

# CITYGATE 2009 & 2015 REPORTS ON SLOCFD

From: Richard W. Ferris

To: City Leaders, Media and Concerned Citizens

Re: CityGate Associates Reports on SLOCFD

Here is a quick summary and a couple of quotes from the 3 reports I have so far.

- 2009 - "Fire Department Master Plan for the City of San Luis Obispo, CA, January 16, 2009
- 2015 - "Proposal to Perform update, February 2, 2015
- 2016 - Update (Fire Master Service Plan) June 8, 2016
  
- The reports are about obtaining average arrival coverage within 4 minutes (7 total) and an additional fire statistics to ensure that
  - There is a long term growth goal for the fire department to grow the department
- They had no intentions or ability to evaluate outcomes or effectiveness
- The consultants must exercise considerable caution to never overtly criticize the fire department that hires them or they will not be invited back. This also dovetails with existing fire department culture of never saying anything bad about another fireman; no matter what!
- I think the report shows how little the city is in touch with supervising the fire department, not how much on top of it they are. The City oversight is non-existent.

The negative recommendations in these reports were downplayed to avoid embarrassment, of the FD, but put in to avoid ethical lapses on the part of the consultants. These show serious issues at SLOCFD (San Luis Obispo City Fire Department) that the City staff still seems unaware of and is denying exists rather than acknowledging and dealing with the serious issues.

# 2009 Report

## Citygate Report Analysis

### No. 1) 2009 Report

Page 1 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph the consultants give the obligatory praise of the fire department that hired them.

Just a “tune-up” needed

Overall this report and those that follow start with the assumption that a 5<sup>th</sup> fire station is needed and this is part of the support to get a 5<sup>th</sup> station.

There is no evaluation of other options other than a 5<sup>th</sup> fire station.

The report is heavy on constrains put on by fiscal limitations, yet zero mention of the officially orchestrated milking of overtime by fire department leadership that doubles their pay.

### Finding #2 (2009 report)

*“The diversity, age and size of the City and Cal Poly building Stock and the increasing numbers of younger and older populations means that there is a greater chance of more serious fires where rescues will be necessary, and if so, the current quantity of firefighter staffing will be quickly overwhelmed with too many critical tasks to accomplish.”*

This means that the excessive overtime takes the place of additional firefighters the report says are needed. The excessive overtime speaks to lack of outright supervision.

I mention this to explain the tone and the timidity of the findings of the report. The report is also assumes the fact that they dispatch from the closest fire station, instead of from which station’s turn it is.

The report is also based on the “fact” that the quint unit (the big hook and ladder truck) is used as a quint instead of being used as only a ladder truck.

### Page: 21: Finding #1 (2009 Report)

*“The City does not have a fire deployment measure adopted by the City Council that includes a beginning time measure starting from the point of dispatch receiving the 911-phone call, and a goal statement tied to risks and outcome expectations. The deployment measure should have a second measurement statement to define multiple-unit response coverage for serious emergencies. Making these deployment goal changes will meet the best practice recommendations of the Center for Public Safety Excellence (formerly the Commission on Fire Accreditation International).”*

- This means that the city doesn’t actually know if the 4 minutes are real

- I believe they have now defined the start point of the time counting
- Goal statement tied to risk and outcomes - points out that no one is considering what actually happens at fires and if it is what the City and public expect. (still not actually done).
- Tied to risk and outcomes refers to actually fighting fires or not - this is as close as they can go to pointing out that there is no one watching the hen house.

Page 18-C4-27: “2.2 San Luis Obispo Community Outcome Expectations - What is Expected of the Fire Department” of the report says:

*“The next step in the Standards of Response Cover process is to review existing fire and emergency medical outcome expectations. This can be restated as follows: for what purpose does the current response system exist? Has the governing body adopted any response time performance measures? If so, the time measures used by the City need to be understood and good data collected.”*

*The community, if asked, would probably expect that fires be confined to the room or nearby area of fire origin, and that medical patients have their injuries stabilized and be transported to the appropriate care location. Thus, the challenge faced by the City is to maintain an equitable level of fire service deployment across the entire City service area without adding significantly more resources as demand for services grows and traffic congestion increases, slowing response times.”*

- This shows they are expected to go in and put out fires

Page25: “2.3.4 Desired Outcomes”

*“Once policy makers choose outcomes, then the response system can be designed with staffing and station locations to accomplish the desired outcomes. An outcome example is, ‘confine a residential fire to the room of origin.’ That outcome requires a more aggressive response time and staffing plan than ‘confine the fire to the building of origin, to keep it from spreading to adjoining structures.’*

*Given the Fire Department’s current response time goal and its Class 2 fire insurance classification rating, the City has, in effect, adopted a structure fire goal of deploying a significant force to building fires to contain the fire near the room, or compartment, of origin, if the fire is small to modest when first reported. By delivering paramedics via fire engines, the City has committed to a higher level of emergency medical care than the County Ambulance System can deliver by itself.”*

- The City has adopted one policy, SLOCFD leadership has adopted the opposite policy.

