

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



RALPH M. TERRAZAS
FIRE CHIEF

January 16, 2018

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 18-006

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM:  Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON LAFD GENDER EQUITY PLAN

FINAL ACTION: ☐ Approved
☐ Denied

☐ Approved w/Corrections
☐ Received & Filed

☐ Withdrawn
☐ Other

SUMMARY

As directed by the Board of Fire Commissioners (Board), the Los Angeles Fire Department (Department) is providing an update to Board Report 16-078, the Gender Equity Action Plan presented to the Board on August 16, 2016. The plan was a result of Mayor Garcetti's Executive Directive No. 11, entitled, "Gender Equity in City Operations," issued on August 26, 2015.

The initial plan contained information, recommendations, goals and objectives to resolve gender inequities and improve the status of women in the Department. It specifically focused on increasing the number of female firefighters, creating a more cohesive and inclusive work environment, and motivating and encouraging women to promote and advance into leadership ranks.

The initial report identified three specific areas to be addressed: Recruitment, Work Environment, and Professional Development. This update will provide an overview of the achievements that have been made since the initial report.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and file this report.

DISCUSSION

Recruitment

The Department initiated a new marketing/recruitment campaign in 2016. The campaign was known as, "Wear Your Strength on your Sleeve." The Firefighter Recruitment Section (FRS) utilized new methods to gather applicant data, offered numerous firefighter preparation programs, and provided structured mentoring to better assist the applicants at being successful throughout the hiring process, academy, and probationary period.

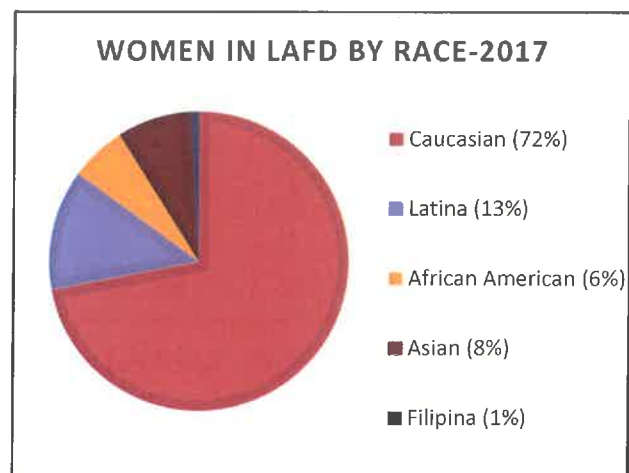
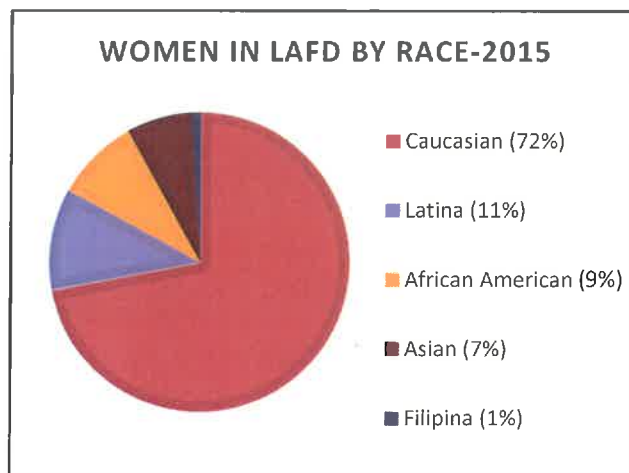
The 2016 recruitment campaign resulted in 8.28% female applicants (565 out of 6824) as compared to 4.86% (196 out of 4032) in 2014 (BFC 16-092 & 17-013). Several factors contributed to this rise in female applicants, all of which have been discussed during the Recruitment Plan Board Report update (BFC 17-013).

