

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



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FIRE CHIEF

December 31, 2020

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 21-010

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM:  Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: 2020 UPDATE ON LAFD GENDER EQUITY PLAN

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 Withdrawn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

Under Mayor Garcetti's Executive Directive No. 11, entitled, "Gender Equity in City Operations," issued on August 26, 2015, the initial plan contained information and recommendations as well as goals and objectives to resolve gender inequities and improve the status of women within the Department. It specifically focused on three areas: Recruitment, Work Environment, and Professional Development.

This current report will provide an update on the progress that has been made in the four years since the initial report and areas identified as necessary to ensure a safe, equitable and inclusive work environment for women.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and file this report.

DISCUSSION

The report focuses on three main areas; Recruitment, Work Environment, and Professional Development. The Department has concentrated its efforts in these areas to evaluate what has been accomplished, what goals remain to be completed and alternative ways the Department can continue to move in a positive direction toward gender equity.

Recruitment

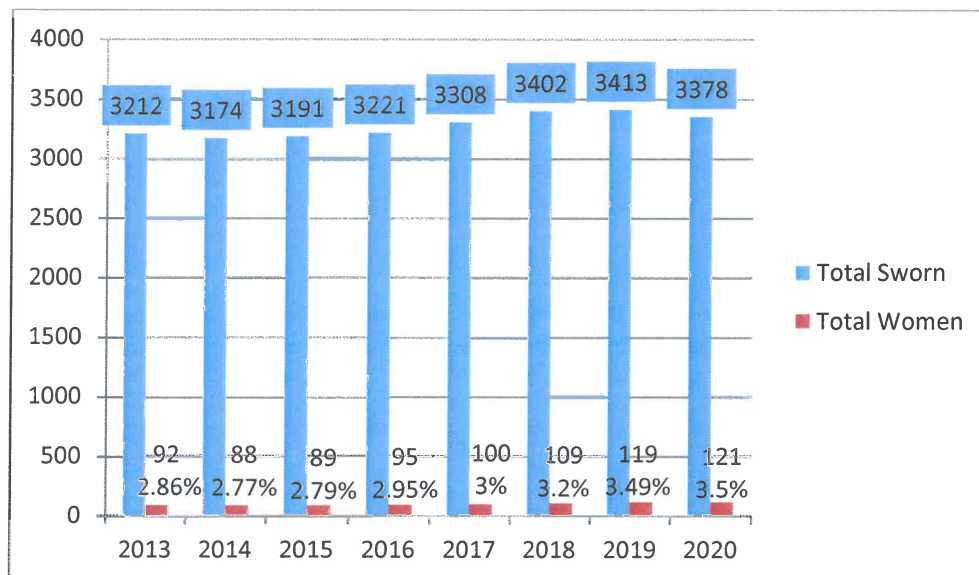
When Fire Chief Ralph Terrazas took office in August 2014, there were 88 women firefighters on the Department¹. With a total of 3,174 sworn personnel, this placed sworn women at 2.77% of the workforce. As of December 31, 2020, the Department has 3,378² sworn personnel and 121 sworn women, or 3.5%. Since January 1, 2014, a total of 107 women have been hired, of which 63 remain active³. Taking into consideration resignations, terminations, and retirements, this provides an overall increase of 44 women in the past six years. When compared in

