

Fire Chief Dominique Artis
Dallas Fire-Rescue Department
1500 Marilla Street, Suite 7A-South
Dallas, TX 75201

Tuesday, November 1, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

Alongside 20 other municipal fire and emergency service agencies in Texas (Amarillo, Arlington, Austin, Brownsville, Carrollton, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Denton, El Paso, Frisco, Garland, Grand Prairie, Houston, Irving, Killeen, Laredo, McAllen, McKinney, Mesquite, Plano, and San Antonio), we write to request urgent assistance regarding the shortage of ambulance chassis and related emergency fleet vehicles.

This shortage of vehicles has the potential to compromise our capabilities to protect our community. We echo the concerns of the American Ambulance Association, International Association of Fire Chiefs, International Association of Fire Fighters, and National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians expressed in their recent letter to Department of Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.

The automotive industry has not fully recovered from the global slowdowns experienced in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen a stark increase in procurement wait times for new ambulances compared to before the pandemic. Since then, the industry has faced a computer chip shortage, global supply chain issues, idling of plants, and a host of other issues that have compounded the already tight market. Government and fleet buyers across Texas and the nation are competing for a smaller supply of full-size sport utility vehicles.

From order to delivery, obtaining a new ambulance is now taking at least 24 months as compared to a 90-120 day wait time pre-pandemic. Furthermore, these supply issues are happening during periods of high service demand from our cities, especially in response to inclement weather events. Manufacturers have informed the City of Dallas that they are not able to fill orders for 27 ambulance chassis and 401 heavy equipment vehicles. Recent extreme weather events have exacerbated this crisis. For example, in August 2022, the City of Dallas lost more than four dozen emergency response vehicles due to an unprecedented flooding event. Each of these vehicles will take more than a year to replace.

Procurement and delivery of fire suppression apparatus have experienced similar long delays. Nearly all fire departments rely on these vehicles not only to respond to fire incidents but also as first responder units for medical incidents, which comprise more than 70 percent of any fire department's call volume. Twelve-month delivery times that were seen pre-pandemic, have increased to twenty-eight months. Delays force older apparatus to continue to serve as a frontline equipment, increasing the likelihood of breakdowns and extended out-of-service times. This has been exacerbated due to supply chain issues related to parts and labor shortages.

In addition, price increases of 14 percent or more have been seen by nearly every apparatus manufacturer since just January of this year with more increases expected before the end of the year. These increases are well above the current rate of inflation and are nearly unrealistic when it comes to planning and budgeting to purchase any emergency medical service or fire suppression vehicle.

Municipal fire and emergency service agencies across Texas have faced difficulties regarding this alarming issue. For example:

- Austin has seen orders canceled and lead times pushed out by Ram, Ford, and General Motors. Austin routinely purchases on 14-15 ambulance chassis each year to maintain a healthy fleet of 94 ambulances to respond to life threatening calls within minutes. Normal lead times for ambulances are 9-12 months; however, due to supply chain constraints replacement ambulance cab chassis are forecasted to take 18-24 months or longer to arrive, which will place its operations at risk while driving up operational expenses. As with the emergency medical service vehicle delivery delays, the fire apparatus industry is beginning to relay potential delivery timelines may potentially double while prices have increased by roughly 20 percent.
- Houston reports that Ford is providing only one of 70 Ford F-150s the city ordered in 2022, with Ford pushing the rest of the order to next year with increased 2023 pricing. Similarly, Ford canceled Houston's order for model year 2022 Transit vans and GM canceled 99 percent of the city's vehicle model year 2022 orders. Manufacturers have also informed Houston that there may be similar delays and cancellations with model year 2023 orders.
- San Antonio ordered ten ambulance chassis for its fiscal year 2021-2022 only to have the order cancelled. The order for the ten that were cancelled last year, along with an additional eight ambulances due for replacement this year, has been made, although the expectation is that the full order will not be met.
- Fort Worth recently received no bids for a specialty parts contract that previously garnered 40-50 bids.
- El Paso ordered two quints, two pumpers and four ambulances for its fiscal year 2021, which have been delayed to the end of 2023. This impacts the availability of units for a new fire station. Apparatus for its fiscal year 2022 are expected to take 31 months for delivery.
- Corpus Christi faces long delays in the delivery of four replacement ambulances, two ladder trucks, one hazardous materials response replacement unit, and a new tanker. New order wait times are 24 months.
- McKinney is experiencing unreasonable lead times including 24 months for ambulance orders with delivery dates for fire apparatus pushed back. Ordered staff vehicles are delayed more than a year. As a result, retention for current apparatus will be extended beyond usual replacement schedule.
- Pasadena reports the projected delivery time for their next two engines is 36 months.

