



Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR
November 3, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager
 Submitted by: David Sprague, Interim Fire Chief, Fire Department
 Subject: Fire Prevention Inspections Audit Status Report

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

On May 9, 2019 the City Auditor submitted a Fire Prevention Inspections audit report¹ to the City Council with recommendations to improve the overall fire prevention inspection program, improve customer service, and reduce the risk of fires and other emergencies that may fall within the jurisdiction of the fire code. The purpose of this information item is to update City Council on the status of implementation of the audit report's recommendations. This is the first status report regarding this audit.

BACKGROUND

The audit included eleven recommendations. Of these items, progress on the implementation or resolution of three of the recommendations was started shortly after the issuance of the report. Since the initial fire department response to the audit recommendations, the department has determined through further research, evaluation and the pursuit of a resolution for two of the recommendations that these two original recommendations should be dropped. These two recommendations involved technical modifications to, or work-arounds for the department's fire record management system software known as RedAlert. Of the nine remaining recommendations three are partly implemented, four have been started, and two have not been started. The two recommendations that have not been started require reliable data on both fire inspection workload and on resources available to deliver inspection services.

Significant programmatic and structural changes are occurring in the fire department which makes meaningful fire inspection workload and resource analysis impossible under the current circumstances for both the wildland and the built-environment. Changes currently being implemented within the department include a significant increase in fire prevention staffing, a changing picture of other fire department personnel that may or may not be available to support fire inspection activities, rapidly changing fire safety inspection mandates and priorities at both the local and State level,

¹ [Audit: Fire Prevention Inspections: Insufficient Resources Strain Code Compliance](#)

and an initiative to move away from an inefficient, paper-based inspection system to a more efficient digital inspection system using digital devices in the field.

Once the scope, nature and impact of these changes are clear, a proposal to reconfigure the fire inspection program can be formulated. Any proposed changes in the scope or frequency of the locally mandated fire inspection program should strive to maximize the positive impacts of the program given any limitations on the resources available to implement the program. As recommended in the audit, both a workload analysis and an analysis of short- and long-term impacts of potential modifications to the program would be a part of a proposal to modify the annual fire inspection program.

Please see Attachment 1 for a detailed table of audit report recommendations, correction action plans, and implementation progress. The next status report to Council is expected to be presented on May 9, 2023.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

There are no identifiable environmental effects or opportunities associated with the subject of this report.

CONTACT PERSON

Steven Riggs, Fire Marshal, Fire Department, (510)-981-3473.

Attachments:

1: Audit findings, Recommendations, and Status Updates

Fire Prevention Inspections: Insufficient Resources Strain Code Compliance

Finding	Recommendation Number	Recommendation	Issue Date	Department	Last Status	Current Status	Update
Fire Not Meeting Inspection Mandates; Extensive Code Requirements and Population Growth Impact Staffing Workload	1.1	Analyze the short- and long-term impact of putting forth a change to the Berkeley Municipal Code to reduce the types or frequency of fire prevention inspections.	5/9/2019	Fire	Not Started	Not Started	An analysis of the short- and long-term impacts of amending the Berkeley Municipal Code inspection mandate has been deferred due to significant programmatic and structural changes that are in progress within the fire department and impact inspection workload and resources.
Fire Not Meeting Inspection Mandates; Extensive Code Requirements and Population Growth Impact Staffing Workload	1.2	Perform a workload analysis to quantify the staff needed now and in the future to comply with the local fire prevention inspection requirements.	5/9/2019	Fire	Not Started	Started	Estimated Start date: July, 2023. Both inspection staff and the digital field equipment and software are still being put in place to begin generating inspector productivity data.
Fire Relies on Incomplete Data to Manage Inspections	2.1	Develop a process, in consultation with the Information Technology Department, for sharing information on property changes and additions between Fire and other City database platforms.	5/9/2019	Fire	Started	Dropped	The auditee has accepted the risk to the city that the recommendation is meant to address and is unable or unwilling to implement the recommendation. According to the department, they engaged with IT and the current software vendor and were unable to implement this recommendation. They have stated that if software replacement is pursued in the future, the software's capability to communicate with other COP software suites and the ability to automate the update of property ownership and other records will be considered for any candidate software.

