

May 6, 2025

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



RONNIE R. VILLANUEVA
INTERIM FIRE CHIEF

April 23, 2025

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 25-025

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners
FROM: **Rv** Ronnie R. Villanueva, Interim Fire Chief
SUBJECT: OFF-DUTY LONG-TERM REPORT

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 Withdrawn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 Board of Fire Commissioners requested a report summarizing the number of members off duty long-term, to include length of leave, classification breakdown, and recommendations to reduce long-term leaves.

The Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) is committed to fostering a culture of health and safety for all of its members. This ongoing process involves focused training and education through the development of standard operating guidelines, policies and procedures designed to reduce injury and illness. In addition, providing the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), apparatus and tools increase our ability to operate efficiently and reduce the chance for injury, illness or exposure while performing our essential function: providing exceptional public safety and emergency services.

Despite our best efforts, due to unforeseen circumstances and inherent dangers associated with performing in an all-hazard and/or immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) environment, firefighters experience physical and mental illness and injury. When a member is injured or suffers from an illness, the Department's paramount concern is for their care, recovery, rehabilitation and return to duty.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and file this report.

DISCUSSION

Firefighter injuries and illness often lead to time away from work, with some more complicated or severe cases resulting in leaves of up to a year or more. While the Department cannot directly control the speed of recovery, there are indirect efforts the Department is taking, or can take, which can reduce the number and/or severity of

injuries and remove delays in the recovery/return to duty process.

STEPS TAKEN TO REDUCE INJURIES AND LONG-TERM LEAVES

In addition to established policies, procedures and training which raise awareness and create a culture of safety in all aspects of Department operations, the following are examples of efforts the Department has implemented to prevent or reduce the number of injuries and illnesses in the workplace:

1. Established a Health and Safety Committee, comprised of representatives from the Department and Labor, to identify areas of concern, establish best practices, and develop meaningful policies to address the immediate and long-term health and safety risks to our members.
Examples:
 - a. Post-Fire Health Assessments: Screening firefighters for smoke inhalation, toxins, and other health effects caused by prolonged exposures to smoke.
 - b. Mental Health & Resilience Programs: Providing counseling, peer support, and stress management.
 - c. Inspecting Fire Stations impacted by the Palisades Fire to improve health and safety protocols.
 - d. Protective Equipment & Training: New and/or improved PPE, hydration strategies, and heat stress mitigation.
 - e. Policy Development: Created additional health and safety guidelines tailored for urban and wildland firefighting
2. Established a Safety Officer Pilot Program to identify and address organizational and operational risk. This pilot program provided 24 hours safety officers to respond to all structure fires and significant all-hazard incidents and provide a dedicated safety officer. This program was effective in reducing and almost eliminating burns, injuries, and dehydration at incidents. In addition, the safety officers provided training related to risk management decision making, fire ground safety, personal protective equipment (PPE), decontamination, and mental health.
3. The LAFD is a contributing member to the Southern Area Fire Equipment Resources (S.A.F.E.R.) organization. SAFER is comprised of fire agencies and manufactures that meet monthly to discuss National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards focused on the health and safety of first responders.
4. Developed a robust decontamination policy for post-incident exposure. This policy addresses and reduces the short and long-term exposure placing firefighters at risk of serious long-term health conditions.
5. Ensuring the Department provides the most advanced Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for our members to provide the greatest level of protection from the inherent risks associated with firefighting.

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6. Established Serious Incident Review Teams (SIRT) to investigate near miss incidents where firefighters narrowly escaped death. This investigative team develops a Blue Sheet within 72 hours and a more in-depth Green Sheet within 30 days. These documents are shared with the fire service and have resulted in policy changes and PPE enhancements.
7. The creation of the "Injured/Ill Member Procedure Packet" be carried on all EMS Captain vehicles and housed at every work location to provide guidance on accurate and proper documentation to expedite workers' compensation claims.
8. Developed a real-time dashboard to document and track members off duty long term. Data points include rehabilitation progress, next doctor appointment, projected return to duty and provides supervisors an opportunity to interact with the injured member and provide assistance in order to expedite care.
9. Conduct monthly meetings with the Personnel Department's Workers' Compensation Division and the third-party administrator to discuss and expedite claims.

In January 2023, the Firefighter Recovery Unit (FRU) had a total of 99 members off duty for over one year. After reviewing each case, it was necessary to update policies governing members off long-term. Four Departmental Bulletins were developed to provide clarity and direction to the organization and its members. As of April 2025, there has been a fifty-percent reduction in the number of members assigned to the FRU and it continues to trend downwards.

STATISTICS

At the time of this report, the LAFD has 175 members off duty greater than 27 days. 55 members have been off duty between 27 and 100 days, 65 members between 100 and 300 days, and 60 members off duty greater than 300 days.

Members Off Duty Greater Than 27 Days by Type of Leave						
FRU	IOD	NIOD	FMLA	ML	LW	CTO
45	54	42	10	3	8	2

Legend:

FRU: Firefighter Recovery Unit
IOD: Injured on Duty
NIOD: Not Injured on Duty
FMLA: Family/Medical Leave

ML: Military Leave
LW: Leave Without Pay
CTO: Compensated Time Off (VC, TS)

Members Off Duty Greater Than 27 Days by Classification										
AC	BC	CII	CI	INSP II	INSP I	ENG	A/O	FF PM	FF II/III	FF I
1	2	7	11	1	1	12	4	65	50	10

LAFD Workers' Compensation Cost History

Fiscal Year	Salary Paid	Medical Costs	Hours Lost
2020 – 2021	\$ 11,032,155.18	\$ 5,683,981.04	317,438
2021 – 2022	\$ 31,088,875.25	\$ 6,309,072.40	575,012
2022 – 2023	\$ 15,341,259.12	\$ 4,281,521.40	315,243
2023 – 2024	\$ 46,788,876.18	\$ 26,762,766.65	383,181

RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE LONG-TERM LEAVES

Prevention is the most effective way to reduce injuries and long-term leaves due to injury. The Department is committed to a culture of safety and continues to hold the physical and mental health of its members a priority. The following recommendations will support achieving this goal:

1. Provide annual workers' compensation training for all officers to reduce delays in members seeking/receiving care for work-related injuries or illness.
2. Provide annual injury prevention training for all members, targeting common or trending causes.
3. Fund the Department's Safety Officer program with dedicated (24-hour) Safety Officers in all four bureaus.
4. Fund additional positions in the Risk Management Section to enhance assistance and oversight for injured members.
5. Prosecute Workers' Compensation Fraud.

Board Report prepared by Nicholas Ferrari, Battalion Chief, Risk Management Section.