

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



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FIRE CHIEF

May 20, 2024

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 24-051

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: Kristin M. Crowley, Fire Chief 

SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT (LAFD) FIRE ACADEMY FEMALE RECRUIT BREAKDOWN FY 22/23

FINAL ACTION:	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved w/Corrections	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn
	<input type="checkbox"/> Denied	<input type="checkbox"/> Received & Filed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

SUMMARY

As requested by the LAFD Board of Fire Commissioners (Commission), the Fire Department is providing a status update relative to the breakdown of the performance by female recruit firefighters in FY 22/23.

This report is prepared in compliance with that direction and is provided as an update on the Commission's request.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and file this report.

DISCUSSION

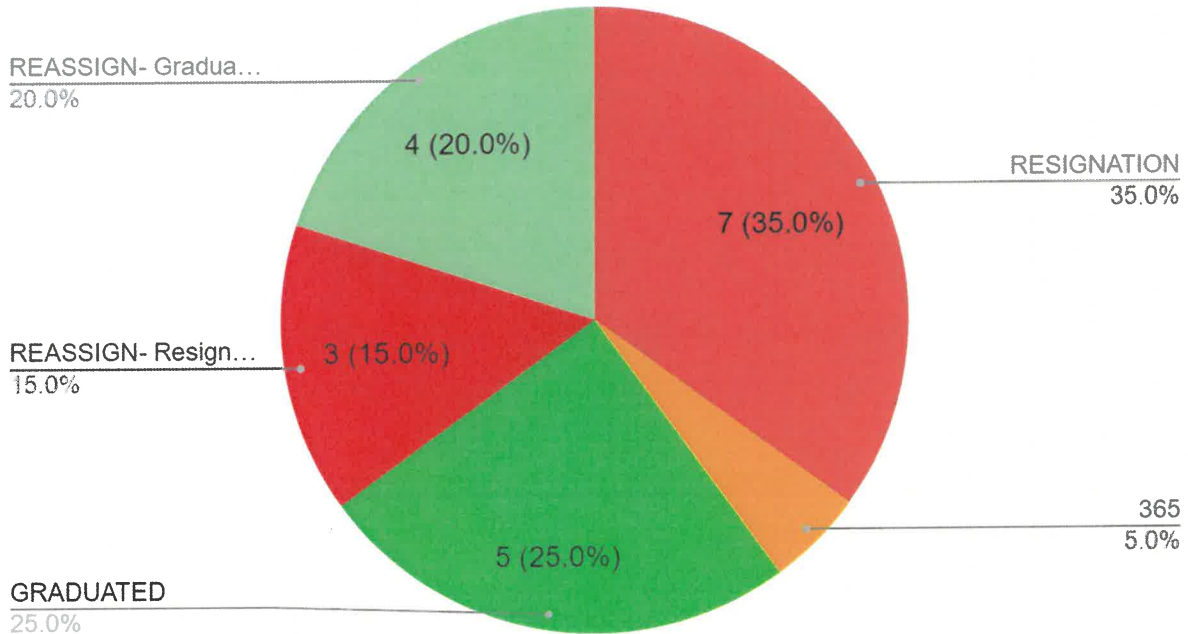
On November 21, 2023, the Commission asked for a report back on the breakdown of female recruit firefighters' performance in the Training Academy (Academy) during FY 22/23. This report is a breakdown as requested by the Commission.

In fiscal year 22/23, five recruit classes were successfully conducted across the Department's two Academy sites: The Valley Recruit Training Academy (VRTA) – Drill Tower 81 and the Harbor Recruit Training Academy (HRTA) – Drill Tower 40. During this period, the LAFD welcomed and trained a total of 20 female recruit firefighters. The data analysis of the female recruit firefighters involved categorizing them into one of five distinct classifications:

1. **Graduated:** Successfully met all requirements for graduation.
2. **Reassign/Graduation:** Initially reassigned during the first attempt but successfully graduated in a subsequent attempt.

3. **Reassign/Resignation:** Reassigned to another class but resigned before starting the new class.
4. **365:** Sustained injuries during a class but was unable to return within the required 365-day period.
5. **Resignation:** Voluntarily resigned for various reasons, including personal or performance-related factors.

Female Recruits 22-23



Outcome classification	Number of female recruits
Graduated	5
Reassign/Graduation	4
Reassign/Resignation	3
365	1
Resignation	7
Total:	20
Total graduated:	9 (45%)

As depicted in the table above, of the 20 female recruits that were trained in FY 22/23, nine graduated for a graduation rate of 45%.

Breakdown by class:

Class 22-1 (3 female recruits)
1. Resignation – Low scores in ladder evolutions
2. Resignation – Injury – Unable to return within required 365-day period
3. Graduated

Class 22-2 (6 female recruits)
1. Graduated
2. Reassign – Injury – Subsequent performance resignation in 23-2
3. Reassign – Low scores in ladder evolutions – Graduated in 22-4
4. Reassign – Low scores in ladder evolutions – Resignation (personal) prior to reassign
5. Re-assign – Low scores in ladders – Resignation (personal) prior to reassign
6. Resignation – Low scores in hose lay and ladder evolutions

Class 22-3 (4 female recruits)
1. Reassign – Failed Phase I – Resignation (personal) prior to reassignment
2. Resignation – Low scores in hose lays and ladder evolutions
3. Reassign – Failed Phase 2 – Graduated in 22-4
4. Resignation – Low scores in hose lays and ladder evolutions

