to the total projected operating budget of universal costs for the coming fiscal year to establish the dollar amount they will be required to pay. This can be further broken down to cost-per-call by dividing the billed amount by the total call volume. While cost-per-call is the product, not the foundation of the billing calculation, it can be used as a guide for billing outside agencies that CONFIRE provides service for.

The application of these recommendations would be different for CONFIRE and Non-CONFIRE agencies. For CONFIRE agencies, the previously non-billed calls in a jurisdiction would now be added to their total call volume. Since the billing formula is based on established universal operating costs, this does not introduce any additional revenue for CONFIRE. It will, however, result in a redistribution of costs since the previously non-billed calls will be assigned the jurisdiction that generated the call instead of spreading the costs equally across each agency (See Table 1).

Table 1: Percentage of call volume based on calendar year 2023.

Jurisdiction	Current # of Incidents	% of Total	Added Incidents	New % of Total
San Bernardino County	132,607	53.45%	2,014 ^a	53.23%
VictorvilleFD	23,682	9.54%	216	9.45%
RanchoCucamonga	18,346	7.39%	17	7.26%
ChinoValleyFD	13,373	5.39%	80	5.32%
AppleValley	12,671	5.11%	2,123 ^a	5.85%
Rialto	11,933	4.81%	74	4.75%
Redlands	11,838	4.77%	13	4.69%
Colton	7,506	3.03%	35	2.98%
MontclairFD	4,799	1.93%	8	1.90%
Loma Linda	4,412	1.78%	206	1.83%
Big Bear Fire	3,622	1.46%	6	1.43%
San Manuel FD	1,953	0.79%	-	0.77%
Baker Ambulance	748	0.30%	-	0.30%
Running Springs	624	0.25%	20	0.25%
Total	248,114	100%	4,812	100.00%

a: The majority of these calls are for burn permits. Apple Valley has already started implementation of an automated process that would eliminate these calls going through dispatch. As this occurs, the percentages for each agency will change again slightly.

For non-CONFIRE agencies, the committee recommends charging on a per-call basis to certain agencies. In these cases, the cost-per-call amount mentioned earlier would represent fair and appropriate compensation. Some of these charges will represent new revenue for CONFIRE from agencies that did not previously participate in any cost sharing with CONFIRE. One of these is the County Department of Public Health, who uses our services to manage call-out notifications.

Another is for uncompensated services that CONFIRE provides for is dispatching private medical air transport resources. While these services often coincide with CONFIRE ground unit responses, the function of coordinating the resource is impactful and justifies appropriate compensation. In calendar year 2023, there were a total of 485 private helicopter dispatches through CONFIRE's comm center, which could generate as much as \$22,000 annually in cost recovery. Because the LEMSA regulates medical air transport in the county, the committee recommends that CONFIRE meet with ICEMA and negotiate a cost-per-call framework for cost recovery.

FISCAL IMPACTS

As mentioned, non-emergency calls that are added and apportioned to the home agency will not have a fiscal impact on CONFIRE's operating budget. However, it will impact the amount each agency pays based on how many non-emergency types calls each agency has (See table 1).

If CONFIRE begins charging non-CONFIRE agencies for services, staff projects a potential for approximately \$2,000 annually from San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, and approximately \$22,000 from private medical air transport companies assuming ICEMA gives approval for the proposed cost recovery. While the recommendations include formalizing a contract with San Bernardino County Road Department, CONFIRE is currently collecting reimbursements from them that are approximately the same as what the proposed cost-per-call method would be, so no new revenues would be realized.

ATTACHMENT A

Description of Non-Emergency Call Types.

GHZ – Hazardous Materials Inc

This code is used when non-emergency Haz-Mat resources are requested to evaluate illegal use or disposal of potentially hazardous products. These typically result in a response from a county haz-mat resource or contact of appropriate resources to deal with the call. These differ from haz-mat emergency response calls that pose an immediate threat to life and/or property. In Table 1, the number of Haz-mat calls for County Fire (BDC) includes calls in their jurisdiction and calls in the county that are not in any CONFIRE jurisdiction (e.g. Ontario, Barstow).

