



July 1, 2025

RONNIE R. VILLANUEVA  
INTERIM FIRE CHIEF

June 13, 2025

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS  
FILE NO. 25-036

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM:  Ronnie R. Villanueva, Interim Fire Chief

SUBJECT: FOLLOW UP REPORT ON THE LAFD'S HANDLING OF SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT COMPLAINTS

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 Withdrawn 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

As directed by the Board of Fire Commissioners (BOFC), the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) is providing an updated status of the Independent Assessors report in the LAFD's handling of Sexual Harassment Complaints since the BOFC File No. BFC 24-044 (April 22, 2024). This report includes data from the Professional Standards Division (PSD).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board:  
Receive and file.

### DISCUSSION

The BOFC requested an update on the progress made since the last Board Report was presented on issues related to sexual harassment and EEO complaints. The LAFD has continued to work towards a better work environment for all members and to provide training that would focus on the unique fire station workplace. Since becoming the Interim Fire Chief, Chief Villanueva has reaffirmed his position on accountability for all members and the continued zero tolerance for discrimination, hazing, or unjust treatment of any member via a letter to all members dated, April 10, 2025 (attachment).

The Department continues to maintain a zero-tolerance policy towards hazing, harassment, bullying and discrimination of any kind. The Equity and Human Resources Bureau continues to work with PSD and the Training and Support Bureau on changes to City and Department policies to ensure fairness and equity in implementation. Some of the changes are the result of new state laws that the LAFD is required to follow, and other changes are training for all members to enhance professional development.

Some of the recent changes that have taken place are:

1. California State law changed regarding driver's licenses for employment. Now unless your job duties require you to drive for employment, you are not required to have a driver's license to apply for a job. This primarily applies to civilians.
2. The In-Service Training Section has developed a qualification guide, Book 25, for all members. It provides standardized training for all members to be certified as drivers of all types of LAFD vehicles. This takes the subjectivity and bias out of members being certified, and gives the department a digital storage method to ensure documents are not lost. This is part of Strategic Plan goal 6.4.5. – Consolidate certification and qualification records into the Human Capital database.
3. Administrative Bulletin #17 was a major rewrite of the Fire Department's policies on Family/Medical leave, Pregnancy leave, Paid Parental time and Military leave. There were changes to Memorandum of Understanding for all members. This new policy changes how all members can take time off for the benefit of their family, providing for a better work/life balance.
4. A complete rewrite to the LAFD grooming standards to come into compliance with California state law related to the Crown Act of 2021 as the grooming standards had not been updated in over 30 years. The standards also included policy from the city workplace equity policy.
5. PSD has completed the transition to the new complaint management system but still needs to have the old data migrated into the new system. Since this is a new system, there will be changes over time as gaps are identified.

There are programs/projects that were in progress by the Equity and Human Resources Bureau and In-Service Training but have not been completed yet:

1. The new version of the Leadership Academy, called the Leadership Development Institute. This will be focused on different levels of leadership within the organization and will be available to both sworn and civilian. The different programs were laid out in outline form and are almost finalized. A portal notice was sent to all members interested in facilitating the classes. Progress stopped when v-hours were eliminated last year.
2. A new LAFD Qualification Guide was also developed. This program is designed to enhance the department's ability to train and qualify personnel for various positions within the organization. This guide outlines clear qualification criteria, recognizing those currently functioning at these levels with the appropriate qualifications, and provides a comprehensive roadmap for members seeking qualification. This again, takes out the subjectivity and potential bias of a member achieving a certification as an Engineer, Apparatus Operator, Captain, or Chief

Officer. All members will have the same access to the material and knowledge of what is expected of them for certification.

3. The In-service Training Section is also working on the mentorship program for all ranks, which started with Battalion Chiefs.
4. The DEI officer was working on increasing the training opportunities for civilians to assist with leadership development and promotional opportunities. Once this position is filled the work can resume with assistance from Human Resources Division and the Management Analyst position.
5. A cadre was trained for Workplace Environment Leadership Training (WELT) and delivered the training to selected members in the promotional process. Feedback was provided and the program was going to undergo some revision before it went department-wide in a Train the Trainer model. The program also suffered from the v-hour reduction but can be reinstituted with refresher training for the cadre for delivery at Officer Continuing Education Program (OCEP).

PSD has started using the new Complaint Management System (CMS) and training officers in how to use it. Cases come into PSD via department members and the public via the LAFD.org website. PSD has a case load that varies from year to year in the total number of cases and their severity. Every complaint that comes into the Division is vetted to so that it is categorized correctly ensuring a thorough investigation can be completed. The chart below shows the cases since the last Independent Assessor's report in 2023.

