

**CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW RESPONSE TO
THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
2019-2020 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT,
“WHY AREN’T THERE MORE FEMALE FIREFIGHTERS IN
SANTA CLARA COUNTY?”**

Finding 1b: Recruitment

Mountain View Fire Department has made specific efforts to recruit female firefighters since 2015, resulting in a 5 percent increase over the last five years. Today, with 10 percent female firefighting staff, the CGJ applauds their efforts.

The City agrees with this finding. The Mountain View Fire Department (MVFD) and the Human Resources Department have been proactively engaged in casting a wide net to reach a broad range of applicants for the recruitment of entry-level firefighters, which has resulted in an increase in the hiring of a diverse group of firefighters, including female recruits.

Recommendation 1

Palo Alto, Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District, and San Jose Fire Departments should develop, fund, and implement a plan to increase recruiting efforts to grow their number of female firefighters. Individual plans should be developed by June 2021.

The Grand Jury’s report lists this recommendation as requiring a response from the City of Mountain View; however, this recommendation is not applicable to Mountain View. As noted in the report itself, Mountain View has already implemented this recommendation.

Finding 2: Mentoring

Talent and knowledge are lost or wasted if organizations do not create a mentoring program. Mentoring potential recruits and firefighters currently is voluntary, loosely defined, and unpaid, which hampers recruiting efforts in the SCC Region.

The City agrees with this finding. Prior to this Grand Jury Report, the MVFD embarked in a mentoring program for entry-level recruits through its recruitment efforts and for current firefighters through its “Career Development Guide.”

Recommendation 2

Fire departments in the SCC Region should develop, fund, and implement mentoring programs. Mentors should advise and guide potential recruits, new recruits, and current firefighters.

Mentoring programs should include visits to local schools and organizations to demonstrate encouragement of female candidates. Individual plans should be developed by June 2021 by Mountain View, Palo Alto, Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District, and San José Fire Departments.

Recommendation has been implemented. Prior to the publication of the Grand Jury report, the MVFD had already established as part of its recruitment efforts a mentoring program with identified mentors assigned to visit local schools, organizations, and recruitment fairs in an effort to recruit a diverse pool of entry-level applicants inclusive of women. In addition, the MVFD has an established “Career Development Guide,” which provides mentoring for all of its members.

Finding 3: Opportunity for Promotion

Although there is an insufficient pool of women firefighters, the SCC Region fire departments are promoting women to management positions.

No Recommendation

The City agrees with this finding. The MVFD is committed to the continued advancement and promotion of its female firefighters. Most recently, the MVFD promoted a female firefighter to Fire Engineer and, in recent years, has had two women promoted, one to Captain and another to Fire Engineer.

Finding 4a: Accommodations

There is a lack of gender-separate accommodations for bathing, sleeping, and dressing in fire stations in the Mountain View Fire Department, Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District, and San José Fire Department, which can cause privacy concerns for all firefighters.

The City disagrees related to the City of Mountain View Fire Stations. The MVFD provides separate bathing, sleeping, and dressing areas for men and women. All of our fire stations have accommodations that provide for privacy. Most recently, the City’s Public Works Department designed a remodel of Fire Station No. 4 with the specific purpose of providing additional privacy for women’s restrooms and showers as well as increasing capacity of those facilities, with construction planned to begin in 2021. The following is a breakdown of the current MVFD Fire Stations’ gender accommodations:

Fire Station No. 1: Separate showers, restrooms, and locker room for female firefighters, and 11 two-bed rooms that are assigned by gender when female and male firefighters are on duty.

Fire Station No. 2: Individual showers, restrooms, and locker room for all members. Separate dormitory rooms that are assigned by gender when female and male firefighters are on duty.

Fire Station No. 3: Private showers and restrooms for all on duty members. Dividers in dormitory room for privacy.

Fire Station No. 4: Private showers and restrooms for all members. Dividers in dormitory room for privacy. A remodel to expand female firefighter restroom facilities and lockers has been designed and is planned to start construction in 2021.

Fire Station No. 5: Four dormitory rooms, each with its own shower, restroom, and lockers, that are assigned by gender when female and male firefighters are on duty.

