




City of Long Beach
Working Together to Serve

R-33
Office of Gerrie Schipske
Councilwoman, Fifth District
Memorandum

Date: August 22, 2006

To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

From: Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District 

Subject: **AGENDA ITEM: 1) Request that the City Manager Report on the Status of the Public Protection Classification (PPC) Survey Performed by Insurance Services Organization (ISO) on the City's Fire Department and Fire Protection Services; 2) Provide a Strategy for Improving the City's Rating from Class 2 to Class 1; 3) Provide Information Concerning the Accreditation of the Fire Department by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI)**

DISCUSSION

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) is a non-profit organization that collects information on municipal fire-protection efforts in communities throughout the United States. In each of those communities, ISO analyzes the relevant data using a Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS). ISO assigns a Public Protection Classification from 1 to 10. Class 1 represents exemplary public protection, and Class 10 indicates that the area's fire-suppression program doesn't meet ISO's minimum criteria.

By classifying communities' ability to suppress fires, ISO helps the communities evaluate their public fire-protection services. The program provides an objective, countrywide standard that helps fire departments in planning and budgeting for facilities, equipment, and training. By securing lower fire insurance premiums for communities with better public protection, the PPC program provides incentives and rewards for communities that choose to improve their firefighting services.

Virtually all U.S. insurers of homes and business property use ISO's Public Protection Classifications in calculating premiums. In general, the price of insurance in a community with a good PPC is substantially lower than in a community with a poor PPC, assuming all other factors are equal.

PPC Rating depends on:

Fire alarms

Ten percent of the overall grading is based on how well the fire department receives fire alarms and dispatches its fire-fighting resources. Field representatives evaluate the communications center, looking at the number of operators at the center; the telephone service, including the number of telephone lines coming into the center; and the listing of emergency numbers in the telephone book. Field representatives also look at the

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dispatch circuits and how the center notifies firefighters about the location of the emergency.

Engine companies

Fifty percent of the overall grading is based on the number of engine companies and the amount of water a community needs to fight a fire. ISO reviews the distribution of fire companies throughout the area and checks that the fire department tests its pumps regularly and inventories each engine company's nozzles, hoses, breathing apparatus, and other equipment.

ISO also reviews the fire-company records to determine:

- type and extent of training provided to fire-company personnel
- number of people who participate in training
- firefighter response to emergencies
- maintenance and testing of the fire department's equipment

Water supply

Forty percent of the grading is based on the community's water supply. This part of the survey focuses on whether the community has sufficient water supply for fire suppression beyond daily maximum consumption. ISO surveys all components of the water supply system, including pumps, storage, and filtration. To determine the rate of flow the water mains provide, we observe fire-flow tests at representative locations in the community. Finally, ISO evaluates the distribution of fire hydrants.

Class 1 Rating

There are currently 43 municipal fire departments in the United States that are rated as Class 1 by ISO. Ten (10) of those fire departments are located in California: Stockton, Huntington Beach, Culver City, Arcadia, Beverly Hills, Vernon, Glendale, Santa Ana and Torrance. Long Beach is rated Class 2.

ISO does not charge either to perform the PPC survey or to work with a community to re-survey. These costs are borne by the insurance industry, which utilizes these ratings to underwrite fire insurance.

Accreditation by Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI)

Essentially, ISO is classifying a community's ability to fight fire.

Accreditation of fire agencies by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) provides a comprehensive system of fire and emergency service evaluation that can help local governments determine their risks and fire safety needs, evaluate the performance of the organizations involved, and provide a method for continuous improvement.

The CFAI self-assessment process covers 10 categories including Governance and Administration, Assessment and Planning, Goals and Objectives, Financial Resources, Programs, Physical Resources, Human Resources, Training and Competency, Essential Resources, and External Systems Relations. Within these categories are several related performance indicators and core competencies that the agency must address. In completing the self-assessment process, agencies must develop a strategic or master plan as well as a standard of response coverage document.

Self-Assessment has many benefits. It allows agencies to accurately evaluate their department and identify strengths and weaknesses. It provides them with a method for addressing deficiencies and encourages quality improvement through continuous self-assessment. There are many examples in which agencies were able to justify the need for additional equipment, manpower or services through the use of the self-assessment process. Ultimately, self-assessment ensures that agencies are meeting the needs of their communities.

An important part of the self-assessment process is to inventory a community's risks and the associated mitigation capabilities. ISO provides communities risk assessment data it has on many of the commercial properties within their fire service boundaries.

The further importance of fire agencies becoming accredited by CFAI is that such accreditation appears to improve a fire agency's ability to increase or maintain their ISO ranking.

Finally, both the ISO rating and the CFAI accreditation can assist the City Council in budgeting appropriately for the Fire Department

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

City Council action on this item is requested on August 22, 2006 to provide necessary information for the Council in a timely manner during deliberations on the Fiscal Year 2007 budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Request the City Manager provide a report on the Status of the Public Protection Classification (PPC) Survey Performed by Insurance Services Organization (ISO) on the City's Fire Department and Fire Protection Services;**

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- 2. Provide a Strategy for Improving the City's Rating from Class 2 to Class 1;
and**
- 3. Provide Information Concerning the Accreditation of the Fire Department
by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI).**