

# NORTHWEST FIRE DISTRICT



Operational Services EMS/Dispatch Division  
Program Appraisal  
for the upcoming 2025-2026 fiscal year

In partial or complete fulfillment of the following CFAI Criterion and Performance Indicators (core competencies identified in **bold**): Category 5 Criterion F, Category 9 Criterion B, & **9C.3**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### Communications

The Northwest Fire District acknowledges the essential role of the Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) in connecting the community with emergency services. The District's mission—to "save lives, protect property, and care for our community"—depends on the efficient operation of the PSCD dispatch centers. A crucial aspect of this collaboration is the Alarm Room Captain (ARC), a position jointly supported by Northwest Fire, Golder Ranch Fire District, and Tucson Fire. The ARC is vital for coordinating emergency responses, ensuring the swift dispatch of the appropriate units in response to calls. In addition to this critical function, the ARC promotes regional collaboration by engaging with both external and internal departments, representing all agencies dispatched by the PSCD. In accordance with District rules and procedures, the ARC oversees the dispatch of emergency response units, addresses operational challenges, supports PSCD staff, and provides mentorship and training. This cooperative effort highlights the District's shared commitment to community safety. The partnership between Northwest Fire and PSCD goes beyond just operational coordination. The District is actively involved in efforts to comply with NFPA 1221, ISO, NFPA 1061, and ICC fire code standards. Adhering to these regulations ensures the highest level of service by enhancing the skills and expertise of PSCD personnel.

### EMS

The Northwest Fire District is dedicated to saving lives, protecting property, and caring for our community. A key aspect of this mission is providing high-quality pre-hospital emergency medical care and ambulance transportation, which are seamlessly integrated within the Response Division. The EMS Division plays a crucial role in fulfilling the organization's mission by ensuring continuous planning, support, monitoring, and improvement of the agency's EMS programs. It acts as an essential link to comply with federal and state laws, covering areas such as ambulance operations, billing, record management, and regulatory requirements. To ensure compliance with the various laws, statutes, and regulations governing pre-hospital emergency medical care, the EMS Division implements internal programs focused on education, recertification, and compliance with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS). It also engages with broader EMS and healthcare systems. The EMS Division is committed to excellence and consistently evolves to meet the changing needs of the community while upholding the highest standards in emergency medical services.

## **DIVISION PURPOSE**

### Communications

The Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) dispatch center serves as a crucial link between the community and emergency services. Their expertise in information gathering, situational assessment, providing instructions, and coordinating responses is essential to the Northwest Fire District's mission of saving lives, protecting property, and caring for our community. Furthermore, the Northwest Fire District demonstrates its commitment to enhancing PSCD's capabilities by providing a Northwest Fire District Fire Captain to serve as one of three 24-hour shift Alarm Room Captains (ARC). This support ensures seamless coordination of emergency response efforts. These collaborative efforts reflect the District's dedication to the safety and well-being of its community, highlighting the importance of its mission in action.

### EMS

The mission of the Northwest Fire District is to "save lives, protect property, and care for our community." A crucial part of achieving this mission is the Division's ability to provide top-quality pre-hospital emergency medical care and ambulance transportation, services that are seamlessly integrated within the agency's Response Division. However, the effectiveness of these services requires more than just immediate response; it demands continuous planning, support, monitoring, and improvement. This is the primary purpose of the EMS Division. The EMS Division strives to uphold the organization's mission by equipping all firefighters and Emergency Medical Care Technicians (EMCTs) with the best evidence-based medical direction, providing ongoing quality improvement (CQI) programs, and establishing EMS equipment standards. Additionally, in collaboration with various divisions within the organization, the EMS Division manages several internal programs to ensure the Fire District's compliance with administrative and statutory requirements. These include regulations governing ambulance operations, billing, record management systems within ImageTrend, hospital protocols, privacy of information, and internal audits of controlled substances and narcotics, among others. Moreover, the EMS Division plays a vital role in connecting the organization with the broader EMS and healthcare system. Through data-sharing initiatives and support for clinical research programs such as the Save Hearts in Arizona Registry & Education (AZ SHARE), as well as active participation in state and regional committees—such as the Southeastern Arizona Emergency Medical Services' Protocol Development and Review Committee

(SAEMS PDR) and the SAEMS Provider Agency Committee—the Division significantly contributes to the enhancement of healthcare practices within the community.

## **DIVISION ADMINISTRATION**

The Operational Services – EMS and Dispatch Division currently consists of the following positions and personnel:

Division Chief (1) – This role is responsible for managing significant areas of operations and coordinating core service and support programs. The Division Chief aligns these efforts with the organization's mission to save lives, protect property, and care for our community. As a member of the District's management team, the Division Chief acts as a representative of the organization, ensuring compliance with federal and state laws. They accept assigned responsibilities from their supervisors and hold themselves accountable for any performance failures that may occur. A crucial aspect of the Division Chief's role includes overseeing the professional development and mentorship of assigned staff. They address performance issues promptly and motivate team members to strive for excellence by effectively communicating Division objectives that align with the organization's Strategic Plan. Additionally, the Division Chief exercises considerable independence and makes professional decisions in their role. They may be required to adapt to the organization's needs, potentially being assigned to different divisions temporarily or permanently while performing other related duties as assigned, contributing significantly to the District's overarching mission and objectives.

Administrative Captain (2) – responsible for:

EMS Captains play a critical role in ensuring the success and integrity of the Division. One of their key responsibilities is managing the complex quality assurance and quality improvement (QA/QI) processes within the EMS Division. This ensures that the care delivered consistently reflects the high standards expected of a premier provider.

They are also responsible for upholding documentation standards set by local, state, and federal agencies, a vital component of maintaining compliance and operational excellence. These efforts are essential in supporting the accurate and timely recovery of costs associated with ambulance billing, directly contributing to the Division's financial sustainability and efficiency. Furthermore, as Certified Compliance and Privacy Officers, they ensure that the District is compliant with the regulations set forth by the Arizona Department of Health Services concerning the Ground Ambulance Certificate of Necessity (CON). This includes fulfilling all necessary response and certification timelines, maintaining operational readiness standards, and ensuring that ambulance units are properly equipped and ready for service.

Additionally, these Captains oversee the Paramedic Transition Courses, as a liaison between the department and the student while the Paramedics work through their educational journey, and prepare them for the challenges of real-world emergency medical services. In addition to these tasks, EMS Captains conduct thorough narcotics audits, examining pharmaceutical practices to maintain compliance with regulatory agencies and state and federal protocols through monthly internal and external narcotic and controlled substance audits.

In FY23/24, the EMS Division added a new position, a Fire and EMS Data Analyst (I)- The Fire and EMS Data Analyst manages and enhances the Fire and EMS record management system (RMS) and related data analysis systems to ensure accurate reporting, data sharing, and compliance with programs such as AZPIERS, NEMSIS, and NFIRS. The role involves collecting, analyzing, and distributing data for accrediting agencies and internal/external reports, collaborating with stakeholders to achieve organizational goals, and overseeing technology updates and system implementations. They are also responsible for troubleshooting software issues, improving policies and procedures, verifying data quality, developing training materials, and maintaining system reliability while ensuring adherence to security policies. Furthermore, they play a pivotal role in managing the records management system, ImageTrend, a crucial software designed to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of patient care documentation and management. Their expertise in handling ImageTrend is essential for maintaining streamlined and organized records, contributing significantly to the overall effectiveness of the EMS Division.

Alarm Room Captain (I) - responsible for: In the role of Alarm Room Captain, the primary responsibility is to guarantee the swift and effective dispatch of appropriate emergency response units in response to emergency calls. This role involves serving as a regional partner, establishing connections with external and internal departments, and representing all fire agencies dispatched by the Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD). Along with following District rules, policies, and procedures, the incumbent is tasked with various duties. These include overseeing and facilitating the dispatch of emergency response units, acting as a liaison between external agencies and internal departments to foster regional collaboration, providing support to dispatchers, floor supervisors, and field units for all nine agencies dispatched by PSCD, addressing operational challenges and ensuring timely resolutions, offering mentorship and training to PSCD staff, and maintaining compliance with the established rules and procedures to uphold functional integrity.

Senior GIS Analyst (I) - responsible for: The Senior GIS Analyst supports the Fire District's mission to save lives, protect property, and care for our community by creating, maintaining, and enhancing geographic information systems (GIS) data, workflows, and applications, ensuring efficient emergency response and high service levels. This role involves monthly tasks such as creating, reviewing, processing, and

updating dispatch and mobile unit maps in collaboration with City of Tucson staff. Additionally, the Analyst administers and coordinates hydrant data and inspections, promptly identifying necessary repairs. They respond to requests for GIS and computer-aided dispatch (CAD) data, providing technical expertise and maps in a timely manner. Collaborating with end-user departments, the Analyst assesses needs, conducts research, and implements customized solutions. Project management skills are essential, as they define and oversee projects that enhance GIS support District-wide based on organizational needs. Additionally, the Analyst conducts risk assessments and pre-plans the data design and implementation processes, ensuring effective emergency response.

## **COMPLIANCE STATUS WITH FEDERAL/STATE/LOCAL REGULATIONS AND CODES**

### Communications

The Northwest Fire District fosters a strong partnership with the City of Tucson's Public Safety Communication Department (PSCD) and its dispatch contractor to ensure compliance with all applicable regulatory and legal standards. Our collaborative initiatives are designed to meet the stringent requirements outlined in the NFPA 1221 Standards, which govern the installation, maintenance, and operation of emergency services communication systems. In addition, the District is fully committed to adhering to the standards established by the Insurance Services Office (ISO), which emphasize meeting essential safety benchmarks for effective emergency response. Furthermore, we actively collaborate with PSCD to ensure compliance with NFPA 1061, which defines the professional qualifications necessary for Public Safety Telecommunicators. By upholding these standards, the District enhances the skills and competencies of its personnel, ensuring they deliver the highest quality of service to the community. Additionally, the District rigorously adheres to the requirements outlined in Section 510 of the International Code Council (ICC) fire code. This section mandates that all new construction projects meet specific criteria to ensure adequate radio coverage, a critical element for effective communication during emergencies.

### EMS

The EMS Division plays a crucial role in ensuring the organization complies with a wide range of laws, statutes, and regulations related to pre-hospital emergency medical care. This responsibility includes key areas such as the tracking of Schedule II narcotics, comprehensive auditing procedures, coordination of ambulance transportation, and careful management of billing and documentation practices. The Division's commitment to compliance is demonstrated through its well-organized internal programs, which align with the policies, standard operating procedures, and protocols of the Northwest Fire District (NWFD). It operates within a structured

regulatory framework that meets the high standards set by oversight bodies, including the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Arizona Administrative Code (AAC), the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS), the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), and the Southeastern Arizona Emergency Medical Services (SAEMS) Council. These efforts ensure that the Division remains fully compliant with all relevant guidelines and requirements. In addition to regulatory compliance, the Division is responsible for protecting patient privacy in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Furthermore, it strictly adheres to the regulations set forth by the Arizona Department of Health Services concerning the Ground Ambulance Certificate of Necessity (CON). This includes fulfilling all necessary response and certification timelines, maintaining operational readiness standards, and ensuring that ambulance units are properly equipped and ready for service.