Recommendation 4a

Because Mountain View Fire Department has no separate dorms for women in its five fire stations, the City of Mountain View should develop a plan to create separate dorms in all fire stations for women to provide better privacy for all firefighters. This plan should be developed by June 2021.

Recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable. As listed above, Fire Station Nos. 1, 2, and 5 have multiple dormitory rooms that can be assigned by gender. Although Fire Station Nos. 3 and 4 have only one dormitory room, dividers have been installed for privacy. The recommendation is not reasonable because Fire Station Nos. 3 and 4 cannot be remodeled to provide separate dormitory rooms due to lack of space available in the buildings and on the property. The City will provide for separate sleeping accommodations in any new fire stations built and for Fire Station Nos. 3 and 4 should an opportunity and funding become available to reconstruct these stations into multi-story buildings.

Finding 5: Work Environment

Although every SCC Region entity has a nondiscrimination policy, the unique work setting of a fire department coupled with the low number of women in fire service presents out-of-the ordinary workplace challenges because they live together and rely on each other during life-or-death situations. These unique features of this workplace make it more challenging for women to report discrimination and/or harassment.

The City of Mountain View partially agrees with this finding. The City continuously conducts extensive outreach and training to all City personnel on discrimination and harassment prevention policies and reporting procedures. Employees and supervisors are trained upon hire and, if applicable, promotion to supervisory level and then every two years thereafter. Employees are able to report incidents to City employees outside

of their department, including to the Human Resources Department. The City is committed to a workplace free of harassment and discrimination for all employees, investigates and responds to reports of discrimination and harassment from Fire Department employees in a timely manner, and takes appropriate preventive or corrective action.

Recommendation 5

To address the unique challenges of promoting a gender-inclusive work culture for women in the setting of a fire department, each fire department in the SCC Region should develop city- or county-approved plans that focus on the remedies to the challenges of the fire service workplace for women. These plans should be developed by the Mountain View Fire Department, Palo Alto Fire Department, Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District, and San José Fire Department by June 2021.

Recommendation has been implemented. The City complied with this recommendation prior to the Grand Jury report. In August 10, 2018, the MVFD established a “Privacy Committee” that evaluates the working conditions at each fire station and, in January 2019, established a written “Privacy Manual” that addresses policies to provide for privacy for all of its members. Furthermore, in 2015, MVFD established “The Mountain View Way” (MVW), a policy manual which provides a direction on how members are to work and interact with one another. Proactively, the MVFD conducted a series of meetings with all members in which input was provided in reviewing its mission statement and core values, and a new vision was created. Through this process, the firefighters identified values of accepting each other as individuals and as members of one team by embracing and valuing differences regardless of gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Each member defined the meaning of the organization’s core values of “Provide Exceptional Service,” “Act with Integrity,” and “Treat Others with Respect,” and the values of each as it applies to the members. The guiding principles of Caring, Integrity, Dedication, Fiscal Responsibility, Positive Work Environment, and Teamwork were extensively reviewed. This internal assessment also defined the “Interactions Agreements” to each of these guiding principles, which culminated in the creation of the MVW. As part of this policy, each new member hired is trained on this policy. As a result of these efforts, the MVFD is a proud, modern, and progressive fire department that has addressed the unique challenges female firefighters face culminating in a gender-inclusive work culture.

Finding 6: Gear

Due to ill-fitting uniforms and gear, women are not on a similar footing as their male counterparts. Women should feel secure in their everyday uniforms and formal wear and, for safety reasons, have properly fitting gear when engaged in firefighting.

The City agrees with this finding. The MVFD has been procuring and fitting clothing and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that is designed for use by women only.

Recommendation 6

All fire departments in the SCC Region should make correctly fitting uniforms for women available and ensure that a sufficient supply of firefighting and specialty gear is available in women's sizes at the time they begin work. This plan for procurement should be implemented by June 2021 by Mountain View Fire Department, Palo Alto Fire Department, Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District, and San José Fire Department.

Recommendation has been implemented. Prior to the new employee arriving at the station, they meet with the City's contracted uniform company and are measured for their uniform and equipment. This outside contractor has an inventory of uniforms for both men and women. The MVFD-provided equipment and uniforms include the daily use uniform, Class A formal, firefighting turnouts, and other protective gear.