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## Local Fire Officials Mixed on Ads

By Nick Marnell



In a different kind of public-private partnership, Saint Mary's College purchased MOFD's aerial ladder truck to assist the district in handling campus high rise emergency calls. The Spirit of Saint Mary's is quartered at station 41 in Moraga. Photo Ohlen Alexander

district branding. "Our uniforms, our patch, our crest and the decals on our engines reflect our identity," he said. "We are a taxpayer funded organization, and we answer only to the taxpayers. By placing advertising on our engines, we would lose our exclusivity as a government agency and send mixed messages."

"If it is used right, it could fund a special program or a project for the department," said Jeff Carman, fire chief of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. "I would say, if the message is fitting, and there is revenue to offset the hassle of putting ads on your apparatus, I'd be interested."

The hassle of implementing the Stockton program will be absorbed by Public Service Advertising of Phoenix, Ariz. "We cover everyone," said CEO Chad Dragos. "We are a third party who can do it all, giving the district a buffer, and promoting a fair process for everyone." The most frequent objections that he deals with are the buy-in from the municipality, the integrity of the system - are we endorsing one company over another? - and negative push back from firefighters. "We don't want stickers on our fire trucks!" is the initial reaction from the rank and file, he said. Piechura agreed that he will not infringe on the integrity of his fire service.

Dragos estimated Stockton fire engine ad revenue of more than \$10,000 annually per vehicle. And Piechura said he hoped to merge all 16 of the department vehicles into the program.

Prediction is difficult, observed scientist Niels Bohr, especially about the future. Whether this radical program instituted by the Stockton Fire Department takes hold throughout the industry will be closely followed.

Despite forecasts of operating losses for this fiscal year, and only slight improvements for next year, officials of both Lamorinda fire districts say they are skeptical of the viability of a new revenue generating idea unveiled by a fire agency in the Central Valley.

The Stockton City Council approved a plan July 15 for the Stockton Fire Department to begin selling advertising on its fire engines. "We're the first California department to go into this," said fire chief Jeff Piechura. "This is the first step to see how the community accepts the concept."

Public acceptance was the most frequent objection raised by Lamorinda fire officials. Supervisor Candace Andersen, whose district includes Lamorinda, said that it would be critical to be selective about the types of ads and she raised concern about the dignity of the fire agency. "Would we really want to commercialize it as a means for revenue?" she said. "I'd rather create efficiencies in the agency and look for more traditional sources of revenue."

Moraga-Orinda Fire District chief Stephen Healy acknowledged the potential detraction from

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[back](#)

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