¹ According to the Departments Quarterly Diversity Report as of August 25, 2014

² According to data obtained through the Human Capital Program

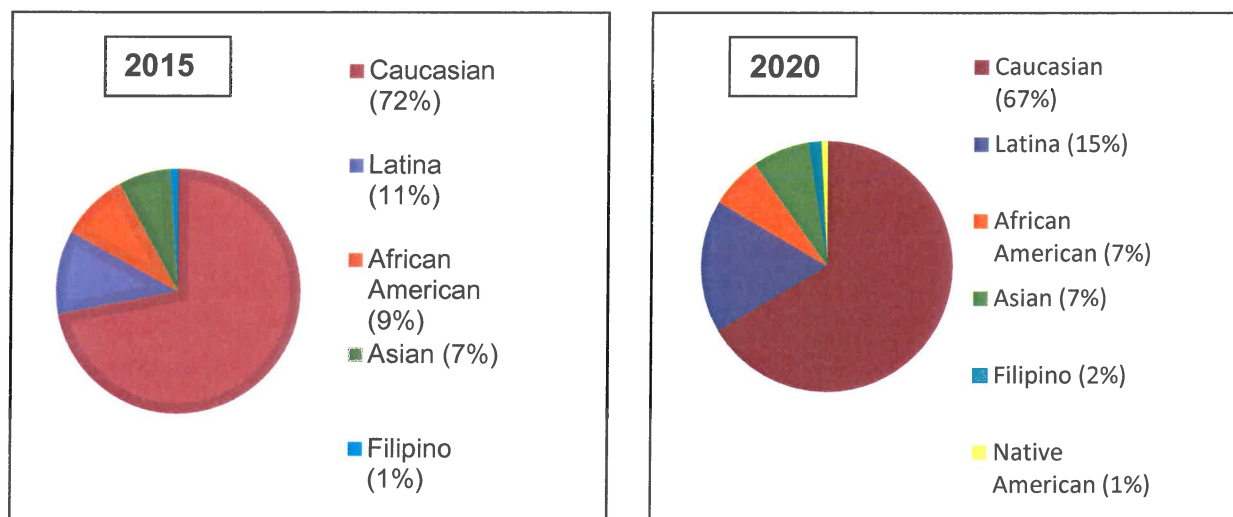
³ This figure includes 5 women currently in Drill Tower (DT) Class 19.2 and 4 women from DT 19.2 deferred due to injury

percentages, the total number of Department members increased by 6%, and the number of women increased by 35%.



The graph to the left depicts a comparison between the total sworn personnel and sworn women since July of 2013.

In addition to gender, racial diversity provides differing perspectives and ideas that help the Department better understand the communities it serves and provides opportunity for better approaches in all aspects of emergency service and human relations. The graph below reflects the breakdown of women by race in 2015 and in 2020.



The increase in women firefighters since 2014 is attributed to the Departments gender focused recruitment efforts, the youth programs, and mentorship and recruitment by current women firefighters and other members.

In 2016, the Department embarked on a very robust recruitment campaign that continues today. This program highlights members within the LAFD, including women and minorities and includes social media platforms and advertisement in high visibility locations such as City buses, professional sporting event marquees, and other measures used to draw public attention to the position of firefighter.

These efforts have been successful in drawing in prospective women candidates. In comparing the number of women who applied for the position of firefighter, the Department found that there

was an increase of 44%. The 2018 recruitment cycle resulted in 9.47% women (936 out of 9879) who filed an application for employment, versus 5.19% (522 out of 10,059) in 2014.

The previous gender equity action plan contained a number of recruitment goals directed at building out the current recruitment process. In a review of the original goals it was determined that most of the goals geared toward the development of targeted women, minority, and youth programs were successfully completed. An example of this success can be seen in the percentages of young women and girls who participate in the youth program, as reflected in the chart below.

Program	% of Girls in 2017/18	% of Girls in 2019	% of Girls in 2020
High School Magnet program	29%	31%	29%
Youth F.I.R.E. Academy 5 programs combined	27%	27% ¹	
Cadet Program	12%	14%	

¹ The percentage number, which remained the same, does not reflect the increase in class size and number of girls. In 2018 there were a total of 319 class participants (87 girls) and in 2019, there were a total of 430 class participants (116 girls)

In the interest of continuing to attract high numbers of qualified women, the Department has identified the following goals and action items:

RECRUITMENT GOALS AND ACTION ITEMS

Goal # 1 – Maintain the current recruitment plan which promotes fairness in attracting and hiring well-qualified and diverse candidates.

