

NEWS

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For more information, contact
David Wert, Public Information Officer
(909) 387-4082
dwert@sbcounty.gov

Supervisors approve major funding for Fire Department Funds to pay for improvements in staffing, equipment and fire stations

VICTORVILLE – The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday unanimously approved dramatic increases in firefighting staffing and resources throughout the nation's largest county.

The board, meeting for the first time outside of the City of San Bernardino in the Victorville City Council Chambers, approved \$2.7 million in ongoing funding to increase staffing at county fire stations in under-funded areas of the county. The funds, which were requested by Board Chairman Bill Postmus and Vice-Chairman Paul Biane, will allow the County Fire Department to convert nine limited-term firefighter/paramedics to full-time, regular employees and provide one additional full-time firefighter/paramedic at the Oak Hills, Phelan/Pinon Hills, and Fawnskin stations. Currently these stations are staffed with extra-help limited-term firefighter/paramedics.

In addition, 14 Captain positions will be added to fire stations in Helendale, Oak Hills, Baker, Harvard, and Needles, increasing staffing levels from two- to three-person companies, and providing much needed leadership capability. At the urging of Supervisor Biane, the Board also approved funding of \$853,576 to provide six full-time firefighter/paramedics at the Devore and Mentone stations.

An additional \$2.7 million in one-time funding was approved to acquire land and design two new fire stations in the communities of Phelan and Spring Valley Lake, and to add living quarters and enhancements to the Needles fire station. The funds will also go toward much-needed equipment such as diesel exhaust systems, emergency generators, fuel tanks, a heavy rescue truck for the North Desert, a swift-water rescue vehicle for the South Desert, and upgraded breathing apparatus.

"I believe this is something that is necessary to ensure the safety of our residents," Chairman Postmus said. "These improvements will give our firefighters the tools they need to effectively protect our citizens."

In a related item, the Board approved a construction contract in the amount of \$3,097,908 for the construction of a new fire station in the community of Baker. The station will provide fire suppression, medical aid, and rescue services to more than 3,800 square miles of desert, including approximately 180 miles along Interstates 15 and 40, and more than 1,200 miles of rail transportation routes.