

2017-2018 BUDGET QUESTION
Response to Request for Information

DEPARTMENT: Austin Fire Department

REQUEST NO.: 10

REQUESTED BY: Adler

DATE REQUESTED: 2/17/17

DATE POSTED: 3/6/17

REQUEST: What is the Austin Fire Department (AFD) equivalent to the Emergency Medical Services Department's (EMS) use of motorcycles? Are there instances where responding to a call with a fire apparatus with four-person staffing might not require that level of staffing or vehicle size? Would utilizing a smaller vehicle and fewer staff responding to certain types of lower priority calls be an effective deployment method? Would this have any cost savings or allow AFD greater flexibility for other response opportunities?

RESPONSE:

During high traffic events in the downtown corridor, AFD uses a response model that is similar to EMS. AFD uses All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) or medium duty pick-up trucks staffed with two firefighters during events like SXSW. This deployment model is more effective than sending a large apparatus like an engine into a highly congested area. AFD's model uses these resources in addition to the existing staffing at stations required to provide an effective firefighting force on major incidents. While there are some savings for the deployment model in that it reduces wear and tear on the larger apparatus, it is difficult to provide measurable statistics on the overall impact.

AFD is currently in discussion with EMS and the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) to develop a similar response model to address service calls from the downtown homeless population. AFD could effectively staff a smaller unit (ATV or light duty truck) and provide a two-person crew to respond to low priority medical calls in the blocks immediately around the Salvation Army and the ARCH. The AFD crew would include an EMS Paramedic and they would triage and treat the homeless at the scene. This would reduce the number of instances that an ambulance and/or fire engine were committed on these low priority calls, while providing improved service to the homeless population in the immediate area. Again, this may not result in cost savings, but it would likely be cost neutral.