



City of
OAKLAND
California

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OFD Responds to Vegetation Management Audit

Oakland, CA – On Tuesday morning Oakland City Auditor Courtney Ruby released the results of an audit performed in cooperation with the Oakland Fire Department analyzing the City’s vegetation management inspections. This is a critical public safety service because reducing the fuel load mitigates the risk for wildfires in the Oakland hills. The Oakland Fire Department is committed to providing the highest level of service to residents and ensuring their safety, and welcomes the assistance of the City Auditor in identifying areas for improvement.

“I understand and welcome performance audits as they are a critical tool in evaluating our performance to ensure effective and efficient service delivery to our residents,” stated Fire Chief Teresa Deloach Reed.

During the period selected for the performance audit, there have been many changes within the Vegetation Management Unit. The audit only validated the issues that the Administration has been working to address, such as permanent staffing of the supervisory position, a more efficient contract bidding system, a cost recovery billing system, and a well-trained and dedicated inspection staff.

Prior to receiving the final audit recommendations, the Department had already started developing procedures to ensure inspections are completed and inspection forms are filled out correctly. The Department also began invoicing all non-compliant property owners for abatement costs incurred by the City. Beginning in January 2014, the noticing process for outstanding invoices will be automated. “Additionally, we are in the process of identifying the best method for contracting out the most common types of abatement services in an effort to streamline the process,” said Chief Reed.

It is important to note that budget cuts that have occurred over the years resulted in a significant decrease in staffing of the Unit, leaving only one full-time inspector, a supervisor, and three part-time inspectors, from what was once a full-time staff of five inspectors.

For more information contact Acting Assistant Fire Marshal Kim Catano at KCatano@oaklandnet.com or (510) 238-6559.

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