

March 5, 2019

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



RALPH M. TERRAZAS
FIRE CHIEF

March 5, 2019

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 19-023

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM:  Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT DATA PROGRAM IN DOWNTOWN
LOS ANGELES

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 Withdrawn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 downtown Los Angeles business district has the highest concentration of homeless encampments in the City of Los Angeles. In 2017, there were several structure fires in downtown Los Angeles caused by tents placed onto sidewalks that became engulfed in fire (accidental or intentional) and spread to nearby buildings. In April 2018, the Fire Prevention and Public Safety Bureau (FPB) developed the Battalion 1 Homeless Encampment Survey. The intention of this survey was to collect data and better understand the impacts of tent fires in the downtown area.

The FPB also reached out to the downtown area Business Improvement District (BID) to capture additional homeless encampment data. Many times, BID members from their clean and safe teams arrive on-scene and extinguish homeless encampment fires and/or tent fires prior to the LAFD's arrival.

The data captured clearly identifies concentrated areas where rubbish/tent or homeless encampment fires occur in the downtown area. The LAFD will continue to work closely with the Mayor's office, Unified Homelessness Response Center (UHRC), Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), Los Angeles Department of Sanitation (LASAN), and private vendors to create a path forward to minimize the impacts of homeless encampment fires in the downtown area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board:
Receive and file.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to the general fund.

DISCUSSION

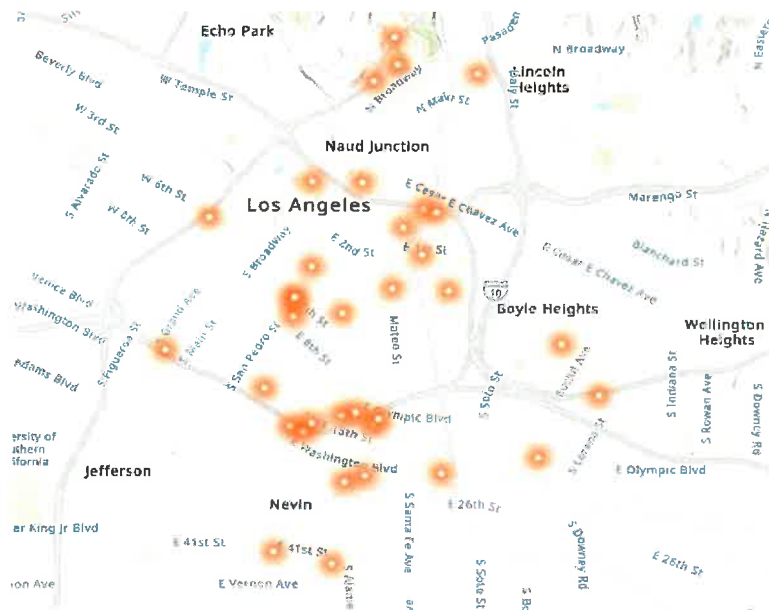
The FPB is continuing to develop the homeless encampment tracking sheet. In addition to tracking the number of tent/rubbish fires that occur in Battalion 1, the FPB has reached out to our GIS mapping partners. The location of the fires is now tracked on a weekly basis. The tracking sheet collects essential information including the probable cause of fires, number of injuries, occasions when Arson has been notified, running totals, percent breakdown, current totals for 2019, totals for 2018 and running totals for 2018 and 2019.

Total Fires	2019 Totals		2018 Totals		Running Totals	
Overall Total:	5	100%	139	100%	144	100%
Accidental Fires:	2	40.00%	55	39.57%	57	39.58%
Intentional Fires:	0	0.00%	45	32.37%	45	31.25%
Other Causes:	3	60.00%	39	28.06%	42	29.17%

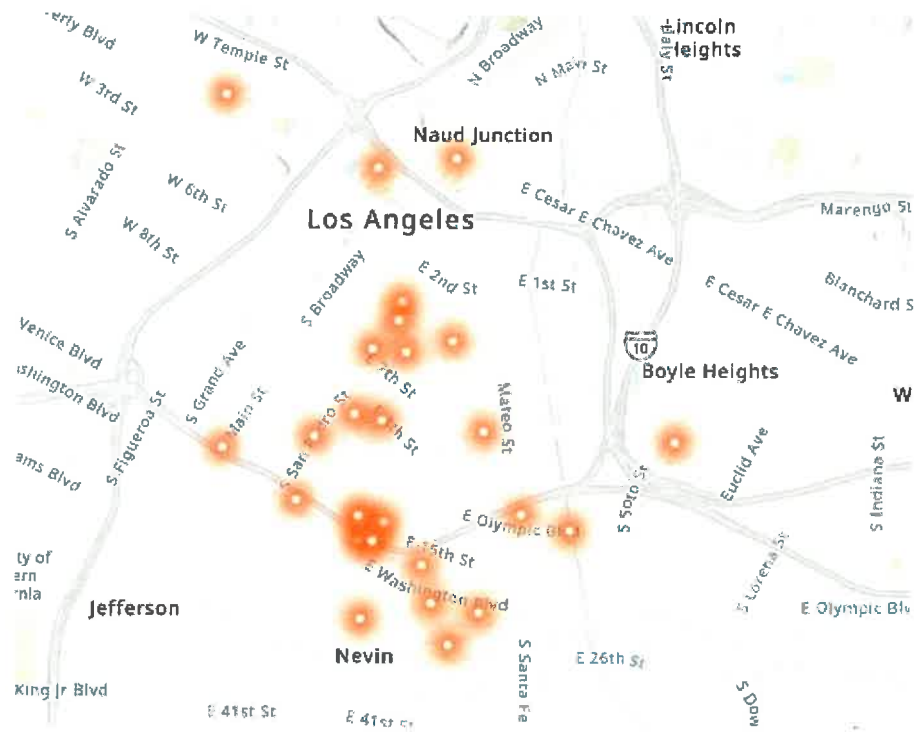
The tracking sheet allows mapping capabilities which demonstrate locations of accidental, intentional and other causes for 2018 and 2019.