## **INTERNAL PROGRAMS**

### **Communications Internal Programs**

- Mentorship and teaching to Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) Supervisor Academies, new hire classes, and floor trainee support
- QA/QI of incidents to numerous agencies and aid dispatcher training daily
- Participates in the QA/QI program at the communications center to ensure 911 calls are handled appropriately and radio dispatch support meets Northwest Fire's needs
- Actively involved in developing and delivering Criteria Based Dispatching program for 911 call-takers
- Updates and calculates unit scene times utilizing a GPS tracking program for accuracy
- Provides real-time call-type assistance to dispatchers
- Manages 911-system overall capabilities and ensures adequate coverage exists in all departments overseen by PSCD
- Aids in notifying area hospitals during significant patient events
- Coordinates response with mutual aid responses between Davis-Monthan AFB, South Tucson Fire, and TFD
- Coordinates numerous mutual aid requests between numerous agencies daily
- Tracks ambulance status daily between agencies and responds to area shortages
- Oversees working fire incidents to ensure a timely flow of information and benchmarks are completed
- Reviews and provides feedback for USDD alerting system
- Provides input and assists supervisors daily and assists lead dispatcher during CAD down events

- During monsoon season, provides real-time assistance to dispatcher and field units, ensuring appropriate units go to proper calls
- Assists Tucson Police with CSARC (real-time crime center), large-scale events, and liaison duties between fire and police
- Develops and works with PSCD leadership to build workflows and processes that are streamlined and effective for field units
- Responds to calls from area chief level officers on a variety of daily operations
- Coordinates and communicates with area hospitals during divert status
- Provides scene information to area public information officers
- Coordinates response as a liaison between police and fire agencies
- Responsible for daily updating of units' radio identifiers in the PSCD radio identifier tracking system
- Provides leadership advice and counseling daily to supervisors as part of a larger team
- Provides real-time, as-needed changes to response plans and call types based on rapidly changing information
- Ensures that the automatic aid system is operating effectively and as intended daily
- Monthly Map Roll
- Hydrants
- GIS collaboration with Prevention

### **EMS Internal Programs**

- EMS education and recertification program: Through the QA/QI process and ePCR data analysis to support the development and delivery of supplemental EMS education based on current needs and trends.
- Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) Statutes and Rules compliance program. The program's design is to ensure organizational compliance with ADHS regulations in delivering prehospital emergency medical care and ambulance transportation. Moreover, this program strives to implement industry best practices in the administration and support of the integrated NWFD EMS program. These are some of the program components:
  - Medical direction and protocols
  - Professional services and training agreement (NWFD/University of Arizona/Banner-University Medical Center)
  - Administrative Guidelines (AGs)
  - Scope of practice
  - Agents eligible for administration
  - Emergency Medical Care Technician (EMCT) drug box requirements
  - Transport destination protocols
  - Administration and recordkeeping

- Ground ambulance program
- ADHS Certificate of Necessity (CON)
- Service rates and charges
- Service area
- Response times
- Ambulance Revenue and Cost Report (ARCR)
- ADHS ambulance registration
- ADHS ambulance inspections
- Minimum equipment and supplies standards
- Minimum vehicle standards (in collaboration with Fleet Services)
- Records and reports
- Record Management Systems upkeep
- Access Point Name (APN) ImageTrend
- National Emergency Medical Services Information System (NEMSIS) standards
- Opioid overdose reporting requirements
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- EMS/Healthcare community engagement program. This program aims to develop valuable partnerships within the local EMS/healthcare community, provide an organizational link to the District's external EMS/healthcare stakeholders, and promote continuous improvement throughout the region. These are some of the program components:
  - Coordination with Banner/UA EMS: Engaging in patient care improvement initiatives through participation in groundbreaking studies such as PediPART, PediDOSE, and E-CPR to advance evidence-based practices and enhance care delivery.
  - Maintenance of the Handtevy Pediatric Dosing/Protocols App: Ensuring precise and effective medication dosing for both pediatric and adult patients by regularly updating and refining protocols, enhancing the accuracy and quality of patient care.
  - Regional Emergency Medical Services (REMS) committee
  - SAEMS council
  - SAEMS Provider Agency committee
  - SAEMS Protocol Development and Review (PDR) committee
  - Northwest Medical Center (NMC) EMS meeting
  - EMS/Healthcare community ride-along (EMCT students, nursing students, medical students, and fellows, among others)
  - Paramedic student training program: This program supports the NWFD professional development program and succession plan by offering NWFD firefighters who hold an EMCT-EMT certification, a path to attaining an EMCT-Paramedic certification, and subsequent job promotion to Paramedic.

- Applicant evaluation and selection process
- Liaison with the Public Safety and Emergency Services Institute (PSESI) throughout the training program
- Paramedic student ride-along (vehicular) coordination
- NWFD Paramedic transition course (40-80 hours)
- Mentorship program coordination (20-21 shifts)
- National Fire Incident Reporting System (NIFRS)
- ePCR management program. This program aims to support the organization's reporting and record retention requirements associated with emergency medical incidents, as well as ambulance billing, QA/QI, treatment benchmarks, and controlled substance tracking, accreditation, among others.
- ePCR form field management and compliance with the state and federal documentation standards (NEMSIS)
- QA/QI module management
- User credentials and permissions
- Controlled substance administration reporting
- Treatment and procedures benchmark analytics
- Wall times
- Ambulance transport statistics
- Billing reconciliation
- User credentials and permissions to the Controlled Access Pharmacy (CAP) provides logistical support to the Response Division in the form of equipment, parts, and medications, among other supplies required for the delivery of prehospital emergency medical care. These items are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through six CAP machines strategically positioned throughout the organization (330, 331, 333, 334, 336, 337, and 338). This program offers a reliable, convenient, and secure way to restock after an emergency medical incident response, reduces out-of-service times, and promotes better patient care. The CAP program is a logistical function and resides with the NWFD Warehouse Division.
- Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) licensing; in collaboration with Dr. Rice/Gaither (DEA registrant)
- DEA Controlled Substance ordering through Banner/Medical Director
- Shipment receipt (NWFD DEA Power of Attorney)
- Reverse distribution of expired controlled substances in coordination with the Warehouse
- Documentation management (order confirmation form, packing slip, CAP inventory report, usage report, and discrepancy memos, when indicated)
- Coordination of a monthly controlled substances audit with the Medical Director's delegate and EMS Captain and Division Chief of EMS

- Quality assurance and quality improvement (QA/QI) program. This program strives towards the continuous quality improvement of the integrated EMS program.
- Internal ePCR review to assure reporting completeness and adherence to NWFD documentation standards, established protocols, standards of care, and administrative guidelines.
- Prompt feedback to responding EMCT and officer-in-charge (OIC) addressing reporting standards, treatment protocols, best practices, and patient outcome follow-up.
- CQI Committee
- Zoll Case Review® Premium (cardiac arrest performance analytics)
- Identification of educational or training needs (individual, crew, collective)
- Medical Director review of all out-of-hospital cardiac arrests (OHCA) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) cases
- Trends and benchmarks, i.e., CPR quality
- AG revisions
- Education and training recommendations
- Medical equipment, medications, and supplies analysis
- External data and quality assurance
- ADHS Arizona Prehospital Information & EMS Registry System (AZ-PIERS)
- ADHS Premier EMS Agency Program (PEAP)
- ADHS Save Hearts in Arizona Registry and Education (AZ SHARE)
- Health Information Exchange (HIE)
- NMC Chest Pain Center (STEMI cancellation and door to balloon feedback)
- Banner Main Chest Pain and Stroke Center (door to balloon feedback)

## **CURRENT AND NEEDED MEASURES**

### **CURRENT PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**

#### Communications

To provide the highest level of care, emergency dispatchers call processing time is measured against the standards set forth in NFPA 1221 7.4.2.2.

During the analysis of call data using NFORS, it was discovered that NFORS may not be the best platform for accurately tracking emergency call processing times. Northwest Fire District (NWFD) is currently working with regional Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and Public Safety Communications Departments (PSCD) to create a more precise method for tracking these times and ensuring compliance.

#### EMS

The EMS Division uses both qualitative findings and quantitative data to evaluate compliance, assess equipment and training needs, measure program effectiveness, and evaluate outcomes. For instance, the ePCR QA monitors adherence to the NWFD documentation standards and offline Administrative Guidelines. The Zoll Case Review® Premium provides data to evaluate the crew's overall performance during an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA). The current qualitative measures employed by the EMS Division include:

ePCR QA to assess compliance with the NWFD documentation standards, Administrative Guidelines (AGs), SAEMS protocols, and standards of care.

Internal and External ePCR QA of all Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OHCA) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) cases by B-UMG (medical direction) and the 40-hour Administrative Captain to ensure adherence to AGs, protocols, and standards of care.

Current quantitative measures employed by the EMS Division include:

ePCR-based performance analytics. These include time-based analyses, such as patient contact to CPR, patient contact to defibrillation, patient contact to transport, and total out-of-service time.

Performance analytics to include skill-specific analyses, i.e., intubation, intravenous (IV), intraosseous (IO) placement, and success rate.

Zoll Case Review® performance analytics. This web-based platform utilizes data uploaded from the Zoll X-Series® heart monitors to analyze the Division's providers' performance after an OHCA incident. Some of the data collected include depth and rate of compressions, length of CPR pauses, time from CPR pause to defibrillation, ETCO2 levels, respiration rate, and volume measurements.

OHCA performance analytics performed by B-UMG. This analysis uses both methods mentioned above, but it is entirely independent. The District's Medical Director shares all relevant findings during the weekly-scheduled EMS meetings.

Other external quantitative data. These include the annual AZ- Save Hearts in Arizona Registry & Education (AZ-SHARE) report on OHCA, Cath-lab cancellation data (ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) alerts), and Door-to-Balloon (D2B) times.

Program Expansion: In FY24/25, the EMS Division expanded the CQI program from a single 40-hour Administrative Captain role to a comprehensive CQI Committee. This evolution supports benchmarking critical calls and providing electronic feedback to crews via SmartSheets, ensuring alignment with NWFD standards and medical direction guidance.

**Collaborative Integration:** The CQI Committee developed into a multi-tiered initiative involving external collaboration and the inclusion of other divisions within the organization. This approach enhances preparedness, training, and program effectiveness through cross-departmental and external partnerships.

**Qualitative and Quantitative Enhancements:** The EMS Division continues to assess program effectiveness by identifying the need for improved methods of data collection and performance analysis. This includes developing evidence-based benchmarks to better measure outcomes and program compliance.

**Technological Investments:** Investments in tools like Zoll Case Review® Premium and enhancements to Continuum and Report Writer through ImageTrend further support data-driven evaluations, ensuring high-quality performance analysis and adherence to NWFED standards.

**Focus on Outcome-Based Measures:** The Division prioritizes analyzing qualitative findings and quantitative data to improve program outcomes, including compliance, training, and equipment needs. In the fiscal year 24/25 special attention is paid to crashing patients, defined as those in a state of severe clinical deterioration leading toward pericardiac arrest. These patients often present with signs such as severe respiratory distress, hemodynamic instability, or rapidly declining mental status. By proactively identifying and addressing the needs of this patient population, the Division enhances interventions aimed at stabilizing patients and preventing cardiac arrest. This focus complements ongoing efforts to evaluate crew performance during out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) events, further ensuring high-quality care delivery.

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES IN DEVELOPMENT:

- Continued expansion of data benchmarking i.e. crashing patients
- Streamlined Smartsheet tracking for complaints, treatment/protocol issues and trends
- Implementation and use of Operative IQ for narcotics and controlled substance tracking
- ePCR updates to help with QA and QI objectives

## CURRENT DIVISION GOALS/OBJECTIVES AND STATUS

### Communications

- Continue to Refine Response Card
- Continue to develop the Alarm Room Captain position
- MDALLY (911 dispatch tele-health program)
- SOLARI (behavioral health program for treat and release)

- Utilization of the 11 card for AMR/ambulance-only response to licensed care facilities, with certified staff present for low-acuity calls that do not require a Northwest Fire District 911 response and can be scheduled for interfacility transport.
- Continue to find opportunities to incorporate the GIS position to leverage their expertise in enhancing operational efficiency, data accuracy, and decision-making internally and externally.