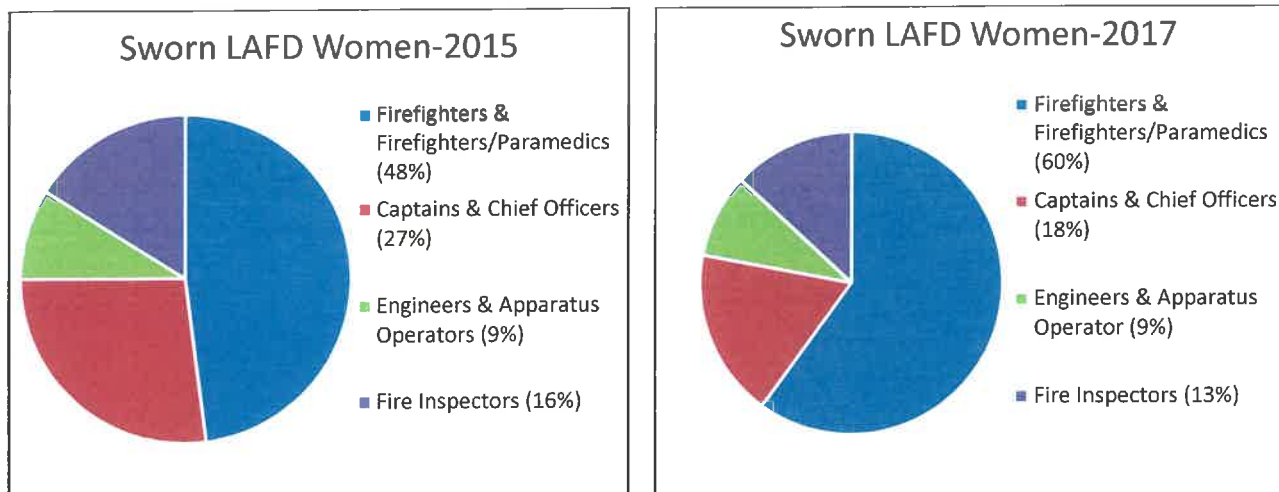
When Fire Chief Ralph Terrazas took office in August 2014, there were 82 female firefighters on the Department. Since then, there have been 12 completed Fire Academy classes, which have produced a total of 29 successful female firefighters. This represents a 35% increase in female firefighters. However, during that same time period, 9 female firefighters (11%) retired. Therefore, there has been a net gain of 20 female firefighters (24%) for a total of 102 as of January 8, 2018. This number represents 3.1% of the LAFD sworn workforce.

During the month of January 2018, 4 sworn women will be retiring from the Department in the following ranks: two Fire Inspector I's, one Fire Inspector II, and one Fire Captain I. As the Department continues to recruit, mentor, and develop more female firefighters, 11 sworn women will be retiring from the Department over the next 3 years.

On the progressive side, during this reporting period the Department promoted its first woman to the position of Fire Marshal for the City of Los Angeles, promoted its first African-American woman to the rank of Battalion Chief, and saw its first woman complete the Fire Academy at the top of her class (Class #17-01).

The following charts depict a comparison of statistical information for sworn women on the Department from 2015 to 2017:





In 2015, 52% of the sworn women in the Department were in promoted positions; with 48% in the firefighter ranks. Those figures have now changed to 40% in promoted positions and 60% in the firefighter ranks due to the Department's continued recruitment efforts combined with attrition due to retirement.

The Fire Chief remains committed to increasing diversity in the Department to be more reflective of the communities served. By focusing on increasing diversity to include more women in the fire service, be that as firefighters, firefighter/paramedics, or in the promotional ranks, the Department can gain better insight into ways to improve processes and foster action plans with an awareness of various community needs.¹

The FRS is also dedicated to offering a variety of youth programs to increase the number of girls and boys motivated to become LAFD firefighters. As an update to the prior plan, all youth programs have been or are undergoing re-design with standardized curriculum development (BFC 16-126 & 17-130). The Department also hired a Senior Special Project Coordinator in June 2017, with the expertise to oversee all youth programs.

Increased efforts have been made to get more girls involved in the various youth programs. The Department now has the tools to collect the data necessary to track the involvement by ethnicity and gender. The FRS data shows that in 2017, 17% of the Cadets, 21% of the Youth F.I.R.E. Program participants, and 27% of the High School Magnet participants were female.

There have also been 3 Girls Camps (ages 14-18 years old) with a total of 194 female participants. The Department is committed to continuously providing 2 girls camps per fiscal year at various locations rotating throughout each Geographic Bureau.

Although the youth programs will not create immediate results in increasing the number of female firefighters on the job, the long-term goal is to create a group of diverse, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable candidates for the FRS to follow and mentor throughout the hiring process, training academy, and probationary period.