Mapping of Fires:

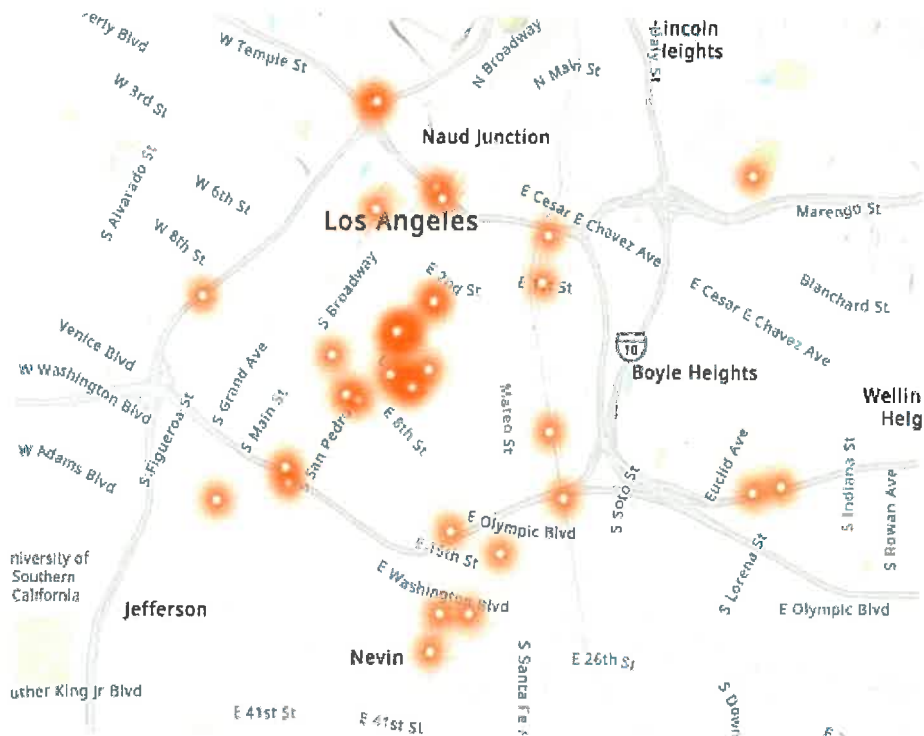
Accidental



Intentional/Arson



Other Causes



The FPB has established a strong working relationship with the impacted downtown area Business Improvement District. On occasion, BID members from their clean and safe teams arrive on-scene and extinguish small homeless encampment fires and/or tent fires prior to the LAFD's arrival. The FPB has partnered with the downtown BID management to collect essential data to add to the weekly totals of tent fires. This ensures that we have a complete and real time count to assist with our strategic approach to decrease tent fires in the downtown area.

CLEAN AND SAFE TEAMS (BID)

Total Fires	2019	2018	Running Total
Overall:	7	85	92

While tracking the overall tent fires during 2018 and 2019, the LAFD has taken the following steps to decrease the impacts of homeless encampment fires to the downtown area:

- Fully staffed Engine 209 to increase firefighting abilities in the downtown area
- Staffed the fast response vehicle to proactively seek out fire life safety issues and address them quickly
- Staffed the Sober Unit
- Staffed the California Advanced Practitioner Unit
- Created a Homeless Encampment Task Force partnering with the Mayor's Office, UHRC, LAHSA, LASAN, and LAPD
- Created an informational handout on safe cooking practices for LAHSA to educate individuals living in homeless encampments
- Conducted and completed a piloted Infrared Camera Program to identify small area tent fires and notification protocols
- Educated and informed local building owners of additional fire life safety systems to protect structures from exposure fires

Additional long term goals have been established. The FPB is working to expand this mapping and tracking program to other areas of the City which would include homeless encampments in the Very High Fire Severity Hazard Zone. The LAFD will continue to leverage technology and metrics to meet our overall goal of decreasing tent and encampment fires in the City of Los Angeles.

CONCLUSION

By capturing and tracking this data, the LAFD is able to increase public safety, firefighter safety and ensure compliance with the fire code. The FPB is working very closely with our local partners to decrease the overall encampment fires in the downtown area.

Board report prepared by Kristin M. Crowley, Deputy Chief, Fire Prevention and Public Safety Bureau.