## EMS

- Continue to certify EMS staff as Ambulance Compliance and Privacy Officers through Page, Wolfberg and Wirth, LLC
- Expand ambulance coverage with the addition of ambulances placed in service within the District areas to maintain compliance with DHS response requirements
- Continue to refine the scope of care that is provided by Northwest Fire District personnel
- Continue to Certify EMS staff as Documentation Specialists through NAAC
- Provide further training and education to the Fire and EMS Data Analyst
- Assist with building supplementary instructional content to meet the educational needs identified through the QA process
- Maintain NWFD's designation as one of Arizona's Premier EMS Agency Providers (ADHS)
- Continue to support NWFD Logistics in the management and the use and dispensing of Schedule II medications and controlled substances
- Annual reconciliation of user access to UCAPIT machines
- Continue to work and collaborate with Essential Services with user access and reconciliation of the CompX program for apparatus drug boxes
- Continue to refine the Q&A process ePCR form
- Continued education for all Captains on the proper Q/A process as first-line supervisors
- Continue developing and refining the Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) Committee
- Continue the use of SmartSheets for direct feedback from Medical Direction team to crews
- Continued support of the Paramedic Program and development of the Liaison Officer position with the Pima Community College's Public Safety and Emergency Services Institute (PSESI)
- Continued Improvement on communication and feedback with EMCTs
- Prepare for the transition from NIFRS to NERIS in 2025

- Continue to develop the roles and responsibilities of the Fire and EMS Data Analyst
- Refine and standardize all data and information requests through ImageTrend and Report Writer

## STRATEGIC PLAN CRITICAL TASKS DISCUSSION

**Goal 1:** Innovate to provide the highest quality services to meet our mission.

**Objective 1A:** Integrate and invest in community risk reduction programs, recognizing our community's crucial role in appropriate support and engagement to prevent emergency response.

**Status:** Ongoing. The Division actively supports community CPR/AED education programs and has implemented a Narcan Leave Behind Program to address opioid overdoses.

**Objective 1B:** Review, analyze, and define the scope of Emergency Medical Services to meet present and future needs.

**Status:** Ongoing. Continuous QA/QI enhancements, the addition of BLS services, and the integration of MD Ally and 311 telehealth programs demonstrate adaptability to current and future community demands.

**Objective 1C:** Collaborate through automatic aid to enhance a region-wide response system while reducing redundancies.

**Status:** Active. Auto-Aid agreements with Golder Ranch and Tucson Fire Department ensure an efficient, unified emergency response.

**Objective 1D:** Document and standardize the data analysis processes incorporated into every division, assuring our commitment to thoroughness and accuracy, emphasizing accreditation, ISO, and annual reporting requirements.

**Status:** In progress. Tools such as ImageTrend Continuum and Report Writer are utilized for standardized analysis and reporting.

**Goal 2:** Enhance and promote the organization's mental, physical, and occupational health, wellness, and safety.

**Objective 2B:** Research, develop, support, and promote programs, initiatives, and opportunities for mental health support to all team members.

**Status:** Initiated. The Division engages in wellness efforts, such as addressing fatigue and stress, through data analysis of Unit Hours of Utilization reporting.

**Goal 3:** Demonstrate responsible and transparent stewardship of organizational resources.

**Objective 3D:** Provide technology infrastructure that is reliable, interoperable, secure, and relevant.

**Status:** Ongoing. The Division leverages GIS analytics and EMS and Fire data for optimized routing, deployment, and resource allocation.

**Objective 3E:** Identify, evaluate, and implement opportunities to streamline efficiencies in all areas of the organization.

**Status:** Ongoing. Tools like QA/QI processes, MD Ally, and 311 integrations to improve reporting accuracy, telehealth accessibility, and reduce redundancy.

**Goal 4:** Strengthen recruitment, development, and retention of an engaged workforce reflective of the organization's community and core values.

**Objective 4B:** Enhance the professional development framework that fosters continuous learning, growth, and skill enhancement for all employees across the organization focusing on cultivating leadership capabilities, technical expertise, and soft skills essential for success.

**Status:** Active. The Division provides NAAC Documentation Specialist certifications and Ambulance Compliance Officer training, fostering skill development and specialization. Paramedic education and compliance-related training ensure alignment with NEMSIS standards and evolving best practices.

**Objective 4C:** Sustain an environment where employees feel deeply engaged, valued, and fulfilled, leading to high satisfaction levels and long-term commitment to the organization.

**Status:** Ongoing. The Division empowers personnel by involving them in peer review committees and creating pathways for professional growth.

**Goal 5:** Develop and execute strategies for overseeing the organization's future growth by leveraging partnerships and engagement with community collaborators and stakeholders.

**Objective 5C:** Evaluate community growth from annexations and development to forecast the need for additional stations and apparatus to maintain exceptional service delivery throughout the District.

**Status:** Active. GIS analytics support forecasting and planning for ambulance placement, UCAPIT machines, and additional resources to meet future demands.

## **CURRENT ISSUES**

### Communications

Over the past two years, the City of Tucson has been engaged in consolidating its police and fire dispatching services. This complex and multifaceted process has presented significant challenges, prompting ongoing efforts to refine and optimize the transition. The management structure of the Public Safety Communications Department continues to be updated as staff address outstanding concerns, improve call performance across the department, and expand the workforce to meet the demands of the newly added workspace within the dispatch center.

### EMS

Current issues faced by EMS are:

- Maintaining an effective ambulance response amidst increased call volume from the addition of BLS transports, while ensuring compliance with DHS CON requirements
- Effective CON ambulance coverage based on analytical data and response times for the Core of the District (Station 330, 331, and 333)
- Department of Health Services compliance with statute changes in response times and required equipment and vehicle standards
- Maximizing the full potential of the ImageTrend Continuum and Report Writer programs for enhancing data analysis, reporting capabilities, and overall operational efficiency
- The collaboration and communication from logistical and fleet support in addressing medication, equipment, vehicle shortages or extended build times
- Management of ambulance response and operations despite personnel, equipment, and vehicle shortages, alongside rising costs, while ensuring compliance with DHS CON requirements

## **UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR GOALS/OBJECTIVES – INCLUDE RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS/OBJECTIVES AS APPROPRIATE**

## TRAINING

### CURRENT YEAR TRAINING ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR DIVISION STAFF

#### Communications

- Annual Public Safety Consortium
- ESRI Conference
- Imagetrend Connect Conference
- US Digital Design (USDD) training
- Pima County Wireless Integrated Network (PCWIN) training
- Alarm Room Captain training on USDD and updated encrypted PCWIN radios
- SESARC Training

#### EMS

##### Division Chief of EMS

- Blue Card Instructor re-certification
- ImageTrend Connect Conference
- NAAC Certified Ambulance Documentation Specialist and Recertification
- US Digital Design (USDD) training

##### Administrative Captains

- ImageTrend Connect Conference
- Compliance Officer Program Certification and Continuing Education
- NAAC Certified Ambulance Documentation Specialist and Recertification
- Privacy Officer Program Certification and Continuing Education
- BlueCard Incident Command Recertification

##### Fire and EMS Data Analyst

- Fire and Statistics Excel training
- ImageTrend Connect Conference

### UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR COMPLIANCE RELATED TRAINING NEEDS

#### EMS

NIFRS to NERIS Training  
Privacy Officer Training and Compliance certification and continuing education  
Annual Southern Arizona Trauma Conference  
Imagetrend Connect Conference  
Continuum and Report Writer training  
Fire and Stats Excel training  
Documentation specialist certification and continuing education training  
Executive Chief Officer training  
Continuing education and professional development via in-person conferences and classes, as well as distance learning opportunities.  
CPSE Training to include Seminars, Conferences, and Workshops  
Fire and EMS Stats Workshops / Bootcamps  
Google Advanced Data Analytics Professional Certificate (Coursera)

## UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR JOB TASK RELATED TRAINING NEEDS

### Communications

Alarm Room Captain backfill training.  
Continuing education and professional development via in-person conferences and classes, as well as distance learning opportunities.  
A GIS analyst works reports to the communication Division and continued education and training will be needed as 911 systems move to geospatial routing of calls.  
ESRI conference  
GIS conference  
ImageTrend Connect Conference  
Annual CAD Conference  
Alarm Room Captain training on USDD and updated encrypted PCWIN radios

### EMS

## **PROGRAM SELF-ASSESSMENT**

THE PROGRAM SELF-ASSESSMENT CONSISTS OF THE CURRENT ACCREDITATION CORE COMPETENCIES AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS THAT DESCRIBE, APPRAISE, AND LIST A PLAN FOR YOUR DIVISION. THESE CORE COMPETENCIES AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS ALONG WITH THE CURRENT ISSUES IDENTIFIED, ARE THE FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPING UPCOMING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

## **CFAI STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

*It is recommended that the agency work with the primary and secondary public safety answering points to capture the call transfer time for inclusion in the total response time. (CC 2C.5)*

## **Category 5**

### **Criterion 5F: Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Program**

*The agency operates an EMS program with a designated level of out-of-hospital emergency medical care that protects the community from injury or death. If identified risks are outside the scope of the agency's capabilities, Category 10 performance indicators should address the agency's ability to receive aid from partners in those areas. The agency should conduct a thorough risk-assessment as part of activities in Category 2 to determine the need for a specific EMS program and support the overall risk reduction strategy.*

NOTE: EMS is a major element of many fire service agencies. Fire service personnel are frequently the first responder to medical emergencies. For that reason, emergency medical response can be organizationally integrated with fire suppression activity. Care should be exercised not to create a priority or resource allocation conflict between the two program activities. Agencies that only provide first responder services must also complete this criterion.

#### Summary

As the primary EMS provider within its jurisdiction, the Northwest Fire District believes that evidence-based medicine and tracking patient outcomes are the best ways to ensure that an organization meets the community's true emergency medical needs. To meet that goal, the District continues its partnership with world-class medical control through Banner Main Hospital, with Dr. Rice as its medical director. NWFD has initiated an Advanced Life Support (ALS) transport program with the addition of a Basic Life Support (BLS) in the Fall of 2023 with AMR assisting with three 12-hour BLS ambulances staggered through the day 7 days a week, from 7-7,8-8, and 9-9, to ensure the ability to transport all ALS and BLS calls. Additionally, NWFD continues to refine and look for opportunities to provide higher levels of service through its continued EMS Auto-Aid agreement with Tucson Fire and Golder Ranch to provide the District residence with the closest emergency response regardless of jurisdiction. The District continues to recognize that the ultimate measure of how effectively the system meets the community's needs lies in patient outcomes. However, acquiring timely and comprehensive patient outcome data remains a challenge for the majority of cases. To address this, the District continues to utilize the Health Information Exchange (HIE) to streamline the tracking of patient status and outcomes. Additionally, the

reconfiguration of the District's ePCR form has improved access to analytical data through the Report Writer program. To further enhance these efforts, the District has also brought on a dedicated Fire and EMS Data Analyst. This role plays a critical part in interpreting complex data, identifying trends, and providing actionable insights that help refine benchmarking programs, evaluate system performance, and support evidence-based decision-making. Coupled with the continuous fine-tuning of the District's benchmarking program and the use of two-way digital feedback via SmartSheets for call reviews, the District remains committed to expanding and streamlining these critical services to improve community outcomes. Over the past year, the District has made significant progress in its commitment to delivering the highest levels of pre-hospital care through investments in new technologies and the adoption of evidence-based medicine. The transition of EMS training, education, and paramedic trainers to the Training Division has proven to be highly effective in aligning programs and processes with the District's mission. This move has enhanced the quality and consistency of training, ensuring that personnel are better equipped to meet the community's needs. Additionally, the Q/A committee is now fully operational, regularly reviewing selected call types and utilizing the QA/QI program to identify areas for improvement in training and education. Over the past year, this program has provided valuable insights, enabling the District to implement targeted enhancements to training curricula and field practices. By integrating feedback from real-world performance data, the District has continued to refine its approach to care, reinforcing its commitment to the community and ensuring the delivery of exceptional service.