Work Environment

¹ Egan, M.E. (2011). Fostering Innovation through a Diverse Workforce. Forbes: Insights.

The second part of the Gender Equity Action Plan addressed the need to create a positive work environment that fosters inclusion, equity, and respect for a diverse workforce.

The Department has taken many steps to ensure that the work environment is free from discrimination and/or harassment, including EEO training. This training includes:

- Mandatory reading of the Discrimination Prevention Policy Handbook (DPPH) by all members;
- Mandatory completion of the “EEO Challenge” training course by all members;
- Mandatory completion of “EEO for Supervisors”, a required course for all Supervisors to be completed every two years;
- Required enforcement of the City’s zero tolerance policies, as defined in the DPPH; and
- Maintenance of a Complaint Tracking System in which members can submit complaints either from their workplace or from home.

A women’s strategic planning workgroup was also formed to develop goals aimed at improving the work environment for women. The goals were prioritized and the next iteration of the Department’s 3-year Strategic Plan will contain the top priority goals. These goals will be listed under the following strategy:

“Create and implement an organizational structure to address human resources, personnel management, and workplace environment.”

The goals listed are as follows:

- Assess the feasibility of hiring a consultant to research and plan the implementation of a new organizational structure;
- Ensure frequent messaging from the Fire Chief focused on the value of human resources, personnel management, and professional workplace environment;
- Provide consistent training to all members on the value of human resources, personnel management, and professional workplace environment;
- Develop and evaluate performance metrics to serve as benchmarks for success and assess the work environment on a continuous basis; and
- Develop a comprehensive and all-inclusive workplace sensitivity training for all members.

At the end of January 2018, another training program called “Leading with Compassion,” will be initiated with the goal of training Department leaders to recognize behaviors in the workplace that inhibit equitable, professional development for all employees.

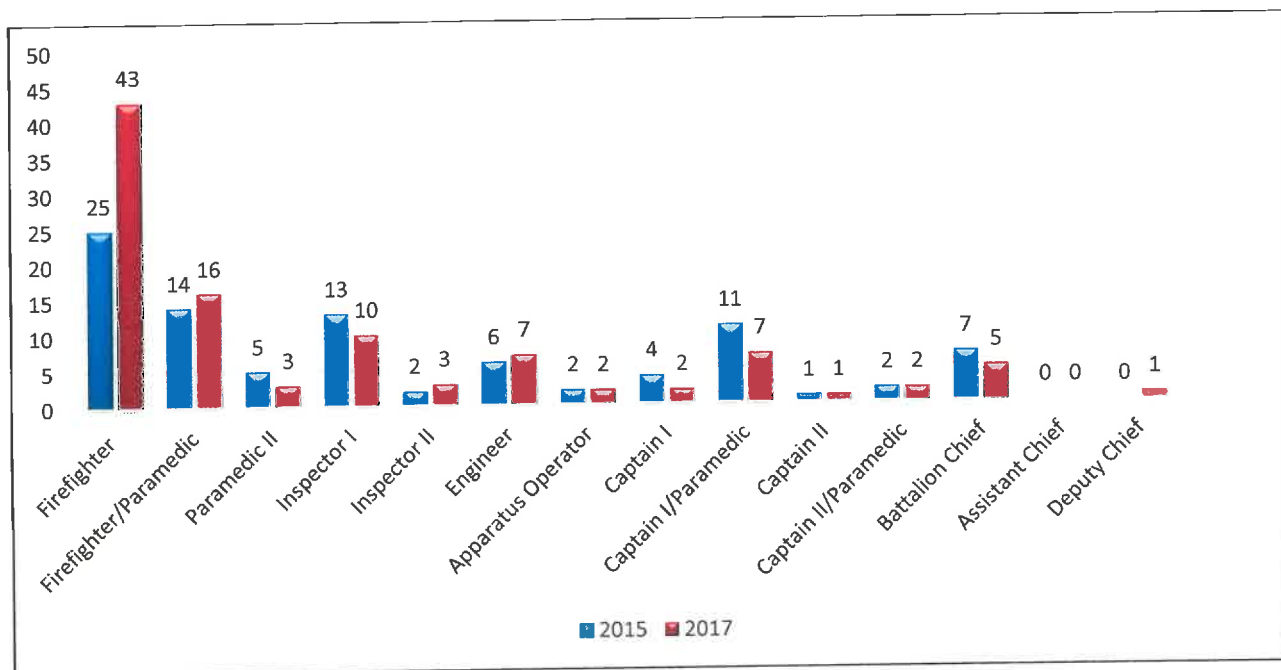
The training will first be given to all Chief Officers and then the Department will determine the best way to deliver this program to all Captains. More specifically, the training will focus on the Department’s culture, the consistency of training and development for all members, as well as team cohesiveness. Dr. Corinne Bendersky, a renowned expert in organizational behavior from the University of California, Los Angeles, created this program for the fire service.

