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## ConFire to Upgrade One-Third of its Fleet

*By Nick Marnell*

Fire chiefs know all about timing. Their jobs revolve around - and their performance is gauged by - improving the incident response times in their districts or departments.

Exhibiting this knack for timing, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Chief Jeff Carman asked that his board approve a \$1 million annual lease-purchase payment for new fire apparatus, subsequently requesting adoption of an ordinance that will allow ConFire to charge \$1 million annually in first responder fees. The Board of Supervisors, acting as the ConFire board of directors, unanimously approved both requests at its Dec. 9 meeting.

ConFire will purchase nine fire engines, three aerial ladder trucks and one rescue truck from Pierce Manufacturing Inc. in 2015 under a 10-year lease-purchase agreement through Oshkosh Capital. "This replaces 33 percent of our aging fleet," said Carman, who added that he expects to request a similar order in the next fiscal year, with an annual goal of \$2.5 million dedicated to replacing district apparatus. The first new vehicles should arrive in the fourth quarter of next year.

Though he would not confirm that any of the new engines will be assigned to Lafayette stations 15 or 17, Carman did say that one of the new trucks will be delivered to station 1 in Walnut Creek, which is the first backup for structure fires in Lafayette. He also confirmed that the new squad vehicle, ordered earlier this fall, will arrive at station 1 on Jan. 17. It, too, will back up calls into Lafayette.

The cost recovery ordinance allows ConFire to collect reimbursement from insurance providers for the actual costs of its services rendered on emergency medical calls. Carman stressed to the board that all costs recovered will be from the insurance companies or the federal government and not from individuals. "Not collecting this fee is subsidizing the insurance companies," he told the ConFire Advisory Fire Commission the previous evening. Though individuals without insurance will still be billed, the district expects to facilitate a compassionate collection approach for those without the ability to pay. Carman anticipates \$1 million in annual reimbursements, but he said that a consultant suggested the amount could exceed \$1.5 million.

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District, less than one-tenth the size of ConFire and sporting vastly different demographics, generated \$100,000 in first responder fees in the last fiscal year, according to administrative services director Gloriann Sasser.

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