**CC 5F.1 Given the agency's community risk assessment/standards of cover and emergency performance statements, the agency meets its staffing, response time, station(s), apparatus and equipment deployment objectives for each type and magnitude of emergency medical incident(s).**

Description

To meet the needs identified in NWFD's CRA-SOC and The District's deployment objectives, NWFD operates 19 full-time ALS response apparatus (19 Engines, 1 Peak activity Engine and 8 Ambulances) and an ALS peak activity unit (Monday-Thursday 0800-1800) to handle, on average, 40 plus EMS incidents a day. In addition to other crew, there is a paramedic on each engine (average of 1.51 paramedics/engine) and one paramedic on each transport-capable ambulance for staffing. To effectively respond to any type/magnitude of emergency medical incident, all apparatus are fully equipped ALS units, with additional equipment on transport units relevant to their intended use. In October 2024, Northwest Fire District began the transition to becoming the primary BLS transport provider within our jurisdiction. As part of this transition, NWFD entered into an agreement with AMR to reduce their presence in the district from three fully staffed 24-hour BLS ambulances to three 12-hour day

units. These AMR units are no longer dedicated solely to NWFD and operate on staggered shifts from 7:00–19:00, 8:00–20:00, and 9:00–21:00. In response to this change and the increasing call volume, NWFD placed PM342 and PM351 into full-time service to ensure continued coverage and meet the needs of the community. NWFD is also in an Auto-Aid agreement with Golder Ranch Fire District and the Tucson Fire Department and has backup agreements with the surrounding fire districts that provide additional coverage when the system is stressed. To further assist with maintaining a readily available response force, NWFD has established an in-house restocking process and strategically positioned pharmaceutical dispensing machines throughout the District for units to rapidly replenish medications used on a call without the traditional long waits at the hospital pharmacies, allowing for a quicker return to service status. To ensure proper deployment and response, dispatching of NWFD units to incidents falls into 7 deployment models, BLS1, ALS1, and ALS2, ALS3, ALS4, ALS5. Additionally, the configuration of these run cards is data-driven according to historical scene outcomes, and anticipated patient needs to ensure that the appropriate level of care responds and that unit utilization is optimal. There are additional, less utilized deployments, such as major medicals and interstate responses. Over the past year, the integration of the Communications Section into the Medical Division and the assignment of a 24-hour Alarm Room Captain within the Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) have continued to prove instrumental in enhancing the District's operational efficiency and alignment with its mission. Since its inception, this role has evolved into a critical component of the District's response strategy, ensuring that 90% of the District's call processing and deployments are managed with precision and timeliness.

The Alarm Room Captain, shared among Northwest Fire District, Golder Ranch Fire District, and Tucson Fire, has solidified its value as a pivotal resource in maintaining seamless communication and collaboration across the Auto-Aid system. Embedded within PSCD, the Alarm Room Captain has become integral to real-time resource management, notifications, and decision-making during critical incidents. Over the past year, they have played a key role in refining response plans, troubleshooting CAD programming issues, and improving call research processes to adapt to the evolving needs of the community. Additionally, the Alarm Room Captain's role in supporting significant events as an extension of the Command Staff has enhanced the District's ability to respond effectively to large-scale incidents. By ensuring deployments, processes, and training are aligned with the District's mission, this position has consistently demonstrated its value in fostering operational excellence, strengthening partnerships, and supporting the overall success of the District and its regional collaborators. As a result, the District has continued to build upon the successes of this initiative, seeking further ways to enhance its communications capabilities and ensure the highest standard of service for the community.

## Appraisal

Over the past year, Northwest Fire District (NWFD) has effectively aligned its deployment strategies with the needs outlined in its CRA-SOC and operational objectives. Operating 19 full-time ALS units and an ALS peak activity unit, NWFD has maintained its ability to handle an average of 40 plus EMS incidents daily with a high standard of care. As the Northwest Fire District works to become the primary Basic Life Support (BLS) transport provider, having a paramedic on each engine and transport-capable ambulance ensures strong staffing. Additionally, the introduction of PM342 and PM351 into full-time service enhances the system and addresses the growing needs of our community. This is further supported by three 12-hour BLS ambulances through AMR, which adds flexibility to our services. The District's Auto-Aid agreements with Golder Ranch and Tucson Fire, as well as backup agreements with surrounding fire districts, provide critical additional coverage during periods of high demand. Innovative solutions, such as the in-house restocking process and strategically placed pharmaceutical dispensing machines, have minimized unit downtime and expedited return-to-service times. Data-driven deployment models, tailored to historical outcomes and anticipated patient needs, ensure optimal resource utilization across all incident types. The integration of the Communications Section into the Medical Division and the continued role of the 24-hour Alarm Room Captain have further enhanced resource management and operational precision, cementing NWFD's commitment to excellence in emergency response and community care.

## Plan

NWFD maintains a high level of service, but continual improvement remains essential to meet the evolving needs of the community. In addition to refining the District's dispatch program, Auto-Aid coordination, and run card utilization based on historical data, NWFD can focus on several key areas. Enhancing community education initiatives, including the use of programs like MD Ally, can help guide appropriate EMS utilization and improve efficiency. Advanced staff training, including scenario-based simulations, can further prepare crews for complex incidents. Leveraging analytics through Continuum and Report Writer will optimize resource allocation and response strategies. Regularly reviewing demographic and geographic data will enable proactive planning for ambulance coverage, including both ALS and BLS services, as well as UCAPIT machine placement. Additionally, NWFD can develop plans for sustainability by addressing workforce challenges, equipment costs, and long-term community growth, while refining disaster response strategies to remain flexible and prepared for surges in demand. These initiatives, combined with the analytical insights provided by NWFD's Fire EMS and GIS analysts, will ensure continued compliance with CON requirements and the delivery of exceptional EMS care.

## References

NWFD CRA-SOC

Auto-Aid Agreement City of Tucson FULLY EXECUTED

Auto-Aid Agreement Golder Ranch FULLY EXECUTED

Backup Ambulance Agreement with Avra Valley, Drexel Heights, Picture Rocks, Three Points, FULLY EXECUTED

Criteria Based Dispatching Response Plans

Alarm Room Captain Job Description

Northwest Fire District CON

Paramedic Drivetimes North Battalion

UCAPIT Training NWFD 2018

**CC 5F.2 The agency has administrative guidelines/protocols in place to direct EMS response activities to meet the stated level of EMS response including determination criteria for specialty transport and receiving facility destination.**

### Description

On medical incidents, the District's field personnel operate under agency-specific offline Administrative Guidelines (ALS & BLS) built in collaboration with the District's Medical Direction team and its Auto-Aid partners, who fall under the same Medical Direction umbrella. These Administrative Guidelines (AGs) have been specially tailored for the organization and community, allowing the District to sidestep the pitfalls typically associated with regional protocols.

The collaborative processes with the Medical Direction team allow the District to rapidly incorporate evidence-based research and emerging science or equipment changes into the AGs. The Administrative Guidelines are under constant review as part of the District's internal QA process and monthly QA/QI meetings with the medical directors.

### Appraisal

With the addition of the Banner Medical Direction Team and evidence-based researched Administrative Guidelines, the NWFD has been able to meet its mission to save lives, protect property, and care for the community, with improved patient outcomes as the goal. While the offline medical direction outlined within the AG guides patient care, the QA/QI program assesses how they are applied. NWFD can facilitate these assessments in several ways, including the standing up of a QA/QI committee and a realignment with the University Medical Center's EMS Fellowship program for a more formal annual review to coincide with the orientation process for emergency medicine physicians entering the program.

## Plan

The NWFD's Medical Services Division ensures the comprehension and compliance of these Guidelines and the availability of the AGs to providers, from a user-friendly app to downloadable PDFs and the use of Handtevy. With more perspective on this issue, the data sets created by Report Writer enable NWFD medical services personnel and the Medical Direction Team to query and identify Guidelines with low compliance ratings. From this analysis, medical services can identify, form, training, or equipment issues and address non-compliance issues to improve patient care and outcomes.

## References

NWFD Administrative Guidelines

### **5F.3 The agency annually reviews and updates, as needed, order/protocols, and engages external stakeholders in the process.**

## Description

The Northwest Fire District utilizes the University of Arizona Administrative Guidelines to provide the highest quality of evidence-based pre-hospital care daily. NWFD plays a significant role in developing and updating these guidelines with semi-annual meetings with the Medical Direction team, Auto-Aid partners, and stakeholders. Stakeholders include but are not limited to Tucson Fire and the Golder Ranch Fire District, and other agencies who fall under the numerous medical directors with UA also utilize these guidelines.

## Appraisal

During the revision and roll-out of the annual administrative guidelines, the NWFD played a significant role. Throughout the year, frequent feedback is gathered from field providers to ensure that the administrative guidelines continue to meet the

providers and the community's needs. Dialogue with the medical direction team is weekly, and communication streams with stakeholders occur regularly.

## Plan

Moving forward, the District will continue to prioritize its strong and collaborative partnership with the Medical Direction Team, ensuring active involvement in the development and updating of clinical guidelines. This ongoing collaboration will allow the District to maintain a consistent presence in discussions, contributing valuable insights and aligning practices with the latest standards in pre-hospital care. The review process will remain a key focus, emphasizing the monitoring and incorporation of new evidence-based research and best practices. By sustaining these efforts, the District aims to stay at the forefront of pre-hospital care, ensuring the delivery of the highest level of evidence-based services to the community.

## References

NWFD Administrative Guidelines

### **CC 5F.4 The agency has online and offline medical control.**

#### Description

The District provides responding personnel with online and offline medical control, memorialized in the NWFD contract with Banner University Medical Center for medical direction. Medical Direction provides offline medical control to the members via Administrative Guidelines. Online communication with a Board-Certified Emergency Physician at Banner UMC is available 24/7 via unit-assigned phones or 800Mhz mobile or portable radio, with an added Arizona's Revised Status, which requires the availability of offline medical control.

#### Appraisal

A vast majority of NWFD's care occurs through offline Administrative Guidelines, which works well for an organization that strives to allow its caregivers to think critically and have the flexibility to adapt to the patient's needs as rapidly as possible. The NWFD/Banner UMC system of Administrative Guidelines is crucial in accomplishing this goal as it allows providers to use several AGs simultaneously depending on the patient's (multiple) complaints. AGs differ from standing orders, which, in Arizona at least, allow the provider to follow one order per patient encounter without online medical guidance. The administrative guidelines are, for the most part, broad in nature, which provides medical providers flexibility to treat the patient how

they see fit with only general guidance. As the Division moves forward, it will be essential to promote a more critical thinking way of managing patient treatment versus the previous practice, which was more of a "checkbox" method of providing care.

## Plan

While the content of Administrative Guidelines and means of communication are under constant evaluation, these forms of medical direction work well, and there are no plans to discontinue either of these guidance methods.

## References

Banner UMC Medical Direction Contract

**CC 5F.5 The agency creates and maintains a patient care record, hard copy or electronic, for each patient encountered. This report records a provider impression, patient history, data regarding treatment rendered and the patient disposition. The agency must make reasonable efforts to protect reports from public access and maintain them as per local, state/provincial and federal records retention requirements.**

## Description

The District creates patient care reports for each medical incident for every patient encounter. Currently, the reports are captured and maintained via the ePCR system, a NEMESIS-certified ePCR, ensuring the capture of relevant data for each patient. All patient care reports, electronic or historical paper reports, fall under the records retention rules that Arizona's Secretary of State manages. As a public agency, most work product is available to the public. However, the District takes its responsibility to safeguard protected patient information seriously. To this end, the District manages protected information in compliance with federally mandated rules and laws (HIPAA) and Arizona's revised statutes. For any records request, initiation of a request must go through the District's Custodian of Records, then Attorney. The District does not allow its billing company to release patient care records. The billing contract refers interested persons, including patients, insurance companies, and attorneys, to the District for this information.