**Page 39: Huge limitations of SLOCFD and the study**

*“All measures then must be understood in the complete context of geography, risk, and actual number of calls for service that exceed the community’s performance measure. The Department’s response time performance must be compared to outcomes such as fire loss or medical cases and be contrasted to the community’s outcome expectations. A community could be well deployed and have poor outcomes, or the reverse. A balanced system will avoid such extremes and strive for equity of service within each category of risk.*

*Fire departments are required to report response statistics in a format published by the U.S. Fire Administration called the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). The private sector develops software to do this reporting according to state and federal specifications.*

*Data sets for this section of the study were extracted from the San Luis Obispo Police Dispatch Computer system. The Fire Department does **not** use an NFIRS compliant records system and only files abbreviated fire incident reports into the police system. The lack of NFIRS data is not only a major limitation to this study, it also means the Department cannot completely measure its emergency operations or completely respond to lawsuit information requests.”*

- This means that the reports are based on what SLOCFD gives them and they do not give as much as they should.

Page 48: *“Recommendation #4: The City needs to fund a fire records system that is National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) version 5 compliant.”*

**Additional Serious Limitation”**

- SLOCFD employs a dispatch system where trucks already out of the station are dispatched first. Trucks from the station *whose turn it is to be on call are used next*. This is not necessarily the closest station to the fire.
- The report assumes we dispatch from closest station every time. The City staff does not know the difference.
- *Recommendation #5*

- This could be accomplished with better management of unnecessary overtime.e

*“If, prior to the funding being available to operate a 5<sup>th</sup> fire station, the City had partial funding to increase the number of daily firefighters, it could do so by increasing Station 1 from 4 firefighters to 5 firefighters per day. This would allow either:*

**[?]** *A 3-person engine company to respond to medical emergencies and small fires, while the other two personnel would still cover a dedicated ladder truck and be able to respond to structure fires and technical rescue calls citywide where the crew could combine with an engine crew(s).*

**[?]** *Or, three personnel would staff an engine/ladder “quint” apparatus and two personnel would respond in a squad to downtown area medical emergencies.*

*Both of these staffing options require additional discussion with the firefighters’ representatives and making the decision on if the current “quint” should be replaced with a dedicated ladder truck.*

*When the City can add a 6<sup>th</sup> firefighter per day to Station 1, then split the crews into two 3-firefighter crews and open the 5<sup>th</sup> station.*

- *In a last phase, as funding allows at the build-out of the City, the City can increase the staffing at Station 1 on the pumper/ladder unit to 4 firefighters per day, which is a much more effective team to operate a ladder truck at a serious building fire.”*
- **Staffing Discussion:** Here the consultants point out a “Quint” unit” has 5 functions they are unaware that SLOCFD training and policy only uses 2 of the 5 functions of the “Quint” initially (ground and aerial ladders) They use the overhead master stream to put the fire out once the roof has collapsed. The consultant’s findings are based on inaccurate data given to them by SLOCFD leadership.

**Page 81: Under Training and Education We Find Hidden the following “Observations”**

- **“The Department culture appears not to be one that is sparked by either a strong desire to train or value following current best practices.**
- **Few of the engineers are certified driver/operations**
- **Only about half of the company officers and chief officers are certified by the OSFM**

- There is no participation in the National Fire Academy programs.”

The following “Recommendation” is interesting as well

“Recommendation #19:

*Page 82: 19.3 An increased focus on and participation in the essentials of firefighting, including multi-company drills, preplans followed by chalk talks on all target hazards, and in house drills focused on the basics.*

**“Focusing on the Basics”**

- This does not speak well as to their basic skills

“Section 5 - Recommended Solutions and Phasing Plan”

*Page 93: “Finding #1: The City does not have a fire deployment measure adopted by the City Council that includes a beginning time measure starting from the point of dispatch receiving the 911-phone call, and a goal statement tied to risks and outcome expectations. The deployment measure should have a second measurement statement to define multiple-unit response coverage for serious emergencies. Making these deployment goal changes will meet the best practice recommendations of the Center for Public Safety Excellence (formerly the Commission on Fire Accreditation International).”*

- Again the City has no idea of that the SLOCFD is doing!

*Page 94 & 95: “Recommendation #1 The City should adopt revised performance measures to direct fire station location planning and to monitor the operation of the Department. The measures should take into account a realistic company turnout time of 2 minutes and be designed to deliver outcomes that will save patients medically salvageable upon arrival; and to keep small, but serious fires from becoming greater alarm fires.”*

- More supervision is needed, faster response times needed and rushing in will keep fires small so more review of what happens at fires is needed.