Planning, budgeting, and preparing an emergency service fleet is becoming more complex and challenging, which ultimately impacts citizens in their time of need. We are asking you to urge auto manufacturers to accelerate and prioritize vehicle build production for first responder fleet to protect the health and safety of our residents.

Sincerely,

Dominique Artis
Dallas Fire-Rescue Department

Jeff Greenlee, Fire Chief
City of Amarillo

Don Crowson, Fire Chief
City of Arlington

Joel Baker, Fire Chief
City of Austin

Jarrett Sheldon, Fire Chief
City of Brownsville

Michael Thomson, Fire Chief
City of Carrollton

Robert Rocha, Fire Chief
City of Corpus Christi

Kenneth Hedges, Fire Chief
City of Denton

Jonathan Killings, Int. Fire
Chief
City of El Paso

Jim Davis, Fire Chief
City of Fort Worth

Lee Glover, Fire Chief
City of Frisco

Mark Lee, Fire Chief
City of Garland

Robert Fite, Fire Chief
City of Grand Prairie

Samuel Peña, Fire Chief
City of Houston

Victor Conley, Fire Chief
City of Irving

James Kubinski, Fire Chief
City of Killeen

Guillermo Heard, Fire Chief
City of Laredo

Jim Schultz, Fire Chief
City of McAllen

Danny Kistner, Fire Chief
City of McKinney

Russell "Rusty" Wilson, Fire Chief
City of Mesquite

Lanny Armstrong, Fire Chief
City of Pasadena

Chris Biggerstaff, Fire Chief
City of Plano

Charles Hood, Fire Chief
City of San Antonio

Gregory Summers, Fire Chief
City of Waco

Enclosure: Letter from American Ambulance Association, International Association of Fire Chiefs,
International Association of Fire Fighters, and National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians

Cc:

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo
The Honorable Xavier Becerra
The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
The Honorable John Cornyn
The Honorable Ted Cruz
The Honorable Louie Gohmert,
The Honorable Dan Crenshaw
The Honorable Van Taylor
The Honorable Pat Fallon
The Honorable Lance Gooden
The Honorable Jake Ellzey
The Honorable Lizzie Fletcher
The Honorable Kevin Brady
The Honorable Al Green
The Honorable Michael T. McCaul
The Honorable August Pfluger
The Honorable Kay Granger
The Honorable Ronny Jackson
The Honorable Randy Weber
The Honorable Vicente Gonzalez
The Honorable Veronica Escobar
The Honorable Pete Sessions
The Honorable Shelia Jackson Lee
The Honorable Jodey Arrington
The Honorable Joaquin Castro
The Honorable Chip Roy
The Honorable Troy E. Nehls
The Honorable Tony Gonzales
The Honorable Beth Van Duyne
The Honorable Roger Williams

The Honorable Michael Burgess
The Honorable Michael Cloud
The Honorable Henry Cuellar
The Honorable Sylvia Garcia
The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
The Honorable John Carter
The Honorable Colin Allred
The Honorable Marc Veasey
The Honorable Mayra Flores
The Honorable Llyod Doggett
The Honorable Brian Babin