Action Items:

- Continue the Firefighter Prep programs to ensure all candidates have knowledge of the LAFD hiring process, physical fitness requirements and job duties, these include:
 - Candidate Physical Ability Testing (CPAT)
 - Interview Preparation (transitioned to online due to COVID with better turn out rate)
 - Mock Interviews (suspended due to COVID but will transition to online once we get tech)
 - Applicant Orientation Program (AOP) (currently not running due to COVID, will be reinstated when safe)
 - Candidate Advancement Program (CAP) (run by Recruit Services Section)
- Strive to build on efforts to recruit a workforce reflective of the City's population, including:
 - Continue to recruit underrepresented groups:
 - Explore new ideas and methods to attract underrepresented groups
 - Explore factors that result in low representation of underrepresented groups and design methods to eliminate those factors, e.g. distrust of law enforcement personnel, perception that firefighting is a job for men only, etc.
 - Continue to work with Stakeholder organizations to assist and mentor candidates in the hiring process:

- Evaluate current processes for effectiveness and needs
 - Identify better methods to assist stakeholder organizations in the mentorship role
- Explore new methods and expand upon existing methods in an effort to increase outreach to underrepresented groups:
 - Continue to look for new partnerships in the community to highlight the LAFD as a career
 - Continue to work with Personnel Department on targeted outreach/recruiting through social media
 - Continue to use social media as a way to engage diverse candidates
 - Team building with local college athletic programs
 - Virtual or In-person recruitment at local colleges, trade schools and universities
 - Develop better outreach to the exiting military members
 - Work with City Personnel to develop new PSAs and marketing contracts with companies for Social media outreach during hiring years
 - Public awareness of firefighting jobs via social media (Instagram, twitter, Facebook) and City Personnel
 - Continue partnerships with ESPN and other marketing partners who are female focused
 - Continue holding a Job Expo(s) in the hiring year to engage as many candidates as possible in person with Q&A

Goal # 2 – Expand Youth Programs to allow for more Youth participation⁴ with the intent to draw interest in the fire service from program participants.

Action Items:

- In conjunction with all recruitment efforts, continue to explore ways to promote and advertise all youth programs
- Assist the High School Fire/EMS Magnets to increase enrollment and support when they have recruitment events at the local middle schools
- Develop system to track participants across all youth programs by gender and ethnicity to determine the number and percentage who continue into the hiring process
- Ensure all Youth Program instructors continue with youth protection training through learning for life (Boy Scouts of America) to limit Department liability
- Continue the LAFD Prep programs and expand as needed with more dates
- Continue to recruit and enhance the number of people on the cadres for Girls Camp, Youth F.I.R.E. programs and Cadet program due to recent retirements and for diversity

Goal # 3 – Develop effective methods to collect, monitor, manage and analyze all available data.

Action Items:

- Obtain funding to procure appropriate technology hardware and software to collect, monitor, manage and analyze data
- Utilize data to establish effective metrics

⁴ Fire Commission Board Report 19-148 speaks specifically to the Recruitment Section Youth Programs

- Develop system to track participants across all programs by gender and ethnicity to determine the number and percentage of who continue into the hiring process
- Establish consistent process to utilize Google Forms as an additional tracking method
- Track and evaluate recruitment processes and events to ensure they are meeting the goals of the Section
- Develop ways to effectively use the collection of recruitment diversity data in conjunction with the Personnel Department
- Establish consistent process of utilizing Eventbrite (or like program) to enroll attendees to all events

Goal # 4 – Develop COVID 19 contingency plans, in coordination with City COVID 19 Guidelines and measures, to ensure recruitment efforts and youth programs continue to function effectively.