## Appraisal

The CAD system automatically creates a run number for each patient encounter for each medical incident. QA then ensures the creation of an ePCR for each run

number (unless the call was determined to be a non-patient interaction). The ePCR will remain open until completed and cannot be deleted by field personnel. As stated earlier, the ePCR reports are NEMESIS v3.5 compliant, ensuring the complete documentation of necessary information before the report can be closed. As per above, public access to patient care reports or requests go through the District's administrative offices, and all requests are approved in accordance with applicable laws by the District's Custodian of Records, then Attorney.

## Plan

The District successfully implemented NEMESIS version 3.5 in July 2023 and has since focused on its ongoing refinement to meet the latest standards throughout the healthcare industry. Monthly audits conducted by the EMS Division compare completed ePCR reports with unit dispatches to identify and reconcile any discrepancies, ensuring report accuracy for each patient encounter and capturing all relevant and required information. While processes to safeguard patient-related information remain robust, the District continues to prioritize adapting to changes in rules, laws, and succession planning. To address this, personnel from the Medical Services Division regularly attend compliance-related training, ensuring the District maintains alignment with all state and federal requirements and continues to uphold its commitment to high standards of care and operational excellence.

## References

### EPCR Record Retention

Public Records Requests, NWFD: <http://www.northwestfire.org/public-info/public-record-request/>

NWFD SOG 7518 EMS Incident Reporting

NWFD ALS & BLS Documentation Training Power Points

**CC 5F.6 The agency has a program to maintain compliance with privacy laws such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) or equivalent (e.g., Canada's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy) that meets federal and state/provincial guidelines. All personnel are trained in HIPAA/FOIP regulations and procedures.**

## Description

The District makes its HIPAA information, Notice of Privacy Practices, available to the public via the District's external website within two mouse clicks per HIPAA guidelines. All patients transported by the Northwest Fire District have a Notice of Privacy Practices sent to them by the District's billing company. Additionally, the District mails or emails a copy of this document to anyone requesting it. All employees (paid or volunteer) or other individuals (ride-along) that have the potential to encounter patients or patient records are required to complete HIPAA training and test. Annual refresher training is delivered through Target Solutions learning management system.

With the start of the District's ambulance transport program, the District's Notice of Privacy Practices (NPP) was reviewed and updated by the District's legal counsel and the compliance department of the contracted billing service. To ensure HIPAA compliance, the District's billing company, upon receipt of an ePCR, automatically sends a copy of the District's NPP to each patient via USPS.

## Appraisal

The Northwest Fire District has complied with all HIPAA regulations and procedures; however, the rules and regulations for managing privacy-sensitive information are constantly evolving. As of March 2023, four members are Certified Ambulance Privacy Officers, three are Certified Ambulance Compliance Officers, and the District is further supported by five Documentation Specialists and one Certified Ambulance Manager. Additional personnel are slotted for Privacy and Compliance Officer training in 2025, ensuring the District remains proactive in adapting to changes and maintaining the highest standards for managing sensitive information.

## Plan

In response to the evolving landscape of privacy protection and compliance, the District remains committed to supporting and expanding its programs to ensure the highest standards of information management and regulatory adherence. With four Certified Ambulance Privacy Officers, three Certified Ambulance Compliance Officers, five Documentation Specialists, and one Certified Ambulance Manager, the District has built a strong foundation for maintaining compliance. To further enhance these efforts, additional personnel are scheduled for Privacy and Compliance Officer training in 2025. The District continues to invest in compliance-related training through partnerships with leading EMS compliance law groups such as PWW and by sending personnel to relevant classes. Ongoing collaboration with the billing vendor, Digitech, ensures adherence to federal billing regulations, reinforcing the District's dedication to ethical and accurate billing practices. By sustaining and refining these

initiatives, the District will remain proactive in adapting to regulatory changes and maintaining its commitment to operational excellence.

## References

NWFD Notice of Privacy Practices

NWFD HIPAA Guidelines

NWFD Target Solutions HIPAA Training

**5F.7 The agency has a quality improvement/quality assurance (QI/QA) program in place to improve system performance and patient outcomes including provisions for exchange of patient outcome data between the agency and receiving facilities.**

## Description

The Emergency Medical Services Division has two stated goals - to improve patient outcomes and to support field personnel in that endeavor. The District's QA/QI program is the foundation of these goals. It provides reviews on multiple levels, including with the State via two programs the District voluntarily participates in – Save Hearts in Arizona Registry and Education (SHARE) and Excellence in Prehospital Injury Care (EPIC), through a weekly QA meeting with the Medical Direction Team and through focused ePCR reviews.

The State provides individual and system-level feedback on Cardiac Arrest and Strokes through the SHARE programs and feedback on Traumatic Brain Injuries through the EPIC program. The District's weekly meetings with the medical direction team focus on QA/QI reviews that may require additional work on Administrative Guidelines or training - these are typically the most intensive calls. Further, to maintain the District's Premier EMS Agency Status with ADHS, one hundred percent (100%) of cardiac arrest, stroke, seizure, TBI, and chest pain incident types will be reviewed in the QA/QI process. Additionally, the District continues to follow the guidelines (NEMIS elements) of the State and its Medical Director and benchmarking with regular reports created for each incident type as mentioned above. After the first step of the QA/QI process is complete at the station Captain level, the EMS Captains review ePCRs and provide focused feedback to the crews to improve individual and system-wide performance.

## Appraisal

Over the past year, the QA/QI committee has become fully operational, providing a structured and efficient approach to quality assurance and improvement for all EMS incidents. The first level of QA/QI at the station Captain level has proven effective in delivering immediate feedback to crew members completing patient care reports and fostering timely improvements and accountability. Over the year, efforts were made to enhance the Captains' understanding of their specific focus within this initial stage of the QA/QI process, ensuring consistency and precision in evaluations. The second level of the process, conducted by the QA/QI committee, has further refined the review process by addressing broader trends, identifying system-wide improvements, and implementing evidence-based adjustments. This dual-layered approach has demonstrated significant value in maintaining high standards of care and ensuring continuous improvement throughout the organization.

## Plan

To build on the successes of the fully operational QA/QI committee, the District will enhance its quality assurance efforts by establishing a dedicated QA/QI Peer Review Work Group. This work group will consist of field personnel who bring firsthand experience and insight to the review process, ensuring that the second level of QA/QI is thorough, balanced, and informed by real-world practice. Guiding documents will be developed to standardize the peer review process, outline expectations, and provide clear direction for identifying trends, addressing issues, and fostering continuous improvement.

The EMS Division will also prioritize the refinement and implementation of training programs focused on report writing and quality assurance. These sessions will be delivered to field personnel and crews to ensure a uniform understanding of documentation standards and the QA/QI process in coordination with the Training Division. By providing targeted education, the District aims to enhance the consistency and accuracy of patient care reports and empower personnel to contribute effectively to quality assurance efforts.

This dual approach—peer-led reviews and focused training—will strengthen the District's QA/QI process, improve documentation practices, and support the overarching goal of delivering exceptional EMS care. Through collaboration and ongoing education, the District will continue to refine its systems and maintain its commitment to operational excellence.

## References

EPIC Website

**5F.8 The agency has implemented or developed a plan to implement a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and public access defibrillation program for the community.**

Description

The District is committed to educating community members on the steps to take if someone experiences cardiac arrest. With guidance from the University of Arizona's Sarver Heart Center, American Heart Association, and Medical Director Dr. Amber Rice, the Division's goal is to deploy hands-only CPR and Automatic Electronic Defibrillator (AED) training to as many community members as possible. The Division's execution plan includes AREST CPR and AED training for all attendees of babysitting classes and middle school courses, for all civilian members of the agency, and for community members and groups by appointment.

Working with the EMS Division, efforts extend beyond the scheduled classroom or requested events. Following a donation of CPR Anytime Kits, the District deployed a virtual training session to businesses in the community. Those kits were then taken back to employees who could scan a QR code on their cell phone, taking them directly to the short video produced by the District.

Staff coordinates with the Andra Heart Foundation, a local non-profit organization that provides AEDs for select community locations upon identification of a need.

Appraisal

The District has evolved its efforts related to CPR training and remained focused on delivering hands-only CPR and AED training to improve both the number of witnessed cardiac arrests where bystander CPR is initiated, as well as improving outcomes for those who suffer sudden cardiac arrest. Public Education staff successfully identified opportunities and delivered CPR/AED training to numerous community members. District staff partnered with the Andra Heart Foundation to provide AEDs and associated training to organizations in the District including the Marana Regional Airport and Carden of Tucson Charter School.

The Division purchased new CPR training cubes for all training programs offered. The cubes “talk” to the individuals going through the training and have proven to be an effective tool for training.

## Plan

Over the past year, the District has continued to prioritize and expand its efforts in delivering hands-only CPR and AED training, with a strong focus on improving bystander intervention rates and outcomes for sudden cardiac arrest victims. Public Education staff successfully identified and capitalized on numerous opportunities to train community members, enhancing public readiness for cardiac emergencies. Partnerships with organizations such as the Andra Heart Foundation facilitated the placement of AEDs and associated training in key locations across the District, including the Marana Regional Airport and Carden of Tucson Charter School, broadening the community's access to lifesaving equipment.

The purchase and implementation of new CPR training cubes have further improved training programs. These innovative tools, which provide real-time feedback to trainees, have proven highly effective in enhancing the quality and retention of CPR skills. Moving forward, EMS will continue to support public education staff by providing additional resources, collaborating on community engagement initiatives, and ensuring that training programs are equipped with the latest tools and techniques. By fostering partnerships, exploring grant opportunities, and leveraging advanced training technologies, the Division aims to sustain and grow its impact on community preparedness for cardiac emergencies.

## References

[Hands-Only CPR Training Video](#)

Babysitting Agenda 2025

**CC 5F.9 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal, at least annually, to determine the impact, outcomes and effectiveness of the program, and to measure its performance toward meeting the agency's goals and objectives.**

## Description

Since NWFD partnered with UMC/Banner in 2012, the District has used an evidence-based approach to provide emergency medical services. One of the most significant

steps in this process is identifying major call types where intervention can significantly impact patient outcomes through time and treatment. These call types are STEMI, Cardiac Arrest, Stroke, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Respiratory Illness, and recently added in the last year, the crashing patient. NWFD reviews 100 percent of these responses for performance on all these call types. The EMS captains constantly monitor and review these calls and through NWFD's medical direction, as well as in annual ePCR summary reports and as reported to the AZ State headquarters of the SHARE (Save Hearts in AZ Registry & Education) and EPIC (Excellence in Prehospital Injury Care) programs.

Documented evidence-based EMS outcomes are reported in the agency program appraisal (formerly ICBP) process that has been used as the program appraisal across the organization. The EMS program appraisal is in alignment with the budget and strategic planning processes.

#### Appraisal

The current NWFD system of EMS program appraisal, combined with the input from NWFD's medical control, has proven to be very effective in evaluating the most crucial call types, which directly correlate to the District's overall performance in meeting the goals and objectives of the EMS division. The EMS program appraisal has worked well to document and report on the outcomes realized by the Division's effort and tie together the budget and Strategic Plan's goals and objectives.

#### Plan

The Division will continue to complete an annual program appraisal using the data gathered from the forementioned reports to appraise the agency EMS system and function. The Medical Direction Team will continue to monitor critical calls through various benchmark dashboards through Report Writer and Continuum.

#### References

Program Appraisal Operational Service EMS & Communications Division

SHARE website

EPIC website

Written Guidelines for QA/QI

### **Criterion 9B: Communication Systems**

*The public and the agency have an adequate, effective and efficient emergency communications system. The system is reliable and able to meet the demands of major operations, including command and control within fire/rescue services during emergency operations, and meets the needs of other public safety agencies.*

## Summary

Northwest Fire District utilizes various Motorola portable, mobile, and transmitter/receiver equipment to ensure system reliability and adequacy. Northwest Fire District contracts with the City of Tucson to provide dispatching services. Northwest Fire District maintains a staff trained and certified in radio system maintenance within its Technical Services Division and has a contractual relationship with the City of Tucson for radio infrastructure maintenance on an as-needed basis. The District is also a full member of the Pima County Wireless Interoperability Network (PCWIN) and has a program with them to maintain and service compatible radios. This system is a robust, county-wide 800Mhz digital trunked interoperable radio system with multiple simulcast redundant sites that provides communication between all public safety agencies.

