

**ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT**

For the meeting of: April 13, 2016

To: Board of Directors

From: Mark E. Mills, Fire Chief

Subject: Insurance Services Office, Public Protection Class 2

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Board receive and file the report.

BACKGROUND:

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) is a leading source of information about property and casualty insurance risk. ISO collects information that is useful in many aspects of insurance underwriting. The information includes evaluations of public fire protection, flood risk, and the adoption and enforcement of building codes in individual communities. They perform evaluations as a service to the insurance industry and do not charge a fee to the communities.

Through the Public Protection Classification (PPC™) program, ISO evaluates municipal fire-protection efforts in communities throughout the United States. A community's investment in fire mitigation is a proven and reliable predictor of future fire losses. So, insurance companies use PPC information to help establish fair premiums for fire insurance, generally offering lower premiums in communities with better protection. Many communities use the PPC as a benchmark for measuring the effectiveness of their fire-protection services. The PPC program is also a tool that helps communities plan for, budget, and justify improvements.

The purpose of an ISO public protection survey is to gather information to determine a Public Protection Classification (PPC™), which insurers use for underwriting and to calculate premiums for fire insurance. The Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) recognizes fire-protection features only as they relate to suppression of fires in structures.

In many communities, fire suppression may be only a small part of the fire department's overall responsibility. ISO recognizes the dynamic and comprehensive duties of a community's fire service. They understand the complex decisions a community must make in planning and delivering emergency services. However, they only evaluate features related to reducing property losses from fire.

To determine a community's PPC, ISO conducts a field survey. ISO staff visit the community to observe and evaluate features of the fire protection systems. Using the FSRS, ISO objectively evaluates four major areas: emergency communications systems, fire department effectiveness, water supply, and community risk reduction.

DISCUSSION:

The Ross Valley Fire Department had not been evaluated since 2001. In 2001, the Department was rated as a 3/9. The properties that were within 5 road miles of a fire station and within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant were rated as a PPC 3. The properties that were more than 1,000 feet from a fire hydrant were rated a PPC 9. The Town of Ross Fire Department was rated as a PPC 4/9. For property owners the difference between being rated a PPC 3 versus a PPC 9 can be drastic as it applies to their fire insurance rates. The amount is specific to the individual insurance provider. In October of 2015 the Department was evaluated by ISO for a new PPC. The results were as follows:

Emergency Communications Systems

A review of the emergency communications systems accounts for 10 points of the total classification. The review focuses on the community's facilities and support for handling and dispatching alarms for structure fires. Out of the possible 10 points for this portion, the Department scored 9.85.

Fire Department Effectiveness

A review of the fire department accounts for 50 points of the total classification. ISO focuses on a community's fire suppression capabilities. They measure suppression capabilities based on the fire department's first-alarm response and initial attack capabilities to minimize potential loss. They review the engine companies, ladder or service companies, deployment model of fire companies, equipment carried on the apparatus, pumping capacity, reserve apparatus, personnel, and training. The Department was penalized roughly 10 points in this category due to staffing levels and the overall deployment model, which resulted in 40.24 points instead of the possible 50 points.

Water Supply

A review of the water supply system accounts for 40 points of the total classification. ISO evaluates the community's water supply system to determine the adequacy for fire suppression purposes. They consider hydrant size, type, and installation, as well as the frequency and completeness of hydrant inspection and flow-testing programs. The Department was awarded 36.42 points in this category.

Community Risk Reduction

ISO reviews a community's risk reduction efforts and credits them in the Community Risk Reduction section, which allows for extra credit of up to 5.5 points for a potential total of 105.5 points. This section takes into account fire prevention code adoption and enforcement, public fire safety education, and fire investigation. This is a new category and the Department scored a 4.99 out of the possible 5.5 points in this area.

After completing the field survey, ISO analysed the data and calculated a PPC. ISO provided a hydrant-flow summary sheet, along with a Public Protection Classification Summary Report (Attachment A). The summary explains each subcategory and indicates the total points the community earned. The report also indicates the performance needed to receive full credit for each specific section in the schedule, as well as the quantity actually provided.

The ultimate goal of any fire department is to obtain a PPC of 1, which requires scoring at least 90 points overall. In October 2015, the Department was evaluated by ISO and received a favorable PPC rating of "2", by scoring 89.39. This new rating represents a substantial improvement in the overall performance rating of the Department as compared to the ratings in 2001. The entire jurisdiction now has a solid single point rating of 2, versus the higher split ratings from 2001, of 3 / 9 and 4 / 9.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None to the Department at this time.