



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: January 16, 2017  
TO: All Lifeguard Personnel  
FROM: Brian Fennessy, Fire Chief  
SUBJECT: Leaders Intent

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As the leader of our organization and based on my respect for all the hardworking and dedicated Lifeguards that serve the community with honor every day, I feel compelled to communicate with you my leaders intent as it concerns the recently completed Citygate Lifeguard Dispatch & Operations Report.

Task: Third party subject matter expert analysis of the Lifeguard Communications Center (LCC) and to provide a needs assessment and integration status of Lifeguard Services and Fire Operations Divisions;

Purpose: So that the Department and City leadership would better understand current service level gaps, future needs and to be provided recommendations to improve public safety;

End State: The provision of life safety services in a manner consistent with first responder best business practices.

It has come to my attention that there may be a great deal of misinformation and perhaps even rumors being spread throughout the Lifeguard Services Division concerning the Citygate Report findings and recommendations. It is unfortunate that a few have chosen this path as opposed to communicating their concerns in a more professional manner. I want to take this opportunity to dispel any of the divisive misinformation and rumors that may exist.

Those of you that I have had the privilege of working alongside over the years know me to be an inclusive and approachable leader that is always willing to openly and transparently share factual information and my feelings and opinions. My support of the Lifeguard Services Division has been demonstrated going back to when I first advocated to have lifeguard added to staff the then new helicopter program, to participate in the UASI All-Hazards Incident Management Team, the Honor Guard and more. I've fought hard and have succeeded in securing new positions, equipment, etc. through the City budget process. One only needs to attend the annual Service Awards Luncheon to know how much I appreciate and support the Division. Hence, my disappointment with learning that a few within the Division may have chosen to undermine the many years of trust that together we have built.

The Citygate Report identified significant technology needs for the LCC. As a result, an Information Technology (IT) budget request was immediately placed for two new dispatch consoles so that the LCC can be connected to the Metro Zone Emergency Command & Data Center Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. Additionally, a new logging recorder budget

request has been placed. It is important that these long overdue upgrades take place so that we are together, improving life safety services.

In terms of Lifeguard Operations, I want to be clear that I continue to support the Lifeguards being the primary responders to coastal cliff and swiftwater rescues. I feel it important to be on record in this regard. None of this work is being taken away. However, we will as one department continue to develop ways to respond together as the mission of the Fire-Rescue Department is to send the closest, most appropriate resource and personnel to any emergency on a 24/7/365 basis.

The recent change to how inland water rescue 911 calls are now being transferred is a good example of how a minor change in protocol resulted in mitigating a significant life safety issue without taking any of the valuable and specialized lifesaving work from the Lifeguard Services Division.

While communicating via memo may help to relieve some of the anxiety that can be expected when a report that identifies service gaps and infrastructure needs is released, I felt it may be worthwhile to also communicate with you via video:

<https://youtu.be/HYNBAz6xyak>

As always, I encourage you to email or call me directly if you continue to have any questions or concerns. If you would like to meet with me personally, please contact my Executive Assistant Yolanda Kelly and she will set an appointment for us. I am also willing to meet with individual workgroups and will come out and conduct workforce meetings if this is something you believe will be helpful.

In short, my view of the Citygate Dispatch & Operations Report is positive. It has identified several areas within the organization that need improvement. It also speaks positively as to how far we have come from an integration perspective, but reflects our not having integrated as far as we should have by this point in time in our history.

To evolve into truly one department does not require the members of the Lifeguard Services Division to give up or compromise a proud culture. This culture will continue to endure and is something that I often share with other fire chiefs and those that are not familiar with the lifesaving services that our Lifeguards deliver.

Thank you for all you do to protect our community.

Brian Fennessy  
Fire Chief

cc: Chris Webber, Assistant Fire Chief  
Rick Wurts, Lifeguard Chief