<p>Fire Relies on Incomplete Data to Manage Inspections</p>	<p>2.2</p>	<p>Work with both the database's software vendor and the Information Technology Department to strengthen controls over the database, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Assessing the needs for required fields for processing an inspection, such as unit, shift, inspector name, address, violation details, and violation location. · Formatting drop down menus for inspection status, inspection type, and violation status. Formatting the options available for the violation code numbers and violation description fields. 	<p>5/9/2019</p>	<p>Fire</p>	<p>Not Started</p>	<p>Dropped</p>	<p>The auditee has accepted the risk to the city that the recommendation is meant to address and is unable or unwilling to implement the recommendation. According to the department, they engaged with IT and the current software vendor and determined that the benefits of implementing the recommendation within the current software would not outweigh the risks and limitations imposed by the recommendation.</p>
<p>Fire Staff Do Not Have Enough Support to Get Inspections Done</p>	<p>3.1</p>	<p>Coordinate work plans with Suppression for all mandated fire prevention inspections. These should take into consideration the volume and nature of the other work Suppression performs.</p>	<p>5/9/2019</p>	<p>Fire</p>	<p>Not Started</p>	<p>Started</p>	<p>Until the annual fire inspection program can be redesigned and revised to meet current and future goals and demands, the current coordination program remains valid for the current delivery model and program. It's anticipated that inspection staffing (Fire Prevention and Suppression) may have stabilized by June 2023 and work on this recommendation can proceed.</p>

<p>Fire Staff Do Not Have Enough Support to Get Inspections Done</p>	<p>3.2 Create a risk-assessment plan to identify those properties that are most at risk of a fire.</p>	<p>5/9/2019</p>	<p>Fire</p>	<p>Started</p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p>The fire department and our allied city agencies and stakeholders have begun the process of developing a Community Wildfire Prevention Plan. This is both a fire hazard and fire risk assessment program that conducts a comprehensive examination of the city's risk of wildfire. The initial CWPP project is expected to be Partly approved/adopted by Council in March of 2023. Estimated completion by June, 2023.</p>
<p>Fire Staff Do Not Have Enough Support to Get Inspections Done</p>	<p>3.3 Issue a General Order to the Department on the importance and necessity of performing fire prevention inspections.</p>	<p>5/9/2019</p>	<p>Fire</p>	<p>Not Started</p>	<p>Not Started</p>	<p>A rewrite of the fire department General Order detailing the conduct of the annual fire prevention inspection program will be conducted following a redesign of the annual fire inspection program in line with the current programmatic and structural changes occurring within the fire department. The current General Order which addresses the annual fire inspection program remains valid for the current delivery model and program.</p>
<p>Fire Staff Do Not Have Enough Support to Get Inspections Done</p>	<p>3.4 The Fire Marshal and Suppression Management jointly develop a communication plan between Fire Prevention and Suppression.</p>	<p>5/9/2019</p>	<p>Fire</p>	<p>Started</p>	<p>Started</p>	<p>Until the annual fire inspection program can be redesigned and revised to meet current and future goals and demands, the current coordination program remains valid for the current delivery model and program. It's anticipated that inspection staffing (Fire Prevention and Suppression) may have stabilized by June 2023 and work on this recommendation can proceed.</p>

<p>Fire Staff Do Not Have Enough Support to Get Inspections Done</p>	<p>Revise the fire prevention inspection training to provide hands-on training, using experienced Suppression staff, on how to conduct inspections and interact with residents and community members during inspections.</p>	<p>5/9/2019</p>	<p>Fire</p>	<p>Not Started</p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p>Fire inspection training for personnel engaged in defensible space inspections was completely redesigned and delivered this year. Fire Prevention staff periodically re-design the annual fire inspection training for Suppression companies. The new fire code adoption would be incorporated into Partly revised training near the start of the new fiscal year (July 2023).</p>
<p>Fire Staff Do Not Have Enough Support to Get Inspections Done</p>	<p>Develop and distribute educational information to property owners prior to the beginning of the inspection cycle to provide information on the fire prevention inspection program, common violations, and any upcoming inspections for that area of the City.</p>	<p>5/9/2019</p>	<p>Fire</p>	<p>Not Started</p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p>The 2022 calendar year was the second consecutive year that the fire department conducted direct outreach to, and the transmittal of educational materials to the entire population of Berkeley Fire Zones 2 and 3 regarding the expansion of our Defensible Space inspection program, wildfire hazards, defensible space requirements, and a message from the Fire Chief regarding the need to provide defensible space. The fire department is in the process of hiring a full-time employee as a Communications Specialist. July 2023 is the estimated start date to generate built-environment outreach materials in Partly conjunction with department's new Communications Specialist.</p>
<p>Fire Staff Do Not Have Enough Support to Get Inspections Done</p>	<p>Create a process for issuing, tracking, and following up on administrative citations for properties with repeat or high-risk violations, including revenue collections and tracking. That process should collaborate with other City work units that perform enforcement activities to provide consistency.</p>	<p>5/9/2019</p>	<p>Fire</p>	<p>Not Started</p>	<p>Started</p>	<p>During 2022 the fire department has initiated discussions with other COB stakeholder entities about standardizing the handling, tracking and processing of Administrative Citations.</p>