

Tubac Fire District Board Members,

My name is Charlie Alvarez and I represent the Tubac Fire Local 4125 union. We currently have twenty-six Tubac Fire District union members. We are a chapter of the Green Valley Fire Local 4125 union. I personally have proudly served the Tubac Fire District residents for 13 years. All full time and reserve fire suppression personnel work 24-hour shifts. We report to our assigned stations at 8 am and leave at 8 am the following day. This includes Tubac Fire Station One. There are times when we are required to work a continuous 48- or 72-hour shift because we are short staffed. We sleep at our assigned stations. We have spare uniforms and bedding that we keep at the stations.

The decline of Tubac Fire Station One has been a topic of discussion since before I began my career. In the years I have been here, the upgrade list for the station has grown each passing year. Some of the repairs and minor upgrades have been completed either professionally or by fire district employees. We feel that we are at a point where minor repairs and upgrades cannot be viewed as a long-term solution. Over the years, we as a district have made many administrative and operational adjustments to try and get as much as we can out of the current fire station.

The current station was never intended to be used as a full-time working fire station. When it was built, station one had 1 office, the current day room where the administrative cubicles are currently located, the kitchen, 2 restrooms, 1 shower and 3 front bays. We currently do not have proper handicap parking or paved parking lots for residents who use walkers or wheelchairs. When construction of the station began in 1974, firefighters were volunteers and did not sleep at the station. With the district growing, the decision was made to employ firefighters whose shifts lasted 24 hours. Throughout the years, the need for upgrades to adjust for our growing communities have been made. Some upgrades have included adding three more bays onto the pre-existing building, as well as an office that Chief Horvath currently uses. A two-room modular which would be used as office space was also purchased. The district also had to purchase two large Conex boxes to store paper records and spare equipment. These Conex boxes are still being utilized. The additions were made in order to improve our response to emergencies as well as to meet our CON requirements and to improve our ISO rating. A pair of Murphy beds were purchased and used by personnel to sleep on while on duty. If you are unfamiliar, Murphy beds fold into the wall when not being used. Female and male firefighters had to sleep in the same living space just feet apart with no privacy. During the day, the bedroom would transition into a community dayroom and would be used for community and board meetings. Our belongings and bedding were kept inside of the dayroom and visible to residents when they came into the station. Making the station look cluttered. There were many instances when we were awoken in the middle of the night by a resident who drove to the station with a medical emergency. When the resident would enter the station, we would have to rapidly move our belongings in order to clear space to assess the patient.

In 2002, there was a mobile home moved onto the property for the firefighters to sleep in which was located where the current radio tower now sits. This mobile home helped provide needed privacy for on duty personnel. The radio tower was constructed a few years later and the mobile home was moved. In 2006, a pair of used FEMA travel trailers which were occupied by residents during Hurricane Katrina were brought on to the property to house on duty personnel. The trailers did not have locks which provided no safety or security to the firefighters. The trailers were placed on the back side of the station. When an emergency call was received, the firefighters had to come out of the trailers and

make their way through the bays and into the proper apparatus. There were times when it was either snowing or raining and we had to make our way from the outside into the bays. When we used the trailers, residents would come to the station and would become upset because we were unable to hear their knocks on the front door of the station. We would then have to explain that we did not sleep inside of the station. After two years, the travel trailers began to deteriorate. The roofs began to leak and damaged the inside of the trailers. The water damage made the floors weak and the walls began to grow mold. The electrical outlets of the trailers began to burn out and were no longer operational. Repairs were made to the trailers but there were only so many repairs that could be made before the trailers became unsafe to sleep in.

In 2008 our sleeping quarters were moved back into the station. When office equipment was purchased, (i.e. copy machines, fax machines and computers) it was moved into the day room/sleeping quarters. During the night, if a fax was sent, we were often woken up. The station also does not have proper security. A few years ago, there was an incident in which a resident drove onto the property with his golf cart and committed suicide via handgun. We were notified by a sheriff's deputy who happened to pass by and noticed the man slouched in the golf cart. The on-duty firefighters at that time were unaware he had entered the property. The entrance to the property from the frontage road does not have a gate. Anyone can drive on to the property at any time of the day. The only thing that alerts us is the sound of a vehicle driving onto the gravel. We have cameras currently installed outside of the station which provide minor security, but we must be looking directly at the monitor to know if there is a vehicle approaching.

In 2016, the board and Chief Keeley allowed for the office modular to be used as temporary sleeping quarters. The desks and tables were moved out and beds were moved in. The modular gave the on-duty personnel and administrative personnel some privacy. After a couple of months, animals began to make their way under the modular and move throughout the underneath at night. We used non-lethal traps to re-locate the animals, but it is still an ongoing struggle. This past year, we have begun to catch mice inside both the modular and the station. The bay doors do not close properly which gives rodents the opportunity to get inside. This past winter, an on-duty firefighter slipped on the icy ramp leading out of the modular in the middle of the night while trying to get into the ambulance bay. There is no proper lighting when we try to enter the bays for a middle of the night call. We also do not have access to a restroom or running water inside the modular. When we need to shower or decontaminate, we must use a metal 4 x 6-foot shower stall. If the crew consists of both a male and a female firefighter, they must wait until the other finishes showering before using the shower themselves. There are times when the hot water is all used by your partner; therefore, you must wait for the water heater tank to re-fill. Currently in the modular, the carpeting is stained and smells of mold. When it rains our boots track in water causing further damage. We also must place towels inside the doorway to prevent water from leaking in. When a flooring contractor came to assess the cost to replace the flooring, he stated that he could not replace it because the damage was too severe.

Currently our biggest concern as a collective is our safety. Currently we have no place to store our personal protective equipment (PPE) that is worn during structure fires. The current board approved the purchase of new turnouts this past year. If we do not have a proper place to store this PPE, the life of these expensive turnouts is diminished rapidly. These turnouts are also sensitive to light. They are required to be stored in a dark room with proper ventilation. Currently they are stored behind fire vehicles when not being used. When the on-duty crew turns on the fire vehicles, our turnouts are

exposed to the exhaust fumes and carcinogens. These carcinogens will stick to the turnouts. Over an extended period, carcinogens can and will cause cancer. Many firefighters across the country are dying because of these types of exposures. I, along with many of my fellow firefighters have spouses and children whom we love very much. We want to be able to retire and continue to live a healthy life and enjoy our time with our loved ones. We are aware that nothing can be done without spending money and we are appreciative of everything that has been done over the years. What we would like is to help you better understand what it is that we must do while responding from Station One. We are asking that something be done to greatly improve the living and working conditions of this station. The district has had contractors come to station to assess the overall structure of the building and surrounding property. The electrical inside of Station One is unreliable. The septic tank was also assessed, and it was determined that it could not withstand a renovation. The temporary "fixes" should be discussed as a district, which should include the full-time firefighters.

Most of the focus has been put on office space for administrative staff. The station renovation committee has neglected to ask any 24-hour personnel about their experience at Station One. We want to help. There was a lot of inaccurate information provided during the meeting on Thursday April 16th. We want to make sure the board and community know what we as firefighters do to successfully complete our job duties. We live here 24 hours a day. This truly is our home away from home. Thank you for your time. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with questions.

Respectfully,

Charlie Alvarez

