

# Fresno city, county firefighting agencies hope to speed up response times

By George  
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Fresno city and county fire agencies Thursday established an agreement intended to improve response times regardless of jurisdictional boundaries.

The agreement calls for the closest available apparatus to go to an emergency for fire protection and emergency medical response. Mark Johnson of Fresno County Fire called the accord “a great opportunity to do what is best for the people and everyone involved.”

The Fresno City Council approved the deal on Thursday. City officials said it’s the first automatic aid agreement between the two agencies in nine years.

The two agencies already have a mutual aid agreement. The downside is it requires an agency to specifically ask for help. That may take only seconds in this world of super-fast communications. But, the chiefs emphasized, seconds count in an emergency with potentially life-or-death consequences.

“People who call us don’t care what badge is there,” Donis said. “They just want people to show up quickly to manage their emergency situation. That’s what we’re there to do — to serve.”

Donis said the deal figures to most significantly affect service along the city-county borders in the southwest, southeast and northeast. Everyone at the news conference proceeded carefully when asked why such a worthy idea lay dormant for nearly a decade. The consensus: New leadership is in the house.

In other action, the council:

-- Agreed to a study that will help update the city’s system of development impact fees. It was about a decade ago that city officials decided they needed a new way to compute charges to developers in the course of growth. City Hall’s theme for 40 years has been that growth, ever hungry for infrastructure, should pay its fair share. Urban growth management fees gave way to development impact fees. It’s time to make the latter conform to the new 2035 general plan, staff said.

-- Adopted a policy for handling requests made under the state Public Records Act. Each city department will designate an in-house Public Records Act coordinator. This person will coordinate and respond to requests that overlap divisions within the department. The aim, according to a staff report, is to streamline and standardize the response process.

-- Adjourned the meeting in memory of entrepreneur/civic leader Earl Smittcamp, who died Monday at age 96. Council President Steve Brandau said Smittcamp “was a great pioneer in this community.”

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