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LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



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March 27, 2025

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 25-020

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: *R/V* Ronnie R. Villanueva, Interim Fire Chief

SUBJECT: STANDARDS OF COVERAGE COMPARISON

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 Withdrawn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

The public entrusts the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) with providing all-hazard emergency services to nearly 4 million Los Angeles residents and visitors. All city employees share a burden to wisely spend a limited amount of budget money on services that meet a measurable performance standard. For the fire service, an analysis of response capability and response performance is known as a Standards of Cover (SOC). This report will compare two SOC's that were completed recently while comparing the findings, recommendations, and performance metrics.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:

Receive the report and transmit it to the Mayor and City Council.

DISCUSSION

Analyzing and optimizing the finite resources of the LAFD is not a new or novel concept. In a letter to the Board of Fire Commissioners (BOFC) dated 12/1/1995, the LAFD set a goal of arriving on scene within five minutes for ninety percent (90%) of emergencies. At the time of writing, the LAFD attained this goal on only twenty-eight percent (28%) of incidents. The scrutiny of response times continued and was especially focused during and after the modified coverage plan. BOFC report 11-169 Deployment Plan Analysis and Report considered similar metrics for response capability. In 2014, the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office contracted with the PA Consulting Group to further analyze the LAFD response metrics. Several key recommendations in priority order included the development of a Strategic Plan and a Standards of Cover (SOC). The LAFD developed several Strategic Plans over the intervening years. The current Strategic Plan (2023-2026) lists goals and metrics in priority order. The number one and two priorities of the plan are:

- 1.1.1 Complete a citywide Standards of Coverage analysis to identify the greatest opportunities for resource allocation improvement
- 1.1.2 Redeploy and add resources based on the needs identified in the Standards of Coverage analysis in order to improve response times

The Citygate Associates LLC was brought in to help accomplish these goals. Their analysis included similar metrics as the reports mentioned earlier. The findings were presented in BOFC 23-055 LAFD Standards of Coverage Analysis. Furthermore, the LAFD presented a report on the Plan to Implement the Recommendations of the Standards of Cover Report (BOFC 23-114) in October of 2023. Upon the delivery of the Citygate Associates LLC SOC, it was determined that the COVID-19 pandemic caused statistical outliers in the data that included a reduction in call volume and daily transports. Additionally, a rise in call volume between 2020 and 2023 rendered some of the 2020 findings of the Citygate SOC obsolete. A second analysis of response data and department deployment was performed in partnership with the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF). The findings of this SOC were presented in December of 2024 (BOFC 24-116).

The two SOC's have many similarities and differ in their solutions for department deployment shortcomings. Both reports use mapping software that identifies similar gaps in coverage based on fire station location. Both studies find that Unit Hour Utilization (UHU) is excessive for some ambulances. Both reports recommend an increase in paramedic resources, including a central hub of resources near the downtown area. Both reports base recommendations on the industry best practices found in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 standard. Each report finds that the LAFD does not meet the time recommendations found in NFPA 1710.

The two reports use different response metrics. The IAFF SOC measures LAFD performance against the recommendations of NFPA 1710. For example, the 90th percentile response in four minutes or less. NFPA 1710 requires: "The fire department shall establish the following performance objectives for the first-due response zones that are identified by the AHJ... 240 seconds or less travel time for the arrival of the first engine company at a fire suppression incident" (NFPA 1710 §4.1.2.1(3)). The SOC identified that the LAFD could respond with an initial engine on 49.2% of roads within four minutes of travel. The Citygate SOC used a five-minute response time in "Finding 4: Given that the current fire station plan provides 5:00-minute travel time coverage to 88.7 percent of public streets Citywide, using a 5:00-minute travel time goal to physically space fire stations across the City's very diverse geography is effective." As a rule, the American Fire Service prefers to follow NFPA recommendations when applicable compared to the findings of a private report.

The two reports differ in the solutions for shortcomings in response times. The Citygate SOC clearly states, "Finding #2: The physical spacing of LAFD stations is sufficient, apart from small areas in the northern section of the City (BOFC 23-055)." In sharp

contrast, the IAFF SOC recommends 84 additional stations to cover gaps in coverage (amended to 62 stations based on aid agreements). The Citygate study called for “at least 14 additional rescue ambulances,” while the IAFF SOC called for 32. The Citygate SOC came to the conclusion, “While field crew deployment needs some adjustment and improvement in key areas, it is not—by any measure—significantly insufficient or in need of major change or fire station relocation” (Pg. 113). The IAFF SOC came to a much different conclusion about the need for increased staffing. A series of recommendations involved fully staffing all forty-two (42) pumps, additional ambulances, Battalion command teams, and increasing firefighters in the most densely populated areas of the city.

Budget requests have been made (BOFC 24-107, 24-005) that include elements of the recommendations from both SOC's. For example, the top priority item of the currently proposed departmental requests addresses the need for investigators who can fully explore the illegal use of fire in the city. Throughout the proposed budget, the SOC recommendations are clearly evident in the form of increased asks for staffing, resources, and civilian support. Both SOC's recognize that the LAFD has been under-resourced and overworked when compared to other municipalities.

CONCLUSION

A SOC analysis is a useful tool that can be leveraged to objectively compare fire department service delivery against nationally recognized standards. The findings and recommendations from any SOC or independent assessment must be balanced with known department goals and objectives. Both the Citygate Association LLC SOC and the IAFF SOC recognize the need for additional resources that will decrease the overall response time that customers must wait for service. Both studies describe the LAFD as understaffed, with resources that are overworked in communities that are underserved.

Board Report prepared by Battalion Chief Eric Roberts, Planning Section.