Professional Development

Professional Development is the planned, progressive, and lifelong process of education, training, mentorship, self-development, and experience that one gains during their career to aid in developing competency and upward mobility. In the fire service, professional development is a critical element to becoming a leader and a professional. As a fire service organization, the Department must strive to provide continuing guidance to its most valuable resource, its personnel.

Near the end of 2015, 52% of the sworn women in the Department were in promoted positions. As of the end of 2017, only 40% of the women are in promoted positions. In addition to the nine women who have retired since the gender equity plan was presented, over the next three years another 11 seasoned, experienced sworn women will be retiring.

The following chart shows sworn women on the Department by rank in 2015 as compared to 2017.



The Department is undergoing significant changes, and the increase in the number of women since 2015 reflects its commitment to a greater representation of women in the ranks. However, greater recruitment efforts and an increase in numbers is not the only answer to creating an equitable work place for women.

As identified in the LAFD Gender Equity Plan of 2016, promotional training programs and organized opportunities for professional development offered by the Department historically were inconsistent and not clearly defined. Traditionally, acceptance into a number of Department training opportunities was determined by rank, with the higher ranks (primarily men by a large margin) having first priority. Other programs that were made available on a first-come, first-serve basis were not advertised. These programs were often made available through "word of mouth" in a system where women were not privy to the availability of these opportunities.

Changes in the last few years have significantly improved the ability of women and all members to obtain desired training. This includes a number of courses offered by or through the In-Service Training Section designed to assist in the upward mobility of all members. Some of these courses include an Engine Academy, Truck Academy, a variety of California State Fire Marshal courses, National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) courses, Continuing Education Programs for Captains and Chief Officers, and rank specific promotional preparation courses for all ranks (also known as CORE classes).

Additionally, for the courses offered, the Training Division is currently changing the way members sign up for classes. Now, many classes are published on the Department intranet (Portal) with an Eventbrite link to sign up. This process provides for a more equitable process for getting into a class through a posted announcement and the Eventbrite link. Although still on a first-come, first-serve basis, the opportunity is advertised to all members. The use of Eventbrite also allows the Department to gather other statistical data that may be of value.

In addition to the above referenced training, the Training Division is in the process of creating a Professional Development Center. This center will provide rank specific education programs, as well as assistance to members wishing to obtain formal education through agreements/contracts that the Department maintains with several universities and colleges. These teaching institutions provide tailored course curriculum with an agreed upon decreased tuition cost, availability of credits/units for work related courses and training, as well as online delivery and live instruction at Department locations. The degree programs available and delivered at Department locations include Emergency Service Management, Organizational Leadership, Public Administration, and Business Administration.

With the formation of a Professional Development Center, the opportunities for women will be more readily available on an equitable platform. This will allow for fairness in obtaining skills for promotability and highly desirable special duty assignments. As these programs are developed, all members will have greater opportunities to improve their job skills and leadership abilities as well as to achieve their promotional goals.

CONCLUSION

As identified in the Gender Equity Plan, the Department's goal is to create and uphold an inclusive work environment that promotes fairness, inclusiveness, and fosters the equal participation of women in all positions. The Department is also committed to increasing the number of women in leadership positions and to recognize the incredible value that women in these positions provide to the Department and the City of Los Angeles.

The Department, with the support of the Mayor's Office and Executive Directive No. 11, will continue to strive towards creating greater gender parity.

Board report prepared by Battalion Chief Elise Brodowy, Executive Officer, Administrative Operations Bureau.