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LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT

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FIRE CHIEF

May 4, 2017

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 17-060

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: STATUS OF STANDARDS OF COVER PROJECT

FINAL ACTION:					
	——— Approved	——— Approved w/Corrections	——— Withdrawn
	——— Denied	——— Received & Filed	——— Other

SUMMARY

The Fire Department is seeking to develop a Standards of Cover document that will serve as a guide to inform decision making on issues such as placement of new fire stations and deployment of resources.

This report describes a Standards of Cover, outlines the process of drafting a Standards of Cover document and discusses issues relating to developing a Standards of Cover.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and file.

DISCUSSION

According to the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) a Standards of Cover (SOC) is a rational and systematic way of looking at the basic service provided by the Fire Department. The process by which an SOC is developed provides a system which will assist with:

- Assessing community fire and non-fire risks
- Defining baseline and benchmark emergency response performance standards
- Planning future fire stations
- Determining apparatus and staffing patterns
- Evaluating workload and ideal unit utilization
- Measuring service delivery performance
- Supporting strategic planning and policy development relative to resource allocation

The process of developing an SOC involves six steps, each requiring intensive research and documentation. The six steps of SOC development are:

Step 1: Complete a review of the current deployment.
This step involves three parts. The first component is a review of the City, including legal and governance descriptions, size, topography, climate, population, land use, etc. It should also include a history of our current delivery system. The next component is a

review of the services provided with our current deployment and baseline performance. This part includes a listing and description of all services provided by the Department, such as fire, rescue, medical, hazardous materials, wildland, swift water, aircraft firefighting and marine firefighting. It will also include a description of our current deployment, such as location of fire stations, kind and type of resources at each station, the staffing at each station and a description of the first-in districts of each station. The final component is a review of community expectations. This component requires determining the expectations of service delivery based upon stakeholder input from forums such as community meetings, surveys, focus groups, etc.

Step 2: Complete a risk assessment of the City.
The purpose of this section is to perform an analysis of the City and its potential risks using real world factors that represent the City's risk level. CPSE identifies this step as the most difficult step in the process. It requires the analysis of large amounts of data in order to validate the risk exposure, which, in turn, determines the nature of resources needed to serve and protect the City. An example of some inputs required of the risk assessment process include topography, transportation networks, disaster exposure, physical assets protected population and demographics. Examples of outputs from the risk assessment are probability/consequence matrices and risk classification tables.

Step 3: Measure the system performance using historical data.
This step in the development process closely examines the performance of our current deployment model using the draft objectives and performance measures developed in the previous step. System performance is categorized into four basic areas:

1. Distribution: Where are our resources located? What are the physical characteristics of the first-in district? What are the demographics of the first-in district?
2. Concentration: How close together are our stations? Can we provide enough resources to a given incident quickly enough to meet safely the needs of the incident?
3. Reliability: How well are we able to meet the resource needs of our City and its communities during routine conditions, as well as during extraordinary circumstances? Do we meet the goal of doing something within XX minutes YY percent of the time?
4. Comparability: How do we compare to other departments of similar size? How do we compare to accredited fire departments?

Step 4: Adopt draft performance measures.
In this step, the objectives and performance measures that were developed in Step 2 and tested in Step 3 are refined and finalized. After analyzing how current performance measures against the draft objectives, solutions are developed to address areas where performance fails to meet objective.

Step 5: Develop a methodology for complying with the performance measures.
This step determines how, when and what will be measured to ensure the SOC is valid and continues to provide appropriate direction for strategic planning. It requires ongoing review of performance measures to ensure they are valid, evaluation of performance against those measures, development of compliance strategies, communication of expectations throughout the Department, compliance validation and ongoing adjustment of the objectives.

Step 6: Complete an overall evaluation of the delivery system including any recommendations for changes to deployment or Department policies.
This step takes all of the inputs and outputs of the previous steps and completes the evaluation of current performance against the adopted performance standard. The output from this step is a validation of those elements of the Department that are working correctly and a list of recommendations for areas that need improvement. Such recommendations may include items such as building new fire stations, relocating or expanding existing stations, reallocating resources to areas of greater need, adding new resources, etc.

Once the six development steps are completed, the final SOC document is created. The final SOC document integrates all of the analysis points into a clear, comprehensive statement of findings and recommendations for future change. The document, with the use of graphs and maps, should foster informed policy discussion.

Each of the six development steps requires significant input from stakeholder groups, including labor, elected officials, other governmental agencies and the public. It is neither feasible nor desirable for the Department to pursue a SOC without the input and consensus of all stakeholders.

Each of the six development steps requires significant staff time and expertise. The risk assessment is particularly demanding. According to CPSE, if the risk assessment is not properly conducted and documented, the entire process will be suspect in its conclusions and recommendations.

CONCLUSION
It is not fiscally prudent for the Department to dedicate the staff time required to conduct the risk assessment, or most of the other steps. Assigning the project to a third-party contractor with demonstrated experience in developing an SOC is more cost effective than assigning the project to staff. A balanced option is to employ a third-party contractor to provide consult and staff support, while Department staff, along with labor and other stakeholder groups, work together to agree upon and develop the objectives, performance measures and recommendations.

Board report prepared by David Perez, Battalion Chief, Planning Section.