Action Items:

- Determine feasibility of developing effective on-line content and/or programming for recruitment efforts and youth programs
- Develop plans to include social distancing and other City mandated guidelines to ensure the safety of participants involved in recruitment and/or youth programs
- Identify elements of the recruitment efforts and youth programs that have been hindered by COVID 19 restrictions and guidelines and monitor its impact on the Departments efforts
- Develop modified programming and information dissemination methods to minimize the impact of COVID 19 restrictions on recruitment efforts and youth programs

Key Areas of Focus

- Girls Camps and high school magnet programs, which teach young girls about the fire service and have the potential to serve as a progressive pathway into other youth programs and eventually the hiring process
- Development of a “Hiring Process” training program to educate all members on the process and assign through Target Solutions. This will empower all members to act as representatives in the recruitment process
- Develop and enhance data monitoring and tracking of all program participants
- Evaluate all parts of the hiring process to identify if there are areas where women are disproportionately disqualified, and develop methods to address those areas if they exist
- Evaluate all parts of the hiring process to identify if implicit biases in the hiring process are disproportionately negatively impacting women candidates

Challenges:

- Budget and funding limitations that inhibit:
 - Staffing, and
 - Procurement of appropriate technology hardware and software
- Two-year time frame for hiring and the Stratified Random Sampling (SRS) process contributes to loss of diverse candidates

- Biases within the fire service that continue to create reluctance in accepting women as firefighters and support the belief that it is not a career for women
- Development of methods to de-stigmatize member participation in Girls Camps and other gender focused recruitment efforts

Key Recruitment Metrics and Time lines are outlined in Attachment A

Work Environment

The second part of the Gender Equity Action Plan addresses the need to create a positive work environment that fosters inclusion, equity, and respect for a diverse workforce. In reflecting on the previous four years of gender equity initiatives, the Department compared initial available data and the most recent 2020 data. Some of this data is tangible, as it relates to actual numbers of women (both sworn and civilian), percentage increases/decreases, and the implementation of gender targeted youth programs (as discussed above). Other information is anecdotal and based on personal accounts rather than facts or research. The validity of the personal accounts is taken very seriously. The Department recognizes that individual experiences, whether perceived or real, create hidden barriers to equity and success, and as such, need to be acknowledged.

In April of 2019, the Los Angeles Women in the Fire Service (LAWFS), held a focus group for its members who were hired in 2014 or later. The purpose of this group was to provide a facilitated dialogue intended to assess the work environment within the fire stations for women firefighters who were newer on the job. This was by design, so that the LAWFS could determine if the work environment for women had evolved and improved over time. To protect the anonymity of the participants, the feedback provided was broadly disseminated into four main themes,

1. How being different impacted their personal observation of being accepted.
2. That often SOD Captains were more likely to engage in problematic behavior than their own assigned Captain.
3. That women were more likely than men to be placed in situations where they had to prove their physical abilities.
4. That the environment within the Department did not promote confidence that it was safe to report negative experiences or potential policy violations.

As a group, the women expressed that their experiences in the recruit academy were largely positive, although they felt that both their mistakes and successes were magnified because they stood out from the rest of the recruits. Probationary assignment experiences varied widely, from extremely supportive to hostile. The majority of participants reported negative treatment during both their probationary and post-probationary station assignments that they attributed to stereotypes and biases about their gender.

Experiences as probationary firefighters also varied based on the way the “front office” approached training. This included whether the Captains and crews approached their roles “as teachers and mentors or as trying to make you uncomfortable and scared”. The later substantially impacted the participants’ experiences. One participant described it this way, “It depends on if the Captain respects you as a human being” and “wants to help you learn.” Others expressed feelings of uncertainty and exclusion as “the only person who looks like me at a station.”

Several women firefighters described how Captains working Scheduled Overtime Duty (SOD) tested and drilled them on tasks that were beyond the probationary firefighter standards and

expectations. All of the women described that they were excessively drilled in the top position of the 35' extension ladder, and were not given enough opportunities to practice the base position, which they felt was harder. Most women perceived that always being placed in the top position of 35' extension ladder, on 2-member throws, was rooted in skepticism about women's strength, especially from SOD Captains who were not familiar with the women's individual abilities.

