



City of Paso Robles

Department of Emergency Services 2008 Annual Report

2008 Quick Stats

EMS	1,997 (69%)
Service Call	554 (19%)
Fire	121 (4%)
False Alarm	102 (4%)
Haz. Condition	97 (3%)
Other	17 (1%)

Total Calls 2,888



About the Department

The Department is made up of 27 men and women dedicated to the life and property safety of the community's 30,000 residents and numerous visitors. The bulk of the Department's members are assigned to shift work in order to provide round-the-clock protection. The actual number of people working each day is between 7 and 8, depending on availability, and an on-call chief officer. The Department operates from 2 locations to minimize response time and handle the volume of work.

2008—A Busy Year

The Department of Emergency Services enjoyed a busy and productive year. Calls for service continued their relatively predictable pattern of 10% increase over the prior year.

This was the first full year of performing business inspections. The experience provided opportunities for improvement. Many program adjustments were made during the year and others will be initiated in the coming year.

Most all businesses were visited to determine compliance with the California Fire Code and, more importantly, to eliminate hazards. The Department remains interested in customer and worker safety and seeing that fire

risk is reduced in order to keep businesses up-and-operating.

In 2008, the Department also installed Mobile Data Computers (MDC's) in most of its front-line vehicles. MDC's "talk" to the dispatch center, relaying crucial incident information. This reduces radio traffic, increases information accuracy, and speeds the communications process. MDC's also provide quick access to building information and area maps. All of this adds to operational improvements.

The Department also expended great effort this past year in updating and expanding its Driver/Operator training program. Aside from teaching employees how to



safely maneuver large and heavy vehicles in an emergency mode, the program educates drivers in the technical aspects of pumping water during fire-ground operations.

The Department's primary focus in the coming year will be on continued service delivery improvements.

Mass Inoculation Exercise

The City of Paso Robles participated in a county-wide exercise of a simulated influenza epidemic. An actual flu vaccine was administered to "victims." Over 600 doses were given. The drill was deemed a success.

Similar exercises are done periodically to test the degree of readiness, adequacy of plans, and otherwise ensure first responders are prepared to address the diversity of community emergency needs.



Department Paramedics prepare syringes with vaccine.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

EMS is the Department's highest requested service. It accounted for 69% of all emergency response activity in 2008. EMS calls are simultaneously responded to by a Department engine crew and private ambulance. The Department usually provides a quicker response to render initial care and stabilize the victim. The private ambulance then receives and transports the patient to the closest appropriate medical facility. This system provides the highest reasonable degree of care.

Fire trucks serve as the Department's primary response vehicle. Doing so ensures all of the needed tools are at hand (as in the case of an EMS call requiring patient extrication equipment) and to make sure

there are no delays to subsequent calls where more than basic EMS equipment is needed.

A somewhat notable EMS response in 2008 was for a choking victim.

Upon their arrival, Department Paramedics quickly determined that an elderly woman was choking on a large piece of meat. Attempts to remove the foreign object from the airway prior to the Department's arrival were unsuccessful.

After attempting basic maneuvers to remove the meat, Paramedics removed the meat through direct



laryngoscopy. During this procedure, Paramedics visualize the patient's vocal cords and remove foreign bodies utilizing McGill forceps.

After the airway occlusion was removed, the patient was transported to the hospital and discharged shortly later. The Paramedics saved this woman's life.

EMS Responses - 1,997

Medical	1,869	94%
Traffic	116	6%
Entrapment	12	<1%

Fire Suppression

Fire suppression represents a small but critical part of the Department's activity. Structure fires occur infrequently. When they do, only a quick response with an adequately sized force can provide good results.



Too few resources or too much of a delay results in increased property

damage and higher life risk. Fires generally place the greatest demand on Department resources.

The most notable fire response for 2008 occurred at Lubrizol Corporation in July. A fire in an outside tank storage area spread to adjacent tanks. Quick and aggressive

action, and assistance from neighboring departments, averted a total loss. Equipment and material loss was \$2M, but the value saved was \$31M.

Fire Responses - 121

Building	32	26%
Vehicle	19	16%
Vegetation	27	22%
Other	43	36%

Hazardous Condition

Hazardous condition calls represent critical situations that worsen without intervention. They therefore include a broad category of call types.

The single call type within this group having the greatest potential to impact the community is hazardous materials (HazMat) releases.

Chemicals and other dangerous products regularly move throughout town. Transportation, storage, or use mishaps that result in hazardous materials releases can affect great numbers of people.

The Department works with other



local fire departments to provide a county-wide team response for HazMat incidents.

Hazardous Condition - 97

HazMat	34	35%
Electrical	19	20%
Aircraft	6	6%
Other	38	39%

Technical Rescue Team (TRT)

The Department began examining its capability to perform certain kinds of unusual rescues many years ago. Recent incidents pointing to deficiencies and prompted a more comprehensive study of risks. It was determined that Paso Robles and Atascadero had overlapping concerns.



Overlapping needs were identified in the areas of trench rescue, technical rope rescue, river and flood rescue, and urban search and rescue. Given the similarities, it seemed

beneficial to cross-train a number of firefighters from both cities.

In 2007, the Paso Robles City Council approved a joint-venture with the City of Atascadero to provide technical rescue.

