

Response to Questions on the FY 2014 Budget

Request By: Board of Supervisors

Question: Provide a detailed explanation of the plan to replace the shirts used by the Fire and Rescue Department including the timing, ongoing costs and projected savings associated with the plan.

Response: The current mix of uniform shirts issuance has been in place since about 1990. With input from field staff, the department periodically reviews uniform issuance practices to find alternative cost effective strategies that promote firefighter safety.

Presently the department issues a mix of Nomex (fire retardant) button up shirts and 100% cotton polo style shirts (non-fire retardant). Uniformed staff is currently issued six polo style shirts (3 short sleeve and 3 long sleeve) and four Nomex shirts (2 long sleeve and 2 short sleeve) for a total of 10 shirts at a total cost of approximately \$610 per person.

The proposed new issuance will include only six Nomex shirts (3 short sleeve and 3 long sleeve) at a total cost of \$479 per person. Implementation of this transition will include the purchase of four new Nomex shirts (2 short sleeve and 2 long sleeve) and retrofits two existing Nomex shirts (1 short sleeve and 1 long sleeve).

Unlike the polo style shirts, which wear out quickly and have to be regularly replaced, the Nomex shirts have a much longer life expectancy. In addition, the proposed new purchase of Nomex shirts will be more adaptable because they utilize removable name/rank tapes that can be updated and reattached to the shirt when personnel are promoted. Presently the polo shirts issued are no longer usable when an employee is promoted, requiring a complete reissuance of polo shirts with rank change. As a result of this change, FRD will provide staff with a longer lasting, fire retardant, shirt that is easily adaptable when personnel are promoted resulting in long term cost savings.

It should also be noted that current Nomex shirts in usable condition are not being discarded. FRD is taking a phased-in approach to the implementation of this new uniform complement. Phase I includes issuing new shirts with the name/rank tapes (2 short sleeve and 2 long sleeve). Phase II involves collecting existing Nomex shirts and retrofitting those in good condition by adding the removable name/rank tapes. The new shirts must be issued prior to retrofitting so personnel have uniform shirts while the others are being retrofitted. FRD estimates roughly half of the current supply of Nomex shirts will be in good enough condition for retrofit and reissue.

In terms of a cost-benefit analysis, while the additional cost of \$260,000 in FY 2013 is substantial, the following chart shows over a five-year period FRD will save money under the proposed plan.

	Shirt Replacement Under Current System	Shirt Replacement Under FRD Proposed System	Difference
FY 2013	\$240,000	\$500,000	\$260,000
FY 2014	\$240,000	\$0	(\$240,000)
FY 2015	\$240,000	\$125,000	(\$115,000)
FY 2016	\$240,000	\$125,000	(\$115,000)
FY 2017	\$240,000	\$125,000	(\$115,000)
Total	\$1,200,000	\$875,000	(\$325,000)

The chart assumes no additional shirt purchases will be required in FY 2014, and approximately one-quarter of the initial outlay will be required to be replaced primarily due to damage starting in FY 2015. It should be noted savings in FY 2014 and future years will be redirected to assist with supporting unbudgeted, increased costs associated with replacing and cleaning personal protective gear and increased costs associated with the Public Safety Occupational Health Center Contract.

In summary, although initially the cost is slightly more, standardizing uniforms, improving protection of personnel, and reducing lifecycle costs will provide long-term benefits to the department. Other reasons why the current time period is appropriate to implement this plan include:

- Safety & Efficiency: Nomex shirts are more fire retardant than polo shirts and have a longer life span allowing FRD to realize long term savings.
- Standardization: Transitioning everyone to the same uniform allows for better recognition of personnel by other public safety personnel and the public.
- Scheduled Implementation: Ensures everyone in the department transitions in a smooth and orderly fashion. Current department policy allows employees to initiate replacement when shirts are worn. They may re-order every two years; however some elect to wait much longer or choose not to re-order at all. In order to ensure all personnel transition to these shirts, FRD chose to implement the transition in a shorter time period.
- Policy/Standard Operating Procedure Updates: All department documents can be updated at once outlining uniform regulations.
- One Time Funding: Funding was available from cost saving measures implemented by FRD during this fiscal year (FY 2013).