Some women described being ostracized for participating in women firefighter recruitment events, like the Girls' Camp or LAWFS events. The group expressed perceptions that there are certain stations that women aren't sent to because they are not welcome there. Some women firefighters had experienced extremely sexist comments. A more toned down example, for the purposes of this report, included a Captain expressing unsolicited concern over a probationary member's menstrual cycle, stating, "I know once a month things happen and you might not be feeling well." Statements like this demonstrate ignorance and implicit or explicit bias toward women firefighters.

These women also talked about the negative reputational consequences for reporting misconduct, or as it is often viewed "complaining", even to their own Captain. Because of this many participants said they don't seek help. One participant explained it this way, "You don't want to get labeled as 'That kind of girl' for complaining." "Once you do something, then you're known as 'that kind of person' because that will follow you for the rest of your career. So you don't know how to react to defend yourself. Pull back, put your head down, disengage, and don't ask questions. But you don't learn and develop that way." It was expressed that the inability to defend oneself or seek help exacerbated feelings of isolation and exclusion from the crews. This same issue was expressed by 43% of the women polled in 2015.

Recognizing that training is an important element in creating positive change and minimizing gender and racial bias, the Department has either initiated or participated in the following actions since 2014:

- Continued maintenance of an internal Complaint Tracking System in which members can enter allegations of misconduct
- 2013 thru 2016 – Battalion Commander facilitated annual EEO Training provided to all members
- 2016 – Mandatory assignment and reading of the Department's Discrimination Prevention Policy Handbook, including the City's zero tolerance for harassment policies.
- 2017 – Development and implementation of the Department's Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance Plan, including mandatory posting of EEO related policies and laws at each work location
- 2017 – Mandatory completion of the Personnel Department's EEO Challenge Training
- 2018 – Mandatory completion of "Leading with Compassion", implicit bias training for Officers
- 2019 – Mandatory completion of "Cultural Competency Training," implicit bias training for members below the rank of Captain
- Prior to 2019, Mandatory completion of the Personnel Department's "EEO for Supervisors," a course required by the City for all Supervisors, to be completed every two years
- As of 2019, and in accordance with CA Senate Bill 1343, two hours of annual training in Sexual Harassment prevention for Supervisors, and one hour for members below the rank of Captain

Consistent with our commitment identified in the Department's Strategic Plan, Goal # 2, Strategy # 1 "Create and implement an organizational structure to address human resources,

personnel management and workplace environment.” The Department has taken, or is in the process of implementing the following actions:

- *“Assess the feasibility of hiring a consultant to research and plan the implementation of a new organizational structure”;* The Los Angeles Innovation and Performance Commission will be funding this study. Deloitte, a professional services network, has been selected to conduct the assessment
- *“Ensure frequent messaging from the Fire Chief focused on the value of human resources, personnel management, and professional workplace environment.”* This messaging generally takes place quarterly
- *“Provide consistent training to all members on the value of human resources, personnel management, and professional workplace environment.”* The training provided to accomplish this goal are itemized above
- *“Develop and evaluate performance metrics to serve as benchmarks for success and assess the work environment on a continuous basis.”* This goal is partially dependent upon the finding of the Deloitte study, other metrics which have not been developed will continue to be included in the current action plan
- *“Develop a comprehensive and all-inclusive workplace sensitivity training for all members.”* This item is in development.

Some examples of quarterly messaging from Chief Terrazas include:

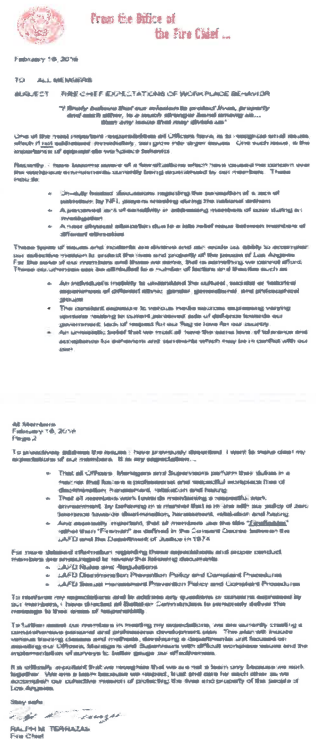
2017 – “We are Stronger Together”, messaging designed to encourage unity in light of events that occurred at a political protest in Charlottesville, Virginia (Attachment B)



