



# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR &  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Teresa Deloach Reed  
Fire Chief

**SUBJECT:** Fire Department Brown Outs

**DATE:** October 29, 2013

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City Administrator

Date

Approval /s/ **Deanna J. Santana**

**10/29/13**

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## INFORMATION

The purpose of this information memo is to address frequently asked questions regarding the Brown Out Strategy that was implemented on July 1, 2012, and will end on June 30, 2014.

### **Background**

Due to cost cutting measures established to balance the 2011-2013 budget, effective July 1, 2012, and given the option to do so through negotiations with Local 55, the Oakland Fire Department begin a brown out strategy resulting in the temporary closure of two (2) fire companies / stations on an equal rotating basis, consistent with operational necessity (e.g. seasonal needs). Through this cost cutting measure, the City of Oakland anticipated a potential savings of \$4M for fiscal year 2012-2013 and a savings of \$2M for fiscal year 2013-2014.

The Letter of Understanding between City of Oakland and I.A.F.F. Local 55 states:

“For the period of July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2014, the provisions of MOU §4.2.2 and Appendix F shall be modified as follows:

- a. Effective July 1, 2012 the City shall be permitted to brownout two companies from service, on an equal rotating basis, consistent with operational necessity (e.g., seasonal needs).
- b. For any company closed, the number of companies out of service per MOU §4.2.4 shall be reduced by one.
- c. The provisions of MOU §4.2.2 and Appendix F shall reinstate in full force and effect on June 30, 2014 except that the Letter of Understanding set forth therein shall be extended until June 30, 2017.”

Below are a series of frequently asked questions and the associated answers:

**Q. What is a brown out?**

**A.** A brown-out is a common phrase used in fire departments. It is when a station or engine company is taken out of service temporarily and the staff is re-assigned to fill the vacancies created by vacation or sick leave on the remaining companies. Staffing on a majority of our companies comprises of four personnel. Through rotation, the Oakland Fire Department will brown out two companies per day with each rotation lasting a period of three days or three 24 hour shifts.

**Q. Which Fire Stations will participate in the brown outs?**

**A.** Since July 1, 2012, all Oakland Fire Department stations, with the exception of Fire Station 22, located at Oakland Airport, have participated in the brown-out rotations. When a station houses both an Engine and Truck Company and the Engine Company is scheduled for brown-out rotation, the Truck Company will provide Advanced Life Support (ALS) medical aid and respond to all emergency calls within that district.

Since July 1, 2013, scheduled brownouts were reduced from two companies per day to one company per day. The brown-out is still conducted on a rotational basis impacting all fire stations with the exception of Fire Station 22, located at Oakland International Airport. Through a rotational basis, the each station or Engine Company is browned out for three days, or three 24 hour shifts.

**Q. How were the Stations chosen for brown-outs and what is the plan?**

**A.** Fire Companies are browned out on an equal rotating basis. The rotation was determined by the geographical location and high fire danger season. Geographically, station closures will be spread across the city to reduce the impact on any battalion and or geographical portion of the city. Only one company per battalion will be brown-out at a time. During high fire season, fire companies in the hills may fall out of the rotation but will pick up again outside of fire season.

Fire Stations housing both an Engine and Truck Company will not close during their rotational brownout period (three day or three 24 hour shifts). The station will not close but the Engine Company will be brown-out during their rotation period. The Truck Company will be staffed with appropriate personnel and equipment to provide Advanced Life Support or ALS medical service to their first in district. Fire Stations housing only one Engine Company will close during their rotation period.

**Q. Who will respond when a company is browned out and what will happen to response times?**

**A.** The closest, available Engine or Truck Company will respond to all emergency calls within a brown-out district. Seven (7) of our twenty-five (25) Fire Stations are two company stations (housing both an engine and truck company). When an Engine Company of a two company

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station is browned-out, the Truck Company will be in service and available to respond to emergency calls. The Fire Administration continues to monitor response times and the number of calls within the brown-out district and as such, adjustments are made as needed.

/s/

TERESA DELOACH REED

Fire Chief

For questions, please contact Chief Teresa Deloach Reed at 238-4050.

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