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Fire Department Partnership Will Improve Response Efficiency

March 6, 2018 By Kayla Anderson — [Leave a Comment](#)

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection (TMFPD) and Sparks Fire departments came together last week to announce its new Enhanced Automatic Aid process, a new system that improves efficiency of resources when responding to emergency situations.

As the first of its kind in this region, this integrated partnership enhances the dispatching process by sending the single closest fire engine to a 911 call, regardless of boundary lines or jurisdiction of either agency.

Before this announcement, in some cases the closest fire engine would respond to a call as well as the area's corresponding agency, sending two fire trucks instead of one. Since both TMFPD and Sparks Fire respond to all kinds of emergencies other than just fires, sending out two trucks when there could've only been one limits the number of available fire trucks during simultaneous calls.

"Roughly 80 percent of our calls are medical emergencies, while less than four percent of our calls are related to fires. This innovative approach will keep the second engine available to respond to the next 911 call, rather than being out of service simply due to a jurisdictional boundary," says Sparks Fire Chief Chris Maples.

The two agencies are still both responding to structure and brush fires with all automatic and mutual aid, but previously both agencies responded to even the most minor EMS calls and have been trying to figure out ways to reduce its level of response. By providing a single resource, fire trucks remain available for other emergencies happening at the same time and also reduces wear and tear on the vehicles.

The labor unions and both fire chiefs knew there had to be a better solution and decided to move forward in implementing this new program.

"We've come to a new agreement that's enhancing automatic aid," says TMFPD Fire Chief Charles Moore. "This ensures better response in very much of a collaborative effort between Truckee



John Byrne/Tribune

A new Enhanced Automatic Aid agreement between Sparks Fire and Truckee Meadows Fire Protection Department will expedite the response process by sending the single closest fire engine to a call regardless of boundary lines or jurisdiction of either agency.



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Meadows and Sparks. This is a win-win for both agencies to improve efficiency. Before we did this, the closest fire truck responded and then the agencies so at least two fire trucks arrived on scene.

There's a risk for firefighters as well as citizens every time you put a fire engine on the road. It causes a lot of wear and tear. Trucks are very expensive to run and operate per mile. It costs half a million dollars for a new fire truck and equipment, so we want them to last as long as possible. It only makes sense to be as efficient as we can with their use," Moore says.

Moore is also hoping that the success of the collaboration will help create a unified dispatch center and better use of Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) technology.

"With AVL technology there is GPS on every fire engine and ambulance, so it automatically chooses who responds. The software matches the location of the fire truck and dispatches them quickly. We all want to take steps to improve our dispatch, particularly in areas with common boundaries. Our dispatchers do an amazing job and we're very proud of them, but we want to leverage that technology to make the system even better," he says.

Under the new Enhanced Automatic Aid agreement, Sparks Fire will be responding to emergencies south of Los Altos Parkway and Wedekind Road near Wildcreek Golf Course while TMFPD will be responding to emergencies north of Los Altos Parkway (along Pyramid Highway) and in the Wingfield Springs area.

"The City of Sparks has been a fantastic partner to work with and our relationship is one I enjoy every day. We've proved what regionalization can look like where jurisdiction autonomy can be maintained. This type of collaboration is logical and necessary in order to provide the most efficient service to our citizens," says Moore.

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