Class 22-4 (2 female recruits)
1. Graduated
2. Reassign – Injury – Graduated in 23-2

Class 22-5 (5 female recruits)
1. Graduated
2. Graduated
3. Resignation – Low scores in ladder evolutions – Subsequently re-hired in 23-3 and reassigned to 23-4 (Status Pending)
4. Resignation – Personal (Family emergency)
5. Reassign – Injury – Graduated 23-3

This comprehensive breakdown provides insight into the diverse outcomes of the female recruit firefighters during the specified FY 22/23. In summary:

- ***There were 20 total female recruits in FY 22/23***
- ***Female success rate in the Training Academy was 45%***
- ***During FY 22/23, one female recruit was rehired after previously resigning, and subsequently graduated***
- ***During the period, seven female recruits were reassigned from a previous class, and four graduated***

To thoroughly understand the factors contributing to female resignations from the Academy, RSS delves not only into the reasons for separation but also into the departing member's perspective. This involves the completion of a Separation Questionnaire and participation in an exit interview.

Given the limited number of female resignations since the arrival of the current Section Commander, and with the aim of augmenting insight and effecting enhancements for all recruits, meticulous attention has been dedicated to analyzing feedback obtained from resignation questionnaires submitted by departing members since June 2023. This analysis encompasses responses from a total of 25 departing candidates, which includes the solitary female resignee during the incumbency of the present leadership.

Examination of such feedback, as well as input from individuals who did complete the Academy, has revealed five recurrent challenges and identified areas for improvement. These areas of concern are delineated as follows:

- 1. Sense of inadequate physical preparedness for the demands of the Academy.**
- 2. Need for exposure to Drill Tower evolutions beforehand to instill confidence and competence.**
- 3. Call for access to the Drill Tower Schedule to acquire knowledge, refine skills and prepare diligently for forthcoming lessons.**
- 4. Desire for a comprehensive grasp of grading criteria and consistency in evaluation standards upheld by Drill Tower staff.**
- 5. Necessity for extended practice in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during Basic to ensure thorough preparation for Phase Evaluations and field assignments.**

Mindful of our obligation to uphold fairness and equity within the Academy, and cognizant of the feedback received, our administration, both current and preceding, has undertaken a series of initiatives to address the aforementioned areas of concern.

In response to concern 1 & 2, the following measures have been implemented:

- The Firefighter Candidate Advancement Program (FCAP) is customized to prioritize a skills-oriented curriculum, ensuring participants are proficient in manipulative evolutions aligned with Training Academy standards.
- The Pre-Academy, a pivotal first component of the 20-week Training Academy program, spans four weeks and incorporates fitness training aimed at enhancing female recruits' strength and stamina. Furthermore, one entire week of the Pre-Academy is dedicated solely to teaching the fundamentals of hose and ladder evolutions, providing all recruits with the essential techniques required for adept maneuvering in non-graded and non-evaluated settings.

- Throughout the Academy recruits undergo guided physical fitness training meticulously designed by Department strength coaches, focusing on targeted exercises that mirror movements necessary for successful execution of manipulative evolutions.
- An augmented allocation of time within the Training Academy syllabus emphasizes practicing high-failure-rate evolutions, ensuring female recruits are better equipped to overcome challenges commonly encountered in operational scenarios.

In response to concern 3, the following have been enacted:

- The dissemination of a comprehensive syllabus outlining both the academic curriculum and manipulative skills to be instructed and evaluated on each day of the Academy.
- Weekly briefings led by the class leader every Friday, providing insights into the forthcoming week's activities and expectations for recruits.

In response to concern 4, this administration has introduced:

- A chance for the recruits to briefly view grade sheets before exams.
- Rater Reliability training for all Training Academy staff members which underscores the dedication to maintaining evaluation standards consistent with field application. This training involves:
 - Peer evaluation of instruction provided by instructors to recruits
 - Re-calibration of points of emphasis by subject matter expert (SME) to staff, so as to present a consistent message to recruits
 - Focus on removing subjectivity in the examination process, and uniformity of content delivery

In response to concern 5, the following have been incorporated:

- Conducting the guided physical fitness training while recruits are adorned in full PPE, delivering a more authentic simulation of real-world scenarios and enhancing preparedness for evaluations.
- Gradual incorporation of PPEs into graded evolutions.

This integration has revealed a correlation between extended periods spent in turnout gear during the Basic module and enhanced performance in Phase Evaluations, underscoring the importance of immersive training experiences in elevating recruits' competency levels and readiness for field deployment.

Further measures have been proactively implemented to enhance the overall experience and ensure every recruit has the best chance at graduation and readiness as a firefighter. These measures include:

- The rigorous scrutiny and continuous adjustments of Phase Evaluations, reflect a commitment to ensuring alignment with the practical expectations of entry level LAFD field personnel.

Finally, although not exclusive to this administration, the Reassign program stands out as a distinctive feature compared to other departments. It provides an opportunity for recruits who narrowly miss qualification for graduation or sustain injuries during training to continue without the need for re-application for their position. With an impressive success rate of over 90% for graduation among reassignments, the program stands as a testament to the Academy's commitment to supporting female recruits through challenges and fostering their journey towards becoming proficient firefighters.

CONCLUSION

The Recruit Services Section will continue to support goals to identify methods and adopt recommendations to improve the retention of all recruit firefighters.

Board report prepared by Timothy Lambert, Battalion Chief, Recruit Services Section.