Recommendation: Begin adding these calls to the appropriate agency's total billable calls on January 1, 2025.

GLAW – Law Enforcement Incident

This code is used when a fire investigator or SWAT Medic is assigned to an incident. Any reimbursement would be charged to the jurisdiction where the resources responded to.

Recommendation: Begin adding these calls to the appropriate agency's total billable calls on January 1, 2025.

GLL – Loma Linda City Inc

This code is used to facilitate contact with various Loma Linda City resources (not necessarily fire) to respond to non-emergency requests.

Recommendation: Begin adding these calls to Loma Linda FD's total billable calls on January 1, 2025.

GPH – Public Health Incident

Any incident where the Public Health Department has to be notified. These include notifications of communicable diseases, emergency death certificates, commercial food problems, re-opening of a restaurant after discharge of fire extinguishers, bee problems, problems at apartment complexes such as sewer issues, rodent/insect infestation etc. and other various Public Health related issues. Because these requests generally require dispatchers to make telephone calls to the on-duty public health officer, it is recommended that CONFIRE bill County DPH for this service.

Recommendation: Meet with the County Public Health Department to establish a service contract where they would pay CONFIRE at the cost per call rate for each call beginning January 1, 2025.

GRD – Road Department Inc

This code is used when reports of road hazards on county roads come into Comm Center. These reports are subsequently transferred to a designated contact to mitigate the problem. There is currently an agreement in place to bill the County for these services. It is recommended that this agreement be updated to ensure that the terms are in line with what other agencies are paying for this service.

Recommendation: Formalize the process by which County Road Department currently compensates CONFIRE for dispatching services to have continuity with other contracts for dispatching outside agencies.

GMI – Miscellaneous Govt Inc

Although this code has been used for a variety of non-emergency requests, over 80% of the calls involve notification or hospital redirect status. This includes any incident entered into the ReddiNet system where a request has been made to Comm Center to poll the hospital(s) for bed availability that is out of our agency/dispatch jurisdiction. As a normal function of the EMS call continuum, these redirects are not included for any additional charges. However, the remaining calls represent dispatcher intervention and are therefore included. For the chart in Table 1, only non-redirect calls are included in this category.

Recommendation: Begin adding calls of this type that do not include redirect notification to the appropriate agency's total billable calls on January 1, 2025.

GBP – Burn Permit

Burn permits are issued through the AHJ for the areas where the permitted burning is to take place. CONFIRE is not involved in the issuing of permits. However, CONFIRE dispatch is advised when a burn is going to take place so that 911 calls for smoke in the area can be appropriately dealt with by dispatchers. This requires the call taker to create a CAD incident and enter the details of each permitted burn event. This ultimately reduces unnecessary responses and associated costs for agencies where the calls originate. Burn periods are typically between 0600 and 1200 hrs.

Recommendation: Begin adding these calls to the appropriate agency's total billable calls on January 1, 2025.

GAT – Alarm Testing

This code is used when a fire alarm system is being tested for community risk reduction purposes. These are generally initiated by fire department employees so that the alarm activation does not generate a false response. This requires the call taker to create a CAD incident and enter the details of each permitted planned alarm activation event.

Recommendation: Begin adding these calls to the appropriate agency's total billable calls on January 1, 2025.

HELO – Helicopter Resources

CONFIRE assists in coordinating helicopter responses from private providers throughout the county. When these resources are dispatched to a CONFIRE incident, information is gathered and confirmed by dispatchers and an incident is generated in CAD. Since the vast majority of these calls also involved the dispatch of additional CONFIRE units, the agency from where the incident occurred is already being billed. However, Admin. Chiefs could consider an additional charge to the air transport company to further offset costs.

Recommendation: Meet with the ICEMA to establish a requirement for private air medical transport providers to pay CONFIRE at the cost per call rate for each call beginning January 1, 2025.