



City of Gilroy

7351 Rosanna Street
Gilroy, California
95020-6141

Telephone (408) 846-0254
Fax (408) 846-0500

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From: Joe Kline
Public Information Officer

Contact: Tom Haglund,
City Administrator
408-846-0202

CITY TO BROWN OUT SUNRISE FIRE STATION ON TEMPORARY BASIS EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 1, 2009

The city of Gilroy will be instituting a cost control measure in its fire department called a "Brownout." The Brownout will affect the Sunrise Fire Station at 880 Sunrise Boulevard.

What is a Brownout?

Brown outs are a term used in the fire service to identify the temporary closure of a fire station usually as a cost control measure. Many California cities, as well as other cities across the country, have undertaken brown outs as a means of controlling personnel costs during periods of unusual economic downturn. Earlier this year the city of Gilroy and the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 2805 ("Local 2805") which represents fire fighters in Gilroy reached agreement on concessions designed to reduce personnel costs in the fire service. The agreement with Local 2805 acknowledges that the Sunrise Fire Station may be browned out as a means of controlling costs.

When will Brownouts of Sunrise Occur?

Brownouts of Sunrise will occur when there is a staffing vacancy at either Chestnut or Las Animas fire stations, or both, due to illness, or discretionary leave that takes either station(s) below the minimum apparatus staffing of 4 personnel on an engine. Sunrise is presently staffed with either two or three firefighters. In the case of a vacancy at another station the Sunrise staff will be redeployed to that station to cover the vacancy thus resulting in Sunrise's closure for that day or period of time that the vacancy exists. By contrast there will likely be periods of time based on scheduling that Sunrise may fully operate as a three person engine company or two person medic facility. Brownouts are to be contrasted with a Blackout which is the total closure of a station. Blackouts are not occurring in Gilroy.

Why Was Sunrise Identified for Brownouts?

The possibility of the Sunrise Fire Station brownout scenario followed two substantial cost cutting efforts undertaken by the city. The first, in November/December 2008,

resulted in the layoff of 4 firefighters and the elimination of two additional vacant positions (total 6 firefighters), resulting in the operation of Sunrise as primarily a two person medical response unit, but with periods of time in which it also operated as a three person engine company. The second cost cutting effort took place this past spring when the city and Local 2805 reached a “concession agreement” for further personnel cost reductions including furloughs. The concession agreement to which Local 2805 agreed acknowledges that the implementation of the cost cutting measures may require the brownout of Sunrise. The concession agreement may be found at:

http://www.cityofgilroy.org/cityofgilroy/city_hall/human_resources/mou/default.aspx.

What is the Sunrise Call Volume?

The Sunrise Fire Stations call volume is significantly less than that of the other two fire stations in Gilroy. The table below identifies the approximate calendar year 2008 call volume at the city’s fire stations:

Fire Station	Total Calls	Medical Calls
Las Animas	1,647	1,010
Chestnut	1,586	850
Sunrise	343	198

Sunrise’s call volume is substantially less than that of the other stations and is approximately 350 per year. It is this significantly lowered call volume that leads to the use of temporary brownouts of Sunrise as the most efficient means of implementing a brownout as needed.

Will the Sunrise District Receive Fire Response?

Yes, the Las Animas fire station will respond to calls in the Sunrise district during periods of any Sunrise Fire Station Brownout although the response time may be somewhat longer.

Can Brownouts be Avoided?

Although Local 2805 has previously rejected the idea, one way to avoid brownouts is for Local 2805 to agree to a lower level of apparatus staffing at Las Animas and Chestnut Fire Stations from a minimum of four (4) personnel on an engine to a minimum of three (3) on an engine during the period of the concession agreement. Doing so means Sunrise would likely remain open at all times for two person medical response or possibly a three person engine company.

Do other Cities Require 4 Personnel on an Engine?

San Jose and Gilroy are the only Santa Clara County cities to have agreements requiring four (4) personnel per engine. The Santa Clara County Fire Department which provides service the cities of Morgan Hill, Campbell, Cupertino and Los Gatos operates with three (3) personnel per engine. The personnel required to maintain Gilroy’s 4 on an engine requirement (as opposed to 3) costs approximately one million dollars per year.

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