*Page 100: “Recommendation #16: The Department should develop preplans for target buildings. While a process using google Earth or other similar process might eventually work well, a much simpler program, using the stock National Fire Academy format, could be started immediately. As part of its risk analysis, the Department self identified about 45 target hazard buildings;*

*this divides into about twelve per station or four per shift, a reasonable number of preplans to develop and maintain. This would provide responding companies with vital information about the target hazards before they arrive. Later on, when the Department acquires the technology, it could computerize the information in one of the many available formats.*

- Means they should do actual planning to fight fires instead of faking it. But since they do not intend to go inside, SLOCFD will ignore this advice.
- Again - planning to fight fires is what they should do, but don't do at all.

Page 100: *“Finding #19: The San Luis Obispo Fire Department does not have a pre-fire plan program. They have been giving consideration to developing a system incorporating Google Earth maps but have made no progress on the project”*

- Here to consultants say what we have been saying (no preplanning to fight fires)

*“Recommendation #16: The Department should develop preplans for target buildings. While a process using Google Earth or other similar process might eventually work well, a much simpler program, using the stock National Fire Academy format, could be started immediately. As part of its risk analysis, the Department self identified about 45 target hazard buildings; this divides into about twelve per station or four per shift, a very reasonable number of preplans to develop and maintain. This would provide responding companies with vital information about the target hazards before they arrive. Later on, when the Department acquires the technology, it could computerize the information in one of many available formats.”*

*“Recommendation #19: The training program needs on-going executive attention. The current training officer is off to a good start, but will probably be going to shift work by the time this report is complete. The executive attention needs to be focused on four essential areas:*

*19.1 A training records management system that provides exception reports on a shift basis so that the Fire Chief and shift Battalion Chiefs know who is training and, more importantly, who is not training.*

*19.2 A Department-wide commitment to certification at all levels from Firefighter I through Fire Chief. With the chiefs modeling the behavior expected of the rest of the Department, it would not take long before everyone was certified. This is particularly important at the Driver/Operator level.*

*19.3 An increased focus on and participation in the essentials of firefighting, including multi-company drills, preplans followed by chalk talks on all target hazards, and in house drills focused on the basics.*

*19.4 Referencing the source documents for training policy to current best practices. Doing this will ensure that the program and, more importantly, the Department is doing its best to ensure that the training received by firefighters meets or exceeds industry standards.”*

- *This echoes our claim they do not train or plan to fight fires as they should. They claimed otherwise to us.*

*Recommendation #19: The training program needs on-going executive attention. The current training officer is off to a good start, but will probably be going to shift work by the time this report is complete. The executive attention needs to be focused on four essential areas:*

- *19.1 A training records management system that provides exception reports on a shift basis so that the Fire Chief and shift Battalion Chiefs know who is training and, more importantly, who is not training.*
- *19.2 A Department-wide commitment to certification at all levels from Firefighter I through Fire Chief. With the chiefs modeling the behavior expected of the rest of the Department, it would not take long before everyone was certified. This is particularly important at the Driver/Operator level.*
- *19.3 An increased focus on and participation in the essentials of firefighting, including multi-company drills, preplans followed by chalk talks on all target hazards, and in house drills focused on the basics.*
- *19.4 Referencing the source documents for training policy to current best practices. Doing this will ensure that the program and, more importantly, the Department is doing its best to ensure that the training received by firefighters meets or exceeds industry standards.*
- *This says they do not train to current best practices or reference up to date practices and policies.*



- This says things are not good, especially 19.3! Focus on **Basics**.

# 2015 REPORT

## Part 2 CityGate 2016 Fire Services Master Plan Update

### Section 1 - Executive Summary

Scope: Again to support a 5<sup>th</sup> fire station based on dispatch times and arrival time statistics

No consideration of the excessive overtime will be analyzed

1.3 They state fire deployment is all about the **SPEED & WEIGHT** (size of force) of the attack. The consultants do not know SLOCFD does not do attacks. Also the speed is calculated based on arrival time not first water on the fire.

1.4 Consultants are not aware of the City's actual dispatch system of 1<sup>st</sup> the trucks that are already out of the station, then which ever station whose turn it is **instead** of the closest station which is what 100% of the consultant's report and recommendations are based on. They still took 9:58 on average in 2014.