While the Department had some capability in this area, it was insufficient to address the area's known risks. Nearly a year of specialty training, writing

joint operations policies and plans, and purchasing specialized equipment produced a team capable of meeting citizen needs in this service area.

The primary response to these types of calls is at least one engine to assess needs and perform initial activities. The response is backed up by the joint team as required. The ability to work with Atascadero translates to a higher level of service for both communities at less cost.



Service Calls

“Service” calls represent a wide range of service requests. Citizens occasionally find themselves in unusual circumstances and unable to locate anyone capable of helping. In these situations, people turn to the Department for assistance.



The Department's employ-

ees have mechanical skills and other expertise that are sometimes put to the test in these unusual assistance requests. And their fire engine serves as a giant rolling tool box.

These requests have included snake “removal”, extricating a child's head from its crib bars, arm

caught in vending machine, deer stuck in fence, back-up generator repair, and cat stuck-on-the-roof rescue. The Department prides itself in helping citizens wherever and whenever possible.

<i>Service Call - 554</i>		
Public svc. assist	240	43%
Smoke check	51	9%
Other	263	47%

Training

The Department works to continually improve its capability by ensuring all members have the latest information and opportunity to hone their skills. The Department



works hardest at maintaining its proficiency for less frequently occurring emergencies that have potential for wide-scale community impact. While these skills are called upon less often, there is no reduc-



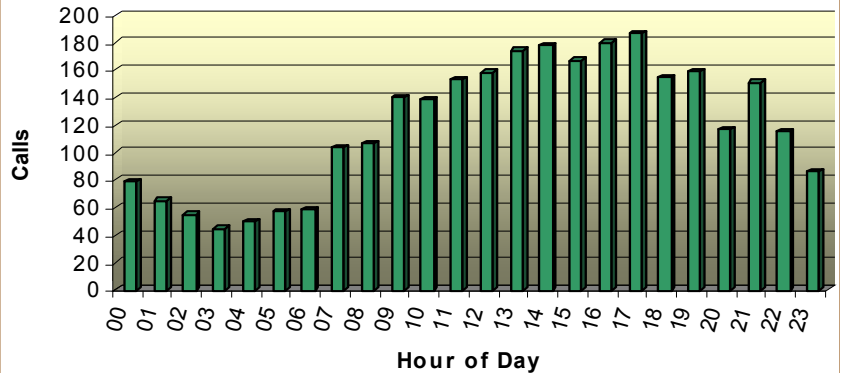
tion in performance expectations. Training therefore plays a significant role in providing the full array of community emergency services.

<i>Training</i>	
Training classes/courses	4,211
Training hours	6,617
Avg. hours per firefighter	276

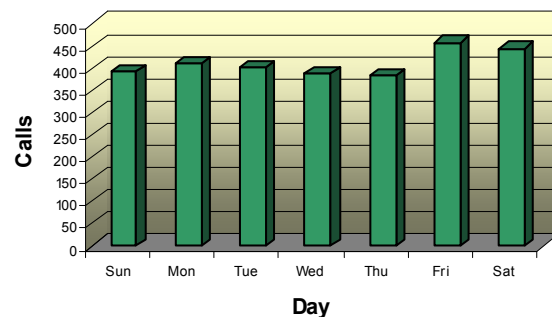
Did you know?

- There were 357 occasions where both fire engines were committed to separate calls at the same time.
- There were 115 calls that required the commitment of both engines.
- The Fire Department changed its name to Department of Emergency Services in 1995 to more accurately reflect the variety of services performed.
- Two major independent studies regarding the adequacy of emergency services were published in the last two decades. Both are available at the Department's web site (under the City web site www.prcity.com).
- The Department sends fire engines on EMS calls to ensure most of the tools needed are immediately available. Engines also occasionally respond to subsequent calls (before returning to the station) where a fire engine is required.
- The Department staffs each of the two engines daily with at least one Paramedic licensed firefighter to provide the highest level of pre-hospital care.

2008 Run Data by Time of Day



2008 Run Data by Day of Week



Non-Emergency Service Activities

While the Department spends much of its time preparing for, and responding to, emergency incidents, the Department also works hard at preventing fires and other emergencies. This work is done mostly through application of the California Fire Code and educating citizens in how to avoid and react effectively to emergencies.

All new building plans are reviewed to ensure that life safety concerns are addressed. While under construction, inspectors make regular site visits to see that the smoke and

fire safety systems are installed according to plan.



Most all established businesses are also annually visited by firefighters to verify that all safety systems are maintained in an operable condition. It also gives firefighters an opportunity to look at buildings in favorable conditions. This helps their efficiency when having to enter under dark and smoky conditions.

The Department routinely spends a considerable number of hours en-

gaged in public instruction. Everything from fire extinguisher to CPR training is covered. Preparing citizens to eliminate hazards and educating them to react in minimizing emergency impacts is time well spent.

Everyone is encouraged to be prepared to deal with major emergencies and community disasters. There is effectively a limit on the amount of assistance the Department can render during these unusual conditions. Having a family disaster kit is a great start and can make all the difference in your family's well being. Contact the San Luis Obispo County Chapter of the American Red Cross at 543-0696 for more information.

Public Education

Pub. education events	223
Public education hours	350

Fire Safety

Engine co. fire inspections	410
Fire code violations found	1,203
Fire control permits	33
Auto. sprinkler permits	79
Plan checks	112
Construction inspections	160