



San Jose Fire Fighters • Local 230

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August 8, 2013

Council Member Pete Constant, Chair
Council Member Madison Nguyen, Vice Chair
Council Member Kansen Chu
Council Member Pierluigi Oliverio
Public Safety, Finance, & Strategic Support Committee
City of San Jose City Council
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Support for the Firefighter Breathing Replenishment Systems

It is my understanding that your committee will be considering the requirement for installation of either Firefighter Air Replenishment Systems (FARS) or firefighter elevators in high-rise buildings. I am writing to urge that the FARS installation requirement stand alone without the option for firefighter elevators.

As you may know, fires in high-rise buildings pose a serious challenge to responding firefighters. Stairwells are critical to successful operations. Stairwells serve as protected safe refuge areas as required through building and fire code standards. They serve all floors of the structures despite electrical interruptions or fire location, and are the egress path for evacuating occupants. Firefighters extend hoses from stairwell standpipes and retreat to those locations from danger or to change air bottles. Stairwells are the lifeline to safety for firefighters. Elevators are not. Elevators are not reliable under fire conditions and are not located within the protection, support, and egress that stairwells provide.

Breathing air and water are the two critical resources that firefighters need for the sustained operations in structure fire environments. Water is supplied by fire pumps within building and/or fire engines at the street level. Air can be supplied via air bottles or FARS. Toting air bottles up stairwells is highly labor intensive. Personnel, already suited up in full turnout gear, wearing their own Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), and carrying heavy firefighting equipment, must also carry additional air bottles. This equates to 15 to 30 pounds of extra weight that firefighters must carry aloft. The air bottle burden is exhausting for crew who have yet to engage the fire, pose a higher risk of injury, and must be continually supported during operations.

FARS is an effective tool for firefighters and is a long-term solution for a real problem in combating fires in high-rise buildings.

Respectfully,


Robert Sapien, Jr., President