***Page 4: "Finding #1: The City has not adopted a complete and best practices-based deployment measure or set of specialty response measures for all-risk emergency responses that includes the beginning time measure from the point of police dispatch receiving the 9-1-1 phone call, nor a goal statement tied to risks and outcome expectations. The deployment measure should have a second measurement statement to define multiple-unit response coverage for serious emergencies.***

*Making these deployment goal changes will meet the best practice recommendations of the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.”*

- This is essentially the same as from the 2009 report

Finding #7: The response time is worse than in the previous study

Finding #9: Turn out times are worse than previous study

**Page 6: “Recommendation #2: Adopt Updated, More Detailed Fire Service Deployment Measure Policies:**

*The City should incorporate performance measures into its financial plan to direct fire crew planning and to monitor the operation of the Department. The measures of time should be designed to save patients where medically possible and to keep small but serious fires from becoming greater alarm fires. With this in mind, Citygate recommends the following measures:*

*2.1 Distribution of Fire Stations: To treat medical patients and control small fires, the first-due fire unit should have a Total Response Time of seven minutes or less, 90% of the time. This equates to a one-minute Call Processing Time by the dispatch center, a two-minute fire crew Turnout Time, and a four-minute Travel Time.*

- 2.1 Says the City still too slow in responding

*2.2 Multiple-Unit Effective Response Force for Serious Emergencies: To confine fires near the room of origin, to stop wildland fires to under three acres when noticed promptly, and to treat up to five medical patients at once, a multiple-unit response of a minimum of three engines, one quint ladder truck, and one battalion chief (totaling 14 personnel) are dispatched to these serious emergencies. This Effective Response Force should have a Total Response Time of 11 minutes or less, 90% of the time. This equates to one-minute Call Processing Time, two minutes Turnout Time, and eight minutes Travel Time.*

- 2.2 Assumes the City uses the “Quint” truck as a “Quint” instead of a ladder truck only.

**Page 7: “Recommendation #3: The Police and Fire Department have to make meaningful improvements to Call Processing Time and Turnout Time.”**

- Says meaningful improvements need to be made in call processing and turnout time.

**“Recommendation #4:** Implement revenue-generating option(s) sufficient to cover initial and ongoing funding gaps to add a fire station in the southern City area

equipped with one fire engine and a three-person crew.”

- Revenue generating options only, no considerations of better use of personnel and less overtime for financial gain.

### **Section 3 – Goals/Measures and Risk Assessment**

- 3.1.1 – Again states the City has no firm standards of performance

**Page 16:** *“Finding #1: The City has not adopted a complete and best practices-based deployment measure or set of specialty response measures for all-risk emergency responses that includes the beginning time measure from the point of police dispatch receiving the 9-1-1 phone call, nor a goal statement tied to risks and outcome expectations. The deployment measure should have a second measurement statement to define multiple-unit response coverage for serious emergencies. Making these deployment goal changes will meet the best practice recommendations of the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.”*

- Still no system to measure risks and outcome
- 3.2.2 Prior Risk Studies – No improvement from 2009 study only to review the risk connected with additional growth and development – not actual SLOCFD performance.
- 3.3.1 Consultants fail to accurately note SLOCFD’s “Quint” engine is actually operated as a ladder truck only.

### **Section 5 – Statistics Analysis**

**Page 38:** **“Finding #6:** The Department’s Total Response Time is significantly longer than a Citygate and best practices-based recommendation of 7:00 minutes/seconds. This is due to a combination of slow Call Processing and Turnout Times combined with long Travel Times from only four fire stations.

**Finding #7:** The Department’s Total Response Time has decayed 58 seconds since the previous master plan study data review from Fiscal Year 07/08. Most of this slower performance is due to more incidents with longer Travel Times offset by a slight improvement in Call Processing Time.”

**Page 40:** *“Finding #9: The City’s Turnout Times are consistently over two minutes from station to station, and have eroded since the prior master plan for a Citygate recommendation of two minutes.”*

### **Section 7 – Overall Evaluation and Recommendation**

## 7.1:

*“While the volume and response times to EMS incidents consume much of the City’s attention, Citygate reminds readers that the word “fire” is in the agency’s name and that all communities need a “stand-by and readily available” firefighting force for when fires break out. The Fire Department does not provide ambulance care and, even if it did, would still require resources in addition to EMS hourly demand for an effective response to emerging serious fires.”*

**Page 48: “Recommendation #2: Adopt Updated, More Detailed Fire Service Deployment Measure Policies:** *The City should incorporate performance measures into its financial plan to direct fire crew planning and to monitor the operation of the Department. The measures of time should be designed to save patients where medically possible and to keep small but serious fires from becoming greater alarm fires. With this in mind, Citygate recommends the following measures:”*

**Page 50: “Recommendation #3:** *The Police and Fire Department have to make meaningful improvements to Call Processing Time and Turnout Time.*

**Page 50: “Recommendation #4:** *Implement revenue-generating option(s) sufficient to cover initial and ongoing funding gaps to add a fire station in the southern City area equipped with one fire engine and a three-person crew.”*

- There should have been a discussion of overtime in this section, but there is not!