

## 4.3 Fire Protection

### 4.3.1 Infrastructure Needs or Deficiencies

#### Performance Standard

The City of Holtville Fire Department is responsible for providing all fire protection and emergency medical aid to the City. Performance standards for fire services are defined in terms of response times of Department personnel to fire and medical emergency calls. The adopted response times for daylight and paid call personnel are five minutes or less. All medical units shall respond with at least two personnel at all times; all fire units shall respond with at least three personnel at all times

#### Inventory of Existing Facilities and Personnel

The Fire Department operates out of one fire station located at 549 Fern Avenue and provides the City of Holtville with full fire protection, emergency medical services, enforcement of codes, and other related items.

The Fire Department has the following equipment:

- 2 Utility vehicles (pick-up trucks)
- 3 Fire engines (city-owned; none are reserve)
- 1 Fire engine (county-owned; none are reserve)
- 1 Rescue squad

The current Fire Department staffing level is as follows:

- Full-time Fire Chief (1)
- Full-time Fire Lieutenant (1)
- Full-time Fire Fighters (1)
- Part-time Fire Prevention Officer (1)
- Part-time Officer Coordinator (1)
- Paid-call Fire Fighters (24)

All employees are fully trained firefighters and five (5) firefighters are Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT II's).

#### Inventory of Approved Facilities/Personnel

While no facilities/services are formally approved, the City is seeking funding for a public safety building that would combine law enforcement and fire protection services in one building, centrally located in Holtville. The project, which was originally estimated to cost \$3 million, came in during the bid process at \$4.9 million.

Adequate staffing to meet the existing need would be three full-time firefighters on each 24-hour shift (three shifts), or nine full-time personnel. Currently, the Department has only three full-time personnel.

In addition, the City's 24 paid-call fire fighters are equal to the budgeted total for Fiscal Year 2006-2007 as provided below.

For Fiscal Year 2006-07, the approved staff level is the same as last year's levels and as follows:

- Full-time Fire Chief (1)
- Full-time Fire Lieutenant (1)
- Full-time Fire Fighters (1)
- Part-time Fire Prevention Officer (1)
- Part-time Officer Coordinator (1)
- Paid-call Fire Fighters (24)

#### Year 2020 Demand Facilities and Personnel

To maintain the existing fire standards, the Year 2020 demand would require a new pumper (i.e., fire engine which carries water tanks and hoses) and a building to house it. A new pumper with a 1500 gallon per minute (GPM) capacity would bring the City to a current required fire flow capability. The Year 2020 demand would also require approximately 5-7 additional paid-call firefighters. As demand for service rises, more full time firefighters will need to be added with paid-call firefighters in a supporting role.

In addition to the current deficiency of seven paid-call reserve firefighters, 5-7 additional fire fighters would be required to mitigate the Year 2020 demand for fire protection and maintain existing performance standards.

The City is seeking funding for a public safety building that would combine law enforcement and fire protection services in one building, centrally located in Holtville. The project, which was originally estimated to cost \$3 million, came in during the bid process at \$4.9 million. The existing fire station at 549 Fern Avenue can adequately service the SOI and relocation to a new public safety building should not affect fire department response time. The phasing schedule will relate to obtaining grants and funding, and approval of City Council.

### 4.3.2 Financing Constraints and Opportunities

All fire services are financed with revenues from the City's General Fund. In Fiscal Year 2004-2005, the City budgeted approximately \$340,000 for the Fire Department and allocated \$89,000 to maintain a contract with Imperial County to provide fire protection services in the City's sphere of influence. The County's contract is renegotiated annually.

The City charges development impact fees to new development to help defray the cost of growth. Fees are charged on a per-unit or square footage basis by land use type (**Table 4.3-1**).

Development impact fees charged to new development are necessary to offset the costs incurred by the Fire Department to serve new development. The City's fee schedule reflects the different costs associated with different land uses. In the past, development impact fees were not frequently reviewed. The City plans to review development impact fees annually beginning FY 2005-2006.

Additional sources of revenue for fire protection facilities include general taxes (i.e., property, sales, use, business license, utility user's transient occupancy, etc.), parcel tax, motor vehicle license fee, benefit assessment and development impact fees and exactions. Mello-Roos community facilities taxes, parcel taxes, special taxes for fire services, and other benefit assessments are other financing opportunities.

As the City expands through annexation, development project applicants will be required to evaluate their project's fiscal impact on existing and future public safety services. Mitigation for these fiscal impacts will be determined on a case by case basis and may include increased development impact fees, general fund revenue, and other funding sources.

Table 4.3-1  
Development Impact Fee Schedule  
Fire Department

Land Use	Fees
<i>Residential (per dwelling unit)</i>	
Single-family/duplex	\$204
Multifamily	\$150
Mobile Home	\$156
<i>Non-residential (per 1,000 square feet)</i>	
Retail	\$108
Restaurants	
Sit-down	\$108
Fast food	\$108
Motel (per room)	\$108
Laundromat	\$108
Office	\$198
General industrial	\$48
Water-intensive industrial	\$48

Source: City of Holtville, 2004.

### 4.3.3 Cost Avoidance Opportunities

The City relies extensively on paid-call firefighters. Paid-call firefighters are non-employee firefighters who make themselves available on an on-call basis to respond to fire department calls. At present, the Department maintains a list of 17 people that may be called upon and who may or may not respond. Firefighters who do respond are paid per call out of a lump sum of money set aside by the City. Paid-call firefighters get a portion of that sum at the end of each month depending upon how many calls they responded to. The amount of money spent by the Department to pay these firefighters remains constant each month, as they are paid a percentage of the available funds, as opposed to a set amount of money per call. Paid-call funds are derived from the City's General Fund.

The Imperial Valley Fire Service and Rescue Mutual Aid Plan provides for the systematic mobilization of fire and rescue resources within the Imperial County and the City of Yuma. The following agencies participate in the plan: Brawley Fire Department, Calexico Fire Department, Calipatria Fire Department, Calipatria Prison Fire Department, Centinela State Prison Fire Department, El Centro Fire

Department, Holtville Fire Department, Imperial Fire Department, Imperial County Fire Department, Naval Air Facility Fire Department, Niland Fire Department, Imperial County Public Health Department, Salton Community Services District, Ocotillo Fire Department, Westmorland Fire Department, Salton Sea Beach, Yuma Fire Department, Winterhaven Fire Department, Yuma Marine Corps Air Station, and BORSTAR (El Centro Sector). Holtville's participation in this Mutual Aid Plan avoids the cost of direct provision of full fire protection services required for large-scale and rare emergencies.

The consolidation of Police and Fire Services in one building would benefit both departments in that both would save money on utilities and building maintenance; both would be located in OSHA-approved and handicapped accessible facilities; and the two departments would be able to communicate and coordinate with one another more freely. In addition, the Holtville Police Department provides dispatch services for the Fire Department; representing another cost savings to the City.

#### 4.3.4 Opportunities for Rate Restructuring

The Holtville Fire Department is currently working on a fee schedule for fire prevention services and wants to add EMT II-level service to EMS fees.

#### 4.3.5 Opportunities for Shared Facilities

The Holtville Fire Department shares the old fire station with Gold Cross Ambulance Service. The construction of a public safety building that would combine law enforcement and fire protection services in one building would provide a combined facility for law enforcement and fire protection services. Lack of funds prevents the City from implementing this planned project. The long-term savings and operational efficiency of a combined public safety center would outweigh the initial costs involved with the project.