The City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) uses technology, personnel, and procedures to be as effective and efficient as possible and can handle the current and anticipated call volume. NWFD has asked for the Alarm Room to work towards meeting compliance with NFPA 1061, Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Safety Telecommunicator, and NFPA 1221, Standard for the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems. The PSCD has an uninterrupted power supply (UPS) capable of supporting operations during the transition to the generators. This set of units is redundantly configured and capable of powering all equipment within the center, including the HVAC system.

**CC 9B.1 A system is in place to ensure communications with portable, mobile, and fixed communications systems in the field. When an area is identified as not allowing for adequate emergency scene communication, such as inside buildings or below grade-level, an operational plan is documented and tested.**

## Description

Northwest Fire District uses the most current Motorola two-way radios for handheld and mobile applications. As a full participating member in PCWIN, the radios are dual-band 800 MHz / VHF radios. NWFD conducts all radio communications on the PCWIN system. As a member of PCWIN, the radios are serviced annually by the PCWIN radio staff.

PCWIN maintains coverage with a full multi-site simulcast 800 MHz trunked digital radio system. This system allows interoperable communications with all neighboring departments and local law enforcement.

NWFD also maintains a very high frequency (VHF) radio system, a seven-site, analog, simulcast system to provide redundant coverage of the entire District. This new system was designed with computer modeling to ensure complete coverage with field transmission testing to ensure coverage. This system would only be relied upon when the PCWIN system has failed. It also provides the District with a full-time, monitored, simplex channel that the dispatch center can monitor.

### Appraisal

With the combination of PCWIN and the District's VHF system, Northwest Fire District has a robust and reliable radio system. There are occasional interruptions in service delivery due to network outages; however, there are redundant links to compensate for these interruptions. Historically there have also been certain buildings within the District where radio reception in certain parts of the building has been an issue.

### Plan

Northwest Fire District has yet to traditionally require builders of new construction to meet Section 510 of the ICC fire code. However, the NWFD Prevention Division ensures that all new construction meets section 510 to provide adequate radio coverage.

The switch to the PCWIN system has also dramatically improved radio communications from inside structures, and NWFD will continue to strengthen the VHF simulcast radio system to ensure adequate radio reception coverage.

### References

International Fire Code 2018 Edition, Section 510 Pages 67-69

PCWIN member memo [Resolution No. 2015.pdf](#)

[PCWIN MAINT.url](#)

**9B.2 The emergency communications system is capable of receiving automatic and/or manual early warning and other emergency reporting signals.**

## Description

The City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) is not currently configured to receive automatic alerts from outside sources. No pull boxes are available in the system, and all communications into the center are handled via wired or wireless phone lines. There are no fire alarms directly monitored in the center, and weather alerts are received via cable television or the internet through monitoring the National Weather Service. All contact with the telecommunicators occurs via wired or wireless telephone, radio voice, and data systems. Mutual aid requests are received via landlines from other area dispatch centers.

## Appraisal

The communications system works well per its original design; however, the current computer aided dispatch system does not interface with outside data sources such as RSS feeds for weather or the reception of automatic alarms.

## Plan

The plan is to collaborate with PSCD to explore the feasibility of integrating external data sources into the District's CAD system. By doing so, the Division can enhance the emergency response capabilities of the system by enabling it to receive automatic and/or manual early warning and other emergency reporting signals from these sources. The Division's collaboration with PSCD will be crucial in identifying potential data sources, assessing their feasibility for integration, and implementing any necessary changes to the system to improve its functionality. Additionally, the Division plans to monitor the flow rates of streams, dry riverbeds, and washes through Pima County during monsoon or storm conditions, which can provide critical information for emergency response planning and decision-making. Furthermore, Northwest Fire District will continue to work with PSCD to expand the system's reach beyond the city, through the implementation of the TRAK School emergency push button, which will directly interface with CAD and make it possible to extend its use into the County further ensuring that the system can receive automatic and/or manual early warning and other emergency reporting signals to better serve the community.

## References

COT Memorandum Paragraph 3

**9B.3 The agency's communications center(s) is/are adequately equipped and designed (e.g., security, telephones, radios, equipment status, alarm devices,**

**computers, address files, dispatching circuits, playback devices, recording systems, printers, consoles, desks, chairs, lighting and map displays).**

#### Description

The dispatching and communication systems that the District contracts with the City of Tucson consist of Enhanced 911, computer-aided dispatching, and other communications systems, such as the Master Street Address Guide, that adequately, effectively, and efficiently dispatch emergency apparatus and support staff. Fire Alarm (title of the City of Tucson dispatch services) can disseminate pertinent information to emergency personnel and various public safety agencies via voice or electronically to NWFD in-vehicle computers. The various components are redundant.

Additionally, the Communications Center recently underwent a \$4 million renovation. This renovation encompassed all aspects of the center, from flooring, consoles, chairs, lighting, and arrangement. It also included the addition of numerous LCD televisions that can project current weather information and weather radar from the National Weather Service (NWS) during storms.

#### Appraisal

The communications Center has adequate radio control stations, consoles, computerized telephony devices, and accommodations to manage incidents within the Northwest Fire District. With the recent transition to PCWIN, any position in the center can back up NWFD during significant events. The Alarm Room has shown the ability to meet the demands of major operations, including multiple full alarm incidents at the same time.

#### Plan

The City of Tucson has entered into an agreement with the State of Arizona for a new "Managed Services" agreement for Next-Gen 911. This agreement will significantly increase the capabilities of the and upgrades of hardware and software for the 911 phone system. This system provides for more seamless redundancy and transition to the back-up 911 center in the event of catastrophic failure. This service was brought online at the end of 2017 and is currently being optimized. NWFD will continue to work with the City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) staff to evaluate the supervision, management, personnel and equipment requirements, and operating policies necessary for operational proficiency.

#### References

**9B.4 The uninterrupted electrical power supply for the primary communications equipment in the communications center is reliable and tested and has automatic backup capability.**

Description

The uninterrupted electrical power supply for the primary communications equipment in the communications center is a reliable and tested system that is equipped with automatic backup capability. The City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) has implemented an uninterrupted power supply (UPS) that is capable of supporting operations during the transition to the generators, ensuring that communications can continue uninterrupted even during a power outage. To ensure that the generators are in optimal condition, the generators at the City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) dispatch center are subject to a monthly test schedule. During these tests, the generator is run once a month for about 30 minutes with building load connected, which is only about 10% of the generator rating. Without adding any fuel, the generator can easily handle 48 to 60 hours, which provides ample time for any required maintenance or repairs to be completed without any interruption to the center's operations. In addition to the maintenance and testing of the generators, the City of Tucson Fleet Services is responsible for handling all refueling requests, ensuring that the generators are always fully fueled and ready for use at a moment's notice. Logs of these tests are kept and are available for review to ensure compliance with all regulatory requirements and to facilitate ongoing maintenance and improvement efforts. The primary fuel for the generators is diesel fuel, which is supplemented by a propane feed backup system. This set of units is redundantly configured and is capable of powering all equipment within the center, including the HVAC system, which ensures that the communications center can continue to function even during extended power outages or other emergencies. Furthermore, to ensure the reliability of the system, the generators undergo preventive maintenance checks on a monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, annual, and three-year basis. Moreover, a UPS system is in place to back up the center in case the generator fails to start during an outage. The system also has redundant transfer switches, and if one fails, the load can be rerouted to the working transfer switch. Additionally, there are connections available to bring in a portable generator if the site generator experiences a major failure. In addition, all radio tower sites and NWFD fire stations are supplied with generators and UPS to keep mission-critical communications devices running during the transition to generator power. NWFD facilities have a variety of fuel sources/types on a quarterly test schedule. The results of these tests

kept in the District's central Managers Plus site for monitoring/repair by facilities maintenance.

#### Appraisal

The scheduled and documented generator tests verify the ability of the system to provide uninterrupted power to the control center (City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD)), the radio transmission sites, and the Emergency response facilities (ERF-Fire Stations). The system in place has operated effectively during storms and power outages.

#### Plan

There are no plans to replace any of these systems in the near term. However, the design of the new Pima Emergency Communications and Operations Center (PECOC) is to be entirely independent of the electrical grid should the power supply be compromised. This facility is the backup dispatch center for The City of Tucson and Northwest Fire District.

#### References

Exhibit 9B.4 Generator PM Program

### **9B.5 Adequate numbers of fire or emergency telecommunicators, supervisors and management personnel are on duty to handle the anticipated call volume.**

#### Description

The City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) ensures adequate staffing to handle the anticipated call volume for both fire and police emergencies. The department has an authorized staff of 183 to provide 24/7 position coverage in the Alarm Room. The staffing levels for the consolidated center are approved as follows: Call Takers (50), Dispatchers (74), Lead Dispatchers (5), and Supervisors (21). The current full-time staffing levels meet the minimum requirements based on anticipated call volume, with 44 Call Takers, 40 Dispatchers (25 Fire Dispatchers and 15 Police Dispatchers), one (1) Lead Dispatcher, and 21 Supervisors. While the exact number of positions has not been specified, the number of dispatchers/radio operators on duty is never below a minimum of six fire dispatchers, with the minimum number of call takers at 12. This provides a dispatcher for calls and a tactical radio operator. The City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) and NWFD have transitioned away from dedicated "County" call takers and instead, all call taking positions handle calls for all

agencies. In addition, all positions in the room have the same telephone system and radios, thus enabling any position to back-up and assist during heavy call volumes or large incidents. The consolidation with police positions has increased this capacity and has required that employees participate in cross training for call taking and dispatching. NWFD closely monitors the performance of the Communications Center and has worked with City personnel to streamline and simplify response plans as well as create more consistency amongst agencies. Northwest Fire District has assigned a Captain to the PSCD Alarm Room as a regional liaison with two other Captains from Golder Ranch Fire District and Tucson Fire who work a 3/4 24-hour schedule to ensure that the District's needs are being met 24/7. The NWFD Captain will work with PSCD Dispatch Supervisory Staff and consortium partner agencies to update the dispatch procedure manual.

### Appraisal

The City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) has seen a decrease in performance and a high turnover rate over the last year as the police and fire dispatchers have been consolidated. City staff has recognized this and engaged a new senior staff in the division to address these issues.

### Plan

There is room for more efficiency in the City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD). When the number of FTEs and total number of calls processed are compared with other cities, the information suggests that PSCD operators process about half of the number of calls in comparable cities.

NWFD's plan is to assist PSCD with evaluating workflows and dispatch/call taking positions to make operations more efficient. Northwest Fire has recognized the benefit of having all agencies in the dispatch center utilizing the same station alerting system but funding for other agencies has not been realized. The Division will continue to evaluate call processing times as a part of the SOC to ensure that the needs of the District continue to be met.

### References

#### 9B.5 Folder Staffing Levels

NFPA 1221 Standard for the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems.

**9B.6 A maintenance program is in place with regularly scheduled and documented system tests.**

## Description

The City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) has adequate maintenance programs in place and system tests that occur regularly in accordance with NFPA 1221, chapter 11, with the exception of daily testing for battery back-ups. In this system, the batteries are constantly monitored, and tests are performed weekly. The CAD system is continuously creating a backup. An automated system completes a test of the backup generator every week. The Center conducts radio and station alerting system tests daily. In-house support and maintenance contracts are in place to support various components of the system. Northwest Fire District provides radio infrastructure support for the Northwest Dispatch Consortium from the Technical Services Division. This infrastructure support is 24/7, with a paid-on call system of technicians.

The City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) Radio Maintenance Division provides assistance to Northwest Fire District when central radio equipment needs testing/repair. All peripheral/remote equipment is maintained by a team of technicians, employees of the Northwest Fire District and contractors to the Northwest Fire District.

