



# THE CITY OF MONTEREY

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **CITY OF MONTEREY RESPONDS TO 2024 MONTEREY COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT ON THE MONTEREY FIRE DEPARTMENT**


Monterey, Calif. – The Monterey County Civil Grand Jury released a report titled: “Monterey Fire Department: Overdue for Overhaul.” The City of Monterey appreciates the Civil Grand Jury’s work on this report; however, the report contains inaccurate information and misguided statements. For the past six months, and prior to yesterday’s release of the Civil Grand Jury’s report, the Monterey Fire Department has resolved and is addressing many of the issues mentioned in the Civil Grand Jury Report. Prior to the release of the report, the City strongly encouraged the Civil Grand Jury to consider updating the report to reflect the implemented measures and current state of the Fire Department. Nevertheless, the Civil Grand Jury decided to release a report that is outdated and that does not reflect the substantial work that has been completed by the dedicated Monterey Fire Department team in the past six months.

The Civil Grand Jury gives the City of Monterey 90 days from the date of publication to prepare a written response. The City’s response will address findings and recommendations the City believes are inaccurate or not warranted, as well as the findings which the City agrees with.

Monterey Fire Chief Andrew Miller explains, “Together with our elected officials, staff, labor, and firefighters, we had recognized the issues contained in this report several months ago.” He added, “Several of the items of concern are either resolved, in-progress, or in the planning phase.”

The Civil Grand Jury’s report rightfully noted the need to update the Fire Department’s infrastructure, including fire stations, apparatus, and communications. The City’s fire stations

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have not been renovated since they were first built over sixty years ago. The City's Central Fire Station (Station 11) was built in 1959, New Monterey Fire Station (Station 12) was built in 1951, and Villa Del Monte Fire Station (Station 13) was built in 1951. Earlier this year, Monterey's City Manager addressed the need to rehabilitate the Fire Stations during his State of the City Address. The need to update the City's aging infrastructure, including fire stations and community centers, is now also evident from the Civil Grand Jury report. One source of City revenue which remains stable is the City's revered Neighborhood and Community Improvement Program (NCIP), which designates 16% of hotel tax revenue for neighborhood and community-wide projects. Among the several proposed projects for the NCIP in Fiscal Year 2025 are rehabilitation projects for Fire Station 12 and Fire Station 13 for a combined cost of \$2.25 million. The City appreciates this aspect of their report.

The Civil Grand Jury's report grossly ignores and lacks acknowledgment of the City of Monterey's investment in fire apparatus. Over the past four years, the City has invested nearly \$5 million into new fire engines, ladder trucks, and rescue vehicles. Data and analysis from the Civil Grand Jury's report on the City's fire apparatus and vehicles is largely inaccurate, particularly the statement that the City only has two vehicles in service that are less than five years old. The City's recent purchases include one new wildland engine (received in 2021, purchased for \$410,000), two new fire engines (received in 2021 at a cost of \$1.4 million), one new Heavy Rescue Fire vehicle (received in 2024 at a cost of \$240,000), one new fire tiller ladder truck (ordered in 2022 at a cost of \$1.72 million), and an additional new fire engine (ordered in 2024 for \$980,000). These investments total over \$4.75 million. Other investments made by the City include mobile data computers, mobile tablets for paramedics, and more. The City has funded and initiated updating the City's fire station alerting systems.

Improved staff morale, mental health, and operations continues to be a significant focus for the Monterey Fire Department. The Civil Grand Jury Report claims that fire stations do not have posted information about post-traumatic stress counseling options, there is no Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Policy, and there is no After Action Report process in place. The Fire Department has already implemented practices above and beyond the Civil Grand Jury's recommendations. Individual and confidential post-traumatic stress counseling from a specially trained Licensed and Family Therapist (LMFT) has been available to all Monterey Fire and Police

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department personnel since 2019. The City also offers an enhanced first responder program tailored for all public safety employees. This program offers expanded session allowances and access to culturally competent, trauma-trained specialty counselors. These counselors are available 24/7 for in-person consultations, or remote sessions via telephone, video, text, or chat. The Fire Department also has a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) policy and Action Review procedures in place to help public safety personnel cope with and manage critical incidents, stress, and trauma. The City of Monterey values its public safety heroes and will continue to ensure that staff have mental health resources they need.

The City looks forward to continuing to work with members of the Monterey Fire Department in addressing and implementing positive change. The City expects to release its official response to the Civil Grand Jury report within the next ninety days.

Unfortunately, the Civil Grand Jury's report may lead the public to believe that fire service delivery by the Monterey Fire Department is unreliable or poor. At no point in time has this been the case and at no point in time will this be the case. The Civil Grand Jury got it right when they cited a recent study from an independent fire services assessment audit stating that in over 20 years of delivery fire service deployment studies, few agencies have met all the key best practice performance measurements to the same degree as the Monterey Fire Department. Monterey Fire Department will continue its tradition of delivering high-quality and responsive emergency services to the community.

*The City of Monterey Fire Department proudly serves the cities of Monterey, Pacific Grove, Carmel-by-the-Sea, and Sand City, as well as Naval Postgraduate School, La Mesa Village, and Monterey Regional Airport.*

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