2019 – The development and distribution of the “Diversity is Our Strength” poster to all work locations (Attachment D)



2018 – “Fire Chief Expectations of Workplace Behavior”, messaging designed to reinforce expectations of creating an inclusive environment and professional behavior in the workplace (Attachment C)



A number of the human relations goals listed in the Strategic Plan have been completed. This includes the establishment of consistent messaging, approval for funding for a consultant to evaluate our work environment, and the completion of implicit bias training for all members. Other action items (listed below) are part of a continuing process which have either been, 1) completed but necessitate continuation on a regular basis; 2) are still in the “reach” category as we strive to accomplish the item or; 3) new action items which have been added as we progress forward. All of these items are listed in the goal below:

WORK ENVIRONMENT GOALS AND ACTION ITEMS

Goal – Continue to develop measures to create positive work environments, Department wide, that foster inclusion, equity and respect for a diverse workforce.

- Continue demonstration by management through actions and words that equitable treatment and inclusion of all members is important and expected
- Continue the development and implementation of Department wide training programs that promote awareness to the benefits of equitable and inclusive work environments
 - Partner with other City Departments, outside agencies and other entities with expertise in the area of equity, diversity and inclusion
 - Present this as mandatory annual training to all members
 - Develop and implement leadership training for all Officers on a continuous basis
 - Establish permanent curriculum in CORE, OCEP and COCEP that addresses the Department expectation for equity, inclusion and professionalism
 - This training should also include messaging from the Fire Chief that re-enforces the expectation of maturity and positive leadership from all Officers
 - This training should be included in all CORE classes and at least annually in OCEP and COCEP
- Develop and implement interpersonal communication skills and conflict resolution training to all Officers, at a minimum of every three years
- Continue to ensure compliance with the implementation of all State and City mandated EEO training courses
- Ensure that the Department's EEO coordinator position is equipped and empowered to effectively monitor implementation and compliance with all EEO training and other processes, including oversight of the Professional Standards Division and Alternative Process EEO investigations
- Institute a policy to make mandatory assignment and reading of the Department's Discrimination Prevention Policy Handbook and the Rules and Regulations, at a minimum of every five years
- Ensure continuous updates of the DPPH to reflect changes in Department and City policies
- Develop an effective process for tracking all progress and implementation plans to ensure compliance
- Conduct annual surveys of all personnel to better determine workforce engagement and the organizational climate
 - *Utilize an outside vendor and or educational institution to conduct the surveys.*
 - *Identify possible funding avenues*
- Develop methods utilizing data and metrics to track positive changes within the work environment for women firefighters. Some examples of data which may indicate things are improving include:
 - Documented decrease in the number of complaints relating to inappropriate behavior and/or potential EEO violations perpetrated toward women
 - Documented increase in the comfort level of women in utilizing officers or the disciplinary system to address concerns in the workplace
 - Increased participation of women in Department-wide training programs and

- classes
- Increased participation of women as instructors and peers in Department-wide training programs and classes
- Improvement in feedback from women in polls and surveys
- Continued increase in the number of women (sworn and civilian) in leadership/management positions, and other key assignments traditionally and currently held by men