2023 EEO (since 11/21/2023)		2024 EEO			2025 EEO (as of 06/05/2025)		
TOTAL	2	TOTAL	41	open cases	TOTAL	21	open/closed duplicate cases
Discrimination	0	Discrimination	6	2	Discrimination	5	4
Harassment	0	Harassment	6	3	Harassment	4	3
Hazing	2	Hazing	4	1	Retaliation	9	9
Hostile Work Environment	0	Hostile Work Environment	11	4	Inappropriate Conduct	3	3
Race	0	Race	2	0			
Retaliation	0	Retaliation	9	2	Work Environment (not included in EEO total)	7	5
Sexual Harassment	0	Sexual Harassment	3	1			

Upon reviewing the 2025 harassment cases, none are related to sexual harassment.

*Note: All case totals may include cases that were closed as duplicates. CTS numbers (2023 & 2024 stats) do not reflect cases that were referred to the Alternative Investigative Process or Special Investigative Process. Currently in CMS (all 2025 cases), we are unable to choose specific bases or practices in addition to the type of*

*EEO complaint; therefore, reports in CMS cannot be filtered to reflect this is information.*

A part of PSD's Strategic Goal 4.4.5 was to codify "professional engagement" principles as organizational approaches to shared accountability. The previous Department Bulletin 21-04 has been revised for better clarity and accountability. The new Department Bulletin focuses on personal performance and engagement if a member is not meeting the department's expectations. The biggest change is that the order of steps that can be taken is not set, but flexible based on the issue presented to the officer. It also lays out a path for the member to improve before going into the CMS process, thereby ensuring fairness for the member.

One program that was an option for PSD for lower level cases, the Ombuds Unit, will no longer have two members assigned. In the few cases they handled, all members who participated in the process were happy with the outcomes, because they came up with the solution. This program can continue with v-hours for the members currently trained or training a cadre to assist the one officer still involved with the program.

In addition, the department continues with mandatory EEO Training for all members:

#### DEPARTMENT EEO TRAINING

TRAINING TITLE	AUDIENCE	LENGTH	MANDATORY BY:	FREQUENCY REQUIRED
<b>Workplace Harassment and Abusive Conduct Prevention: Non-Supervisor Version</b>	All non-supervisor employees every two years as initiated by Personnel - AND - Any new employee within 6 months of assignment	1 hour	State Law	Every other year
<b>Workplace Harassment and Abusive Conduct Prevention: Supervisor Version</b>	All supervisors every two years as initiated by Personnel - AND - Any new supervisor or lead employee within 6 months of assignment	2 hours	State Law	Every other year
<b>Anti-Bias Learning for Employees (ABLE)</b>	All employees and Commissioners/Board Members	1 hour 30 minutes	Mayor	Annual
<b>Workplace Equity Policy Training</b>	All employees and Commissioners/Board Members	30 minutes	Mayor	Every other year

Additionally, all recruits in the drill tower receive EEO training before they graduate, and are given the department's discrimination prevention policy handbook. They all sign written documentation attesting that they have read the policy.

Now that the Equity and Human Resources Bureau has been eliminated, the work will fall onto other areas of the department based on recommendations from the Fire Chief and Chief Deputies. Policies and programs will still receive input from stakeholder groups for equity and inclusion.

The department will continue working to make the work environment better for all members, and hold members accountable for issues that are entered the CMS at PSD. Training will continue quarterly for Officers to reinforce positive work environments and professional growth. The goal is year-over-year progress towards fewer complaints and a positive work environment for all.

Report prepared by Deputy Chief Kristine Larson, Equity and Human Resources Bureau.

Attachment



## From the Office of the Fire Chief...

April 10, 2025

TO: ALL MEMBERS

SUBJECT: ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE DEPARTMENT

The Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) has a proud history of serving this city with honor, professionalism, and excellence. Our strength comes from our people—the men and women who dedicate their lives to protecting others. To ensure we remain the world-class organization that our communities deserve, we must uphold the highest standards of integrity, respect, and accountability.

Let me be clear: There is no place in this department for discrimination, hazing, or unjust treatment of any member. Every firefighter, paramedic, and employee deserves to work in an environment where they are valued, supported, and treated with dignity. That is non-negotiable.

Accountability begins with the individual, but it does not stop there. We also must hold each other accountable. As your Interim Fire Chief, I will ensure that every member is held responsible for their actions. Captains and chiefs are expected to lead by example, enforce our policies, and maintain a fair and professional work environment. Leadership is not just a title; it is a responsibility.

At the same time, let me be equally clear about this: Upholding fairness and equity does not mean lowering our standards. The people of Los Angeles rely on us in their most critical moments, and we will continue to maintain the highest levels of performance, discipline, and preparedness. Every member of this department has earned their place here through hard work, and that expectation will never change.

Moving forward, my focus remains on our mission—protecting lives, property, and safeguarding our communities. Every decision I make will be based on what is best for this department and the people we serve. I expect each of you to do the same.

We are one department. And together, we will continue to set the standard for excellence in the fire service.

Stay safe and stay healthy,

RONNIE R. VILLANUEVA  
Interim Fire Chief