## Appraisal

The scheduled maintenance program for the City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) has proven adequate with procedures established to handle power failures, radio outages, and allow monitoring circuits to stations. Radio and station circuits are monitored by a remote system and alerts are sent to staff in the event of a failure/interruption.

## Plan

Northwest Fire District has developed a routine maintenance program to assess the effectiveness of the communications system as well as ensure that all equipment has preventative maintenance performed on a regular basis. This assessment and service will be documented and stored in a central location. As part of the program, the end users will be surveyed to ensure that the system is meeting their needs.

## References

COT Memorandum Paragraph 4

[IGA-PCWIN 2015-020.pdf](#)

[Resolution No. 2015.pdf](#)

**9B.7 The agency has established time-based performance objectives for alarm handling. These objectives are formally communicated to communications center managers through direct report, contracts, service level agreements and/or memorandums of agreement and are reviewed at least annually to ensure time-based performance objectives are met.**

#### Description

Northwest Fire District has adopted the standards set in NFPA 1221 as the standard for alarm handling.

#### Appraisal

Northwest Fire District has been diligent in working with the City of Tucson Alarm Room to reduce call processing times (CPTs). One of the objectives of the NWFD captain assigned to the Alarm Room is to assist with the reduction of call processing times, particularly related to those calls that are time sensitive i.e., stroke, chest pain and cardiac arrest. NWFD has worked with PSCD to use the First Watch program for dispatchers to see real-time status of CPTs.

There has been a steady decline in CPT's over the last several years, particularly evident at the point that NWFD began to assign a Captain to the Alarm Room. With these decreases, there is still much room for improvement. The NWFD Alarm Room Captain, with help of PSCD statisticians, evaluates the CPTs monthly. The goal is to be fully compliant with the standards set forth in NFPA 1221. In addition, the SOC group will evaluate the performance on an annual basis to ensure that the needs of the District are being met.

#### Plan

Northwest Fire District will continue to work with the City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department to decrease Call processing times for emergency calls. In addition to working with PSCD directly, NWFD continues to use station alerting system that helps to decrease CPTs by eliminating a step in the dispatch process. Calls are sent to the individual Stations as soon as the call is created and does not rely on the dispatcher to speak the dispatch information over the air.

This also eliminates the inherent lag time with the current system and allows simultaneous dispatches to multiple stations.

#### References

See times listed for SOC and CPTs

NFPA 1221 Standard for the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems.

[CPT.url](#)

**9B.8 Communications training programs for emergency telecommunicators and emergency response personnel ensure adequate, timely and reliable agency emergency response.**

Description

The City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department maintains a training program that includes classroom, hands on and guided on the job training activities. The system in place is an 'in house' developed program that does not depend on the Association of Public Communications Officials (APCO) – International 33 or National Emergency Number Association (NENA) standards. While some facets of this training program have been based on principles outlined in APCO/NENA standards, they are more specific and targeted to the NW Dispatch consortium operations and guidelines.

The training period is about nine to ten months from the time of initial hiring and is broken down into four major steps. These steps are designed to train operators to become 9-1-1 call takers, radio dispatchers and familiarize them with the more specific county fire district policies and procedures. Operators are initially trained for six weeks to become a call taker. They then move on to train for six weeks at each position and receive an additional seven weeks of training on county-specific operations. Before program completion, each of the candidates is closely supervised and does not function independently.

Northwest Fire District and Fire Alarm staff have made great strides in creating workflow patterns that are similar for both the county and the city positions, thereby making it easy for dispatchers to comfortably transition and operate in support of either area.

Appraisal

The training program produces functional telecommunicators, and the Alarm Room experiences about 65% retention of personnel that complete the training. A 35% turnover is on par with other communications centers in the Pima County and Arizona area. While there will continue to be differences in the different organization's needs, the commonality of operations has increased the effectiveness of the dispatchers.

## Plan

The NWFD Alarm Room Captain will continue to work closely with the training office to ensure adequate training of the dispatchers with an emphasis on County operations. The NWFD Alarm Room Captain will also continue to work with PSCD staff to find areas where more efficient processes can be used.

## References

[Shift Alarm Room Captain.pdf](#)

**9B.9 The interoperability of the communications system is documented, tested and evaluated. The agency has processes in place to provide for interoperability with other public safety agencies in the field including portable, mobile and fixed communications systems, tools and equipment.**

## Description

NWFD is a fully participating member of the Pima County Wireless Interoperability Network (PCWIN) and can communicate with any other member of PCWIN, including fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies. In addition, Northwest Fire District maintains a robust VHF radio network that members of the County Consortium can utilize. NWFD can communicate with neighboring agencies, not full members of PCWIN, through this VHF system. NWFD also can operate on Arizona Interagency Radio System (AIRS).

## Appraisal

PCWIN provides a functional interoperable system that allows participating users to communicate efficiently. There is still some resistance from agencies to utilize the interoperability talk groups, and they tend to use their routine talk groups. More training and familiarity are needed with the system.

## Plan

The NWFD Alarm Room Captain will develop a written guide and training to help with the familiarity of the PCWIN system and its use.

## References

PCWIN Managing Talkgroups – Interoperability Talkpaths

PCWIN Managing Talkgroups – AIRS Usage Procedure

[Auto Aid Radio Fleetmap 2021.pdf](#)

**9B.10 The dispatch process utilizes a formal and recognized emergency medical dispatch (EMD) system that allows for pre-arrival instructions and adequate triaging of medical calls for service.**

Description

Northwest Fire District, through the City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department, utilizes Criteria Based Dispatch (CBD) for Emergency Medical Dispatch and pre-arrival instructions. Northwest Fire District, through the City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department, utilizes Criteria Based Dispatch (CBD) for Emergency Medical Dispatch and pre-arrival instructions. CBD was developed by King County, Washington and implemented in 1990. Criteria Based Dispatch (CBD) is based on the recognition that the level of care (ALS vs. BLS) needed by the patient and the urgency of patient care should be the determining factors in the level of response. (Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Program - King County, n.d.)

Appraisal

The ProQA system previously used by NWFD did not adequately meet the needs of the District. The City of Tucson switched from ProQA to CBD in April of 2017.

NWFD worked with its Dispatch Center, at the time run by Tucson Fire Department, to evaluate the effectiveness of the current EMD program, ProQA. It was determined that ProQA did not meet the needs of the District because it took too long to determine an appropriate dispatch code and determine the need to provide pre-arrival instructions. The Dispatch Center adopted Criteria Based Dispatch (CBD) in 2017 with the expectation it would decrease the amount of time needed to dispatch units and recognize the need to provide pre-arrival instructions. This change has not produced the expected results of decreased call processing times; however, call takers have demonstrated an increased recognition of the need to perform CPR and provide instructions. While not all factors impacting the delayed call processing time are known, there are several factors we believe contribute to the long processing times. First the call takers at PSCD are cross trained to answer both police and fire 911 calls. The reality is the steps to process these call types differ greatly between fire and police. Often with police calls (with the exception of the highest emergent call types), the role

of the call taker is to gather as much information as possible before the call is dispatched. On the fire side the opposite is preferred where minimum information necessary is gathered to determine emergent vs non-emergent and dispatch units. The human nature side would suggest that the call taker may experience some challenges switching back and forth between these two different tempos. Additionally, PSCD dispatches nine different fire departments/districts. Each fire agency has different resourcing and response plan. Eight of the agencies are subscribers to PSCD paying a fee for service with the ninth being Tucson Fire Department who is the host agency. Due to the significantly higher population densities and call volume Tucson Fire uses multiple different response apparatus to respond to different call types. This requires more questions to be asked prior to dispatching to identify the appropriate call type and therefore the appropriate resource deployment. NWFD on the other hand, sends an ALS Engine company to every call type and supplements with additional resources if they are determined to be needed. This would allow for quicker dispatching of District units if automatic call acceptance were to be enabled but that feature cannot be segregated to just one agency. Ultimately the only method to decrease call processing time is to collaborate with all other fire agencies and PSCD to find solutions to the increased processing time. The executive staff of PSCD meets with all nine Fire Chiefs and/or the assigned representatives on a quarterly basis. The topic of response times has been on the agenda for several of the past meetings and is a recurring topic for upcoming meetings. Additionally, The Tucson Fire Department has initiated the internal process to seek accreditation themselves and NWFD and TFD staff members are sharing information to assist them in being successful in the process. The Tucson Fire Department is aware of the challenges associated with increased call times and has a vested interest in assisting with finding a solution so that their own accreditation process will be successful.

## Plan

The greatest challenge to overcoming the call processing times for NWFD is that it is a subscriber and not an owner of the system and therefore is limited in the ability to demand changes to operational procedures. With that being known, NWFD has two choices at its disposal. It can leave the services of the PSCD Dispatch Center and stand up its own system or work collaboratively with PSCD staff to identify challenges and improve the system for all users. The task of standing up a District owned system would be premature given all the other tremendous benefits associated with being a subscriber of PSCD and would be cost prohibitive. The alternative of working with PSCD as a continued partner offers much greater opportunities for success. There have been recent management changes at PSCD, which have resulted in the new Department Director being a retired Assistant Chief from Tucson Fire and the Interim Deputy Director is a Deputy Chief from Tucson Fire on extended loan to PSCD. The

deep fire service background these two individuals possess is beneficial to understanding the challenges faced. NWFD and TFD Operations Chiefs along with the management staff from PSCD hold a weekly meeting to discuss challenges that are identified in the system and work to find quick solutions to mitigate those problems and as mentioned earlier, the Command Staff from PSCD and all agency Fire Chiefs meet quarterly to identify larger problems that are not easy to resolve and identify solutions to those problems. Most of the changes just mentioned are relatively new collaborations that have just been initiated or revamped in the past year and we expect to see positive solutions to many of the larger challenges being addressed within the next year. As a more immediate and simpler remedy the NWFD Alarm Room Captain is the onsite and first level solution to improving call processing times. It is recommended to PSCD staff that the Alarm Room Captain work with the call takers at PSCD to ensure the expected efficiencies of CBD are realized. The mentoring of the call takers by the Alarm Room Captain will help combat any human error and help the call takers understand why the call processing benchmarks are so important to the end user.

## References

CBD Licensing Agreement

[CPT.url](#)

### **9B.11 The agency has a documented and tested system in place for the notification and recall of off-duty agency personnel and telecommunicators for unplanned, large-scale incidents.**

#### Description

NWFD has implemented a comprehensive system for the recall of off-duty personnel during incidents of significance, ensuring a rapid and effective response. The responsibility for initiating the recall lies with the Battalion Chief who is not assigned to the incident or the Alarm Room Captain in situations where both Battalion Chiefs are assigned. This system provides clear guidelines and protocols for contacting and mobilizing available personnel during emergencies. PSCD does not have dispatchers on call but can request them to come in during emergencies. The agency is staffed to the requirements set by NFPA and will hold over staff as needed to maintain these staffing levels. Although dispatchers are not required to monitor their phones after hours, PSCD is committed to maintaining adequate staffing levels during emergencies to ensure a timely and effective response. PSCD has its own Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) that they utilize to ensure operations continue during times of unplanned, large-scale incidents. PSCD has advised that they have a process

in place to request personnel to report back to the Dispatch Center in the event of a large-scale emergency. PSCD also states that due to the consolidation and cross training of police and fire dispatchers they have an appropriate level of staff on duty daily to mitigate any request for service that may be required. Specifically, the dispatchers on the fire side can handle the four separate medical response channels and the three different tactical channels with the personnel available on a daily basis plus support from the on-duty supervisor and Alarm Room Captain.

## Appraisal

The off-duty recall system is rarely used (last event January 8, 2011) due to District growth along with use of automatic and mutual-aid agreements with surrounding entities. Communications for recalls are reliable through Telestaff messages sent to primary and secondary contacts for all off-duty personnel. The same messaging system is used reliably for filling last-minute vacancies.

