

February 21, 2017

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



RALPH M. TERRAZAS
FIRE CHIEF

February 1, 2017

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 17-009

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM:  Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: ARSON COUNTER-TERRORISM AUDIT REPORT UPDATE

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 Withdrawn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

In December 2014, the Office of the Independent Assessor (OIA) completed an audit of the Arson/Counter Terrorism Section (ACTS) and reported its findings to the Board of Fire Commissioners (Board). The audit was conducted to assess the status of recommendations made during the 2008 LAPD audit, assess the quality of ACTS investigations, and determine background and training standards.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and file.

DISCUSSION

In May 2014, the OIA began a review of ACTS and subsequently made several recommendations. The audit reinforces and supports actions currently in motion by ACTS supervision to address deficiencies and improve performance. Work addressing the audit had already begun and continues to fall in-line with the recommendations in the audit report.

On March 15, 2016, ACTS reported that all of the OIA recommendations addressing backgrounds, training requirements, firearms qualification and supervisory oversight had been completed. The one remaining item was updating the Office Procedures Manual. After a thorough review, the recommendation is to eliminate the Office Procedures Manual.

The Office Procedure Manual was established in 1984 with several changes ending in 1995. Over the past two decades the Office Procedures Manual began to lose its usefulness due to other standalone documents that addressed the daily operational needs. Many of the components within the Office Procedures Manual were incorporated into the Arson Procedures Bulletins which included the following topics:

- APB#01 Lineup Schedule
- APB#02 Evidence Booking/Retrieval Procedures
- APB#03 Surveillance/Tactical Plan Preparation
- APB#04 Authorized Duty Weapon
- APB#05 Firearms Qualification Policy
- APB#06 Authorized Uniforms
- APB#07 ACTS Response to Fire Fatalities & Serious Burns
- APB#08 Structure Fire Fatality Report
- APB#10 K-9 & Supervisor Notifications
- APB#11 Case Assignments
- APB#12 Filing of Criminal Cases
- APB#13 Fire Investigation Reports
- APB#14 Quarterly Case Review
- APB#15 LAPD Report Procedures
- APB#16 Officer Involved Shootings/Use of Force
- APB#17 Post Arrest Procedures
- APB#18 Use of Department Helicopters
- APB#19 Supervisor Notification of Arrest
- APB#20 Vehicle Stop / Pursuit Policy
- APB#21 Wearing of Body Armor by ACTS Personnel
- APB#22 Arson Training Requirements
- APB#23 Scene Security

The above Arson Procedures Bulletins were revised in 2015 and reviewed in 2016. ACTS uses other reference documents such as "Search Warrant Manual", Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, 2015 Edition and "The Investigations and Prosecution of Arson", 2nd Edition, 1995. ACTS works closely with the Los Angeles Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. As a result, ACTS operates with Letters of Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding between these agencies. These agreements establish guidelines for training and use of force policies that have been incorporated into ACTS policies.

ACTS investigators rely on NFPA 1033: Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator, 2014 Edition and NFPA 921: Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2014 Edition. The NFPA reference documents facilitate safe, competent, accurate investigations by specifying industry performance standards.

CONCLUSION

The Office Procedures Manual has been replaced by the creation of the Arson Procedures Bulletins. In addition, ACTS uses other professional documents and reference material developed and maintained by outside professional organizations as guidelines for investigative processes and procedures.

ACTS has worked with the OIA to improve section performance, reduce risk management concerns, and enhance accountability. ACTS supervision is continually working to maintain accurate and updated policies and reviews policies on an annual basis.

Board report prepared by Robert W. Nelson, Commander, Arson-Counter Terrorism Section.