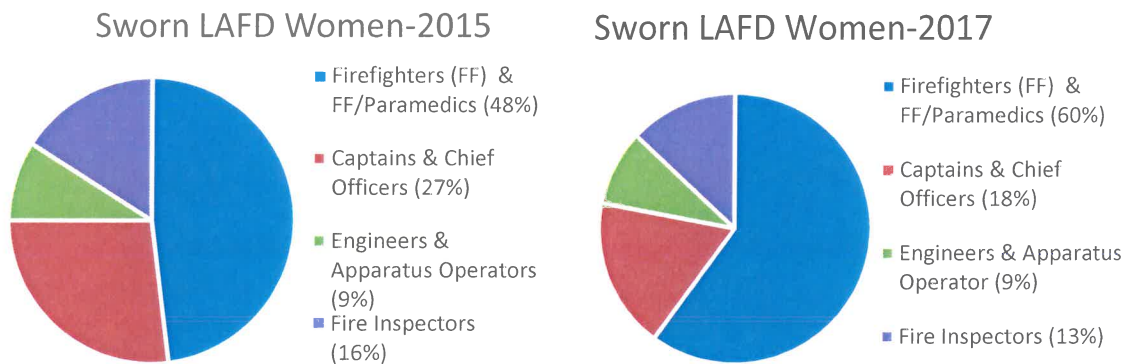
The identification of cultural norms and workplace actions that contribute to creating barriers for equity in the Department are often hard to quantify. Individual mindsets and belief systems, lack of or inadequate training, weak accountability measures, and inconsistent messaging create and support the foundation upon which bias and inequity is allowed to exist. Personal perception of events also plays a role. Completion of the action items above will provide the Department some tools to ensure a concentrated and concerted effort to improve on these areas.

Professional Development

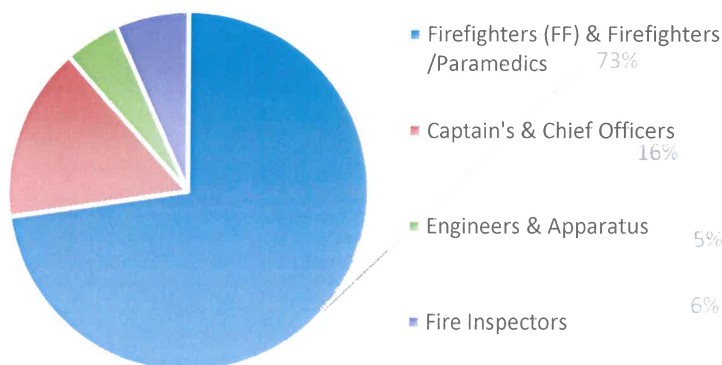
The 3rd part of the gender equity plan discusses professional development and provides key areas where implemented action items may improve the status of women.

In 2015, the plan highlighted that there were a total of 92 women firefighters, 52% of which held promotional positions. Currently, there are 121 sworn women within the Department, 25% of which hold promotional positions.

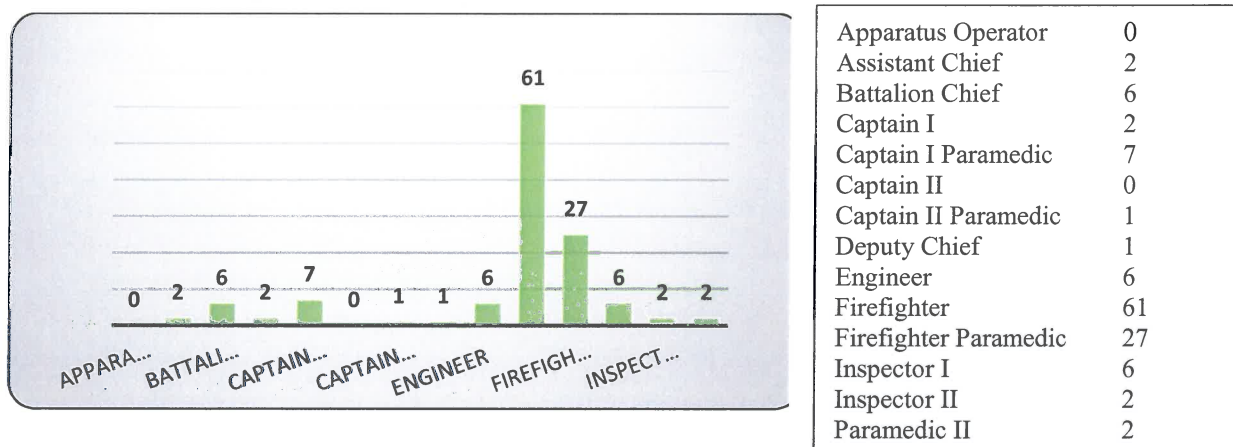
As noted in the following charts, which document the percentage of women by rank in 2015, 2017, and 2020, the percentage of women in promotional positions is on the decline.