## Plan

A formalized process for recalling off-duty personnel for incidents of significance will be developed in the form of an SOG, along with a group paging system and made available to all personnel on SharePoint. Additionally, an updated Command Staff paging system is being developed in collaboration with PSCD. In order to improve the recall of off-duty personnel for incidents of significance, NWFD will develop a formalized process in the form of a Standard Operating Guideline (SOG). This SOG will be made available to all personnel on SharePoint and will include a group paging system for efficient communication. Furthermore, in collaboration with PSCD, an updated Command Staff paging system will be developed to improve the recall process. These efforts will help ensure that the agency has a documented and tested system in place for the notification and recall of off-duty agency personnel and telecommunicators for unplanned, large-scale incidents.

## References

SOG #6902: Daily Staffing

SOG #6905: Move-Ups

[Command Page Template.xlsx](#)

**9B.12 The agency has a documented plan, which is reviewed and tested annually, to ensure continuity in communicating during any partial or total disruption or failure of a communications system or facility.**

Description

The City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Department has a documented plan that provides guidance in relocating some or all the communications functions to a backup facility if needed. This includes 911 primary phone lines, radios, and CAD systems. A documented plan guides the dispatch center in a CAD-down scenario that does not require relocation.

Pima County controls the PCWIN Radio system. This system is robust and has built-in redundancies should a partial failure occur. It is also designed to fail back into site trunking if needed. These challenges field units sometimes because they can communicate with each other but not with the dispatch center. As a backup to that scenario, NWFD maintains a seven-site analog VHF simplex system that is monitored by the dispatch center and available for use on all radios.

Appraisal

PSCD's plan is maintained internally. Personnel from the Dispatch Center are sent to the backup location once per month to verify the functionality of all systems in case a move is required.

Pima County's backup plan for the PCWIN Radio System is maintained internally and is coordinated through contracts with Motorola.

The backup VHF system is a low-maintenance system. Receiver sites are all connected through the network and are monitored by IT staff for connectivity issues. There needs to be a documented plan for testing the VHF backup system. NWFD staff will need to develop and implement a document that ensures the system is functioning.

Plan

NWFD will continue to be active participants in its systems with contract partners to validate and verify that their internal back up plans continue to meet the need of this organization. Staff will also work to provide a documented procedure for testing the backup VHF system operated outside the contracts with PSCD and PCWIN. Additionally, the agency will continue to review and update its contingency plan to account for any changes or improvements in communication technology.

## References

**CC 9B.13 A formal and documented appraisal is conducted, at least annually, to determine the effectiveness of the emergency communications systems and their impact of meeting the agency's goals and objectives.**

## Description

The Northwest Fire District has implemented the program appraisal process, which aligns the organization's strategic planning process with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) model's performance measures and budget. The program appraisal document template is completed annually, and it serves as a formal and documented appraisal of the organizational programs, including the Communications Division, ensuring that they are evaluated based on efficiency and needs and budgeted accordingly for improvement needs if applicable. Additionally, the Northwest Fire District holds formal quarterly meetings with the Southern Arizona Fire and Emergency Response Consortium (SAFERC) group. It maintains documentation of meeting agendas to address any concerns or issues with the effectiveness of PSCD in meeting the consortium's needs. The District also participates in weekly meetings with the City of Tucson Public Service Communication Department (PSCD) command staff to manage issues weekly and in a timelier manner that are not addressed in the quarterly meetings. Overall, these efforts aim to ensure that the effectiveness of the emergency communications systems is formally and regularly appraised, and the agency's goals and objectives are met.

## Appraisal

Northwest Fire District has been diligent about surveying its members as to the effectiveness of the communications system. The Northwest Fire District implemented the program appraisal, formerly known as the Internal Compliance, Budget, and Planning (ICBP), process in 2018. This plan should help to document changes that occurred in the last year as well as plans for changes in the future. One of the items that is constantly evaluated is call processing times. NWFDF has been using the First Watch and NFORs system to track and evaluate these times with PSCD using Vest internally. NWFDF continues to monitor and evaluate response plans and the impact they have on responders and the public. Northwest Fire District conducts regular appraisals to assess the effectiveness of its communication system, with call processing times being a key factor in the evaluation. The Division has been using the First Watch and NFORs system to track and evaluate call processing times internally with PSCD. To aid in this effort, the District has implemented the program appraisal process, which provides a formal and

documented assessment of the Division's activities and plans. The program appraisal process aligns with the CFAI model's performance measures and ties in with the organization's budget. NWFD is committed to monitoring and evaluating response plans and their impact on responders and the public, with the program appraisal process serving as an effective tool for tracking current goals and objectives. The outcomes of the appraisal are reported to the Governing Board monthly, and the program appraisals are integrated into the budgeting process and presented and approved during the agency's budget approval process. The Communications Division has completed these documents since 2019. Through these efforts, NWFD is continually improving its emergency communications systems and their impact on meeting the agency's goals and objectives.

Plan

The District plans to continue the appraisal process as the formal and documented appraisal for all divisions within the organization. Updates to the document will result from changes in credentialing authorities and as the agency works toward continuous quality improvement.

References

NWFD Comm. evaluation program

NFORS [analytics.nfors.org.url](https://analytics.nfors.org.url)

**FINANCE BUDGET DEPARTMENT ID:**

Department Finance ID #	Department(s)
3400	EMS Services
4150	Dispatch Services

**ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST**

\$877,886      EMS Services

\$989,379      Dispatch Services

## PROGRAM ECONOMIC EFFICIENCIES IDENTIFIED DURING PREPARATION OF PROPOSED BUDGET

N/A

## CAPITAL ITEM REQUEST DISCUSSION

N/A

## LINE-ITEM DISCUSSION

N/A

## PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 BUDGET

Account	Account Name	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Adopted Budget	2025-26 Proposed Budget	Variance	Comment
<b>3400 - EMS Services</b>						
51110	Salaries	\$ 114,093	\$ 197,101	\$ 195,582	\$ (1,519)	Staffing Change
51120	Hourly	\$ 218,671	\$ 208,776	\$ 212,570	\$ 3,794	Step Increase
51150	Overtime	\$ 406	\$ -	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	
51190	PTO Paid Out	\$ 15,608	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
51211	Medical Insurance	\$ 37,899	\$ 49,719	\$ 53,160	\$ 3,441	Premium Increase
51212	Dental Insurance	\$ 1,152	\$ 1,932	\$ 1,900	\$ (32)	
51213	Vision Insurance	\$ 321	\$ 456	\$ 448	\$ (8)	
51215	PSPRS-Cancer Insurance	\$ 150	\$ 150	\$ 150	\$ -	
51216	Life Insurance	\$ 122	\$ 168	\$ 168	\$ -	
51218	STD Insurance	\$ 711	\$ 991	\$ 874	\$ (117)	
51230	Social Security	\$ -	\$ 4,760	\$ 4,524	\$ (236)	Staffing Change
51231	Medicare	\$ 4,820	\$ 5,885	\$ 5,954	\$ 69	
51250	PSPRS	\$ 136,421	\$ 136,018	\$ 140,511	\$ 4,493	Step Increase
51251	ASRS	\$ -	\$ 9,420	\$ 8,756	\$ (664)	Staffing Change
51280	Deferred Compensation	\$ 5	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
51290	PEHP	\$ 3,414	\$ 4,059	\$ 4,107	\$ 48	
<b>Total Personnel</b>		<b>\$ 533,791</b>	<b>\$ 619,435</b>	<b>\$ 631,204</b>	<b>\$ 11,769</b>	
52139	Operational Equipment	\$ 1,555	\$ 7,500	\$ 3,000	\$ (4,500)	Equipment as Needed
52140	Operational Supplies	\$ 774	\$ 4,000	\$ 1,000	\$ (3,000)	Equipment as Needed
52160	Dues, Memberships & Subscriptions	\$ 21	\$ 1,600	\$ 2,600	\$ 1,000	Arizona Ambo Assoc Incr.
52162	AZDHS & Federal Licensure	\$ 4,328	\$ 7,328	\$ 8,078	\$ 750	3 Additional Ambulances
52170	Travel & Per Diem	\$ 8,924	\$ 16,900	\$ 18,650	\$ 1,750	PWW Compliance Trng. Incr.
52177	Meals & Entertainment	\$ 2,081	\$ 500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,000	Increased Events and Costs
52180	Training	\$ 8,006	\$ 8,450	\$ 11,450	\$ 3,000	PWW Compliance Trng. Incr.
52181	Training-Paramedic School	\$ 35,500	\$ 56,000	\$ 56,000	\$ -	
52184	Training - Recertification	\$ 4,717	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
52225	Medical Direction	\$ 128,250	\$ 137,600	\$ 144,404	\$ 6,804	Service Increase
<b>Total Non-Personnel</b>		<b>\$ 194,157</b>	<b>\$ 239,878</b>	<b>\$ 246,682</b>	<b>\$ 6,804</b>	
<b>Total EMS Services 3400</b>		<b>\$ 727,948</b>	<b>\$ 859,313</b>	<b>\$ 877,886</b>	<b>\$ 18,573</b>	

Account	Account Name	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Adopted Budget	2025-26 Proposed Budget	Variance	Comment
<b>4150 - Dispatch Services</b>						
51110	Salaries	\$ 73,241	\$ 80,432	\$ 82,445	\$ 2,013	Step Increase
51120	Hourly	\$ 94,816	\$ 102,496	\$ 104,477	\$ 1,981	Step Increase
51140	Holiday Pay	\$ 2,299	\$ 2,105	\$ -	\$ (2,105)	Aligned to Actual
51150	Overtime	\$ 6,171	\$ 9,360	\$ 6,000	\$ (3,360)	Aligned to Actual
51190	PTO Paid Out	\$ 38,808	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
51211	Medical Insurance	\$ 20,550	\$ 24,860	\$ 26,580	\$ 1,720	Premium Increase
51212	Dental Insurance	\$ 768	\$ 966	\$ 950	\$ (16)	
51213	Vision Insurance	\$ 214	\$ 228	\$ 224	\$ (4)	
51215	PSPRS-Cancer Insurance	\$ 50	\$ 50	\$ 50	\$ -	
51216	Life Insurance	\$ 80	\$ 84	\$ 84	\$ -	
51218	STD Insurance	\$ 443	\$ 465	\$ 443	\$ (22)	
51230	Social Security	\$ 4,111	\$ 4,987	\$ 5,112	\$ 125	
51231	Medicare	\$ 2,982	\$ 2,819	\$ 2,797	\$ (22)	
51250	PSPRS	\$ 42,306	\$ 47,100	\$ 45,970	\$ (1,130)	Staffing Change
51251	ASRS	\$ 9,001	\$ 9,869	\$ 9,893	\$ 24	
51290	PEHP	\$ 1,791	\$ 1,944	\$ 1,929	\$ (15)	
<b>Total Personnel</b>		<b>\$ 297,632</b>	<b>\$ 287,765</b>	<b>\$ 286,954</b>	<b>\$ (811)</b>	
52140	Operational Supplies	\$ 1,326	\$ 1,575	\$ 1,575	\$ -	
52170	Travel & Per Diem	\$ 3,533	\$ 5,100	\$ 5,100	\$ -	
52180	Training	\$ -	\$ 3,400	\$ 3,400	\$ -	
52390	Dispatch Services	\$ 591,596	\$ 656,879	\$ 692,350	\$ 35,471	City of Tucson Service Incr.
<b>Total Non-Personnel</b>		<b>\$ 596,456</b>	<b>\$ 666,954</b>	<b>\$ 702,425</b>	<b>\$ 35,471</b>	
<b>Total Dispatch Services 4150</b>		<b>\$ 894,088</b>	<b>\$ 954,719</b>	<b>\$ 989,379</b>	<b>\$ 34,660</b>	

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS, TABLES, CHARTS, ETC

N/A

## REFERENCES

N/A