Sworn LAFD Women-2020



The next graph reflects the number of women from Firefighter to Chief Officer:



A robust recruitment effort, human relations training, and messaging from the Department alone will not remove barriers, whether obvious or hidden, that inhibit the equitable growth and development of women. Equal access to professional development opportunities is also part of the equation.

The Gender Equity Plan of 2016 contained the following two main goals for professional development:

1. Develop and implement a professional development program with the incentives to improve performance and provide opportunities for employee advancement.
2. Strengthen training and education opportunities for LAFD members

To date there has been significant progress in accomplishing these goals, which includes:

- Establishment of a professional development center, identified as The LAFD Training Institute⁵. This institute is designed to educate all members of the opportunities that lie

⁵ The LAFD Training Institute has currently soft launched and will be ready for widespread distribution soon

within the LAFD and to provide them a path to achieve success. Components of the program include:

- A program and website⁶, developed by Training Division, which provides career guidance, including connections to the following:
 - Colleges and Universities
 - State Fire Training (SFT)
 - California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS)
 - National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Wildland Training
- LAFD Leadership Academy provides an upper level education and college credits. This program is open to all.
- Currently in development, the SFT Company Officer Series:
 - A 5 class series for members aspiring to be LAFD Officers
 - Anticipated delivery- November 2020 – March 2021
- Strengthen opportunities for LAFD members:
 - The In-Service Training Section (ISTS) in collaboration with the 31 Los Angeles County Agency Regional Training Group has an established network with regional agencies to provide training opportunities to all members in USAR, HazMat, Brush, and SFT. Other opportunities at the region, state and federal level also exist.
- Transparency and encouragement:
 - All training opportunities and classes facilitated or sanctioned by ISTS are published on the Department portal to ensure equal opportunity for all interested members.
 - In situations where class size is restricted, students are elected based on class criteria or seniority.
- Tracking:
 - All ISTS facilitated classes are rostered and inputted into Target Solutions for documentation, accountability, and reimbursement.
 - Target Solutions entries can be queried and generated into reports by gender for data collection.
- Mentorship:
 - ISTS has sought out and actively recruited women Department members to participate on the following training cadres:
 - Captain CORE
 - Engineer CORE
 - Wildland Operations/ Engine Operator
 - SFT Instructor
 - Smoke Recognition/Live Fire

⁶ The LAFD Training Institute web page can be accessed at <https://www.lafd.org/ti>

CONS / GOALS

Recruitment:

Based on the current Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) entries, the Department will lose nine women by the end of 2022 and an additional 10 by the end of 2024. Should the Department desire to continue its target of obtaining 5% women, it would have to hire and retain at least 45 additional women by the end of 2022 and 55 women by the end of 2024⁷.

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.

Accountability & Measurement:

Specific Individuals responsible for gender equity goals:

- Commander of Administrative Operations, Chief Deputy
- Commander of Emergency Operations, Chief Deputy
- Commander of the Training and Support Bureau, Deputy Chief
- Assistant Commander of the Training and Support Bureau, Assistant Chief
- Commander of Firefighter Recruitment Section (FRS), Battalion Chief
- Commander of the In0Service Training Section (ISTS), Battalion Chief
- The Gender Equity Liaison will assist with monitoring progress towards the LAFD's Recruitment goals.

Board report prepared by Battalion Chief Stacy Gerlich, Executive Officer, Administrative Operations.

⁷ This 5% figure is based on the current total sworn membership level of 3378.