


# LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



KRISTIN M. CROWLEY  
FIRE CHIEF

February 20, 2024

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS  
FILE NO. 24-025

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners  
FROM:  Kristin M. Crowley, Fire Chief  
SUBJECT: SINGLE FUNCTION PARAMEDICS

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 Withdrawn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 Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) currently faces a significant shortage in Firefighter/Paramedic (FF/PM) positions due to promotions, retirements, and injuries. In addition, the Department anticipates additional vacancies in the coming fiscal year as it aims to expand its Emergency Medical Services (EMS) resources based upon the Citygate Associates Standards of Cover (SOC) report. The SOC report identified an extraordinarily high EMS demand within the City of Los Angeles which well exceeds the busiest emergency departments in the nation. Citygate estimated that the LAFD sees upwards of half a million patients a year and EMS responses represent 81.9% of total incident demand. As a result, the SOC report calls for the addition of 164 paramedics over the next three fiscal years to match the demand for emergency services.

In an effort to meet this additional demand, the LAFD has developed multiple methods to onboard licensed paramedics into the Department; however, it has faced ongoing challenges in maintaining paramedic staffing levels, let alone increasing the paramedic ranks. A multi-faceted paramedic recruitment and retention plan is required to meet the current and projected paramedic staffing requirements. As such, consideration should be given to compelling new members to attend paramedic school, accelerating paramedic certified probationary members onto paramedic rescues and detailing special duty members to paramedic rescues. Should this prove to be insufficient, the use of single function paramedics, despite its significant hurdles may be considered as a feasible alternative.

## RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:  
Receives and files.

## DISCUSSION

The LAFD historically onboards new paramedics by sending tenured Firefighter III

members to Paramedic school while on duty or by hiring Firefighter Is (Firefighter Recruits) who have already obtained a paramedic license. However, Firefighter Recruits with a paramedic license have only represented a small number of new hires in recent years. This is due to the current selection process not specifically identifying paramedics for priority hiring.

Paramedic school takes approximately 10 months to complete the didactic, clinical, and field internship training process. State and County licensing and accreditation can take an additional several months to complete after the training program. The LAFD has routinely budgeted to send 45 Firefighters to paramedic school, per fiscal year. However, the budget does not account for authorized training positions; the firefighters must be detailed away from their current assignment at a fire station and filled behind by other firefighters working overtime. This detail process further exacerbates staffing challenges at the fire station level and limits the Department's ability to enroll a larger number of Firefighters in paramedic school. The cost to back-fill a Firefighter III detailed to paramedic school with another Firefighter working overtime is approximately \$130,000 per member. Firefighters hired in Classes 21-4 and beyond were mandated to sign a Contract of Performance acknowledging the policies and procedures of the Recruit Academy and making Paramedic School compulsory. It further stipulates that the member agrees to maintain their license as a condition of employment. Consequently, all non-paramedics in these classes will be given the paramedic school entrance examination and sent to school when seats are available. Doing so will ensure a consistent stream of paramedic certified Firefighters moving forward. In addition, the EMS Bureau has requested that the budgeted allotment for paramedic school be increased from 45 to 60 students per year. EMS Bureau is also developing contracts with several local paramedic schools to equitably broaden access for our members. This process, although proven as a long-term solution, is not capable of meeting an immediate need.

In an effort to immediately address the shortage, the Department has recently begun hiring single function paramedics utilizing the Temporary Paramedic job classification to supplement paramedic staffing. The job classification of Temporary Paramedic was originally designed as a training position intended to allow Los Angeles County licensed paramedics to work for up to one year on a paramedic ambulance. During this time, they gain experience in EMS and receive an orientation to the fire service in preparation for a future career as an FF/PM. The licensed paramedics on board this year were hired through Emergency Appointments, which limits their employment to a maximum period of one year. These candidates were initially selected from the Firefighter eligibility list with the intent to have them work on a rescue ambulance (RA) while their applications for Firefighter are being processed by personnel. The one-year time frame restriction of this job classification limits its appeal to prospective candidates while not guaranteeing employment as a Firefighter.

In a bid to broaden the appeal, a new EMT training classification is being developed by the Training and Support Bureau in conjunction with City Personnel. This new training classification will allow for candidates to be hired with an EMT or paramedic certification

for a term of up to five years. Approval of this classification will require Civil Service Commission approval, CAO salary setting and final approval through City Council and the Mayor's office. Once established, interested paramedics and members who are current Emergency Appointment Paramedics can apply for this new classification. Employment will be based upon an established civil service list and subject to an abbreviated background check, psychological and medical examination. The new classification will give the Department flexibility in temporarily supplementing paramedic staffing for a longer period of time. The EMT classification also has the flexibility to reach a larger candidate pool beyond our current Firefighter civil service list to candidates that may only be interested in working as paramedics for the Fire Department.

The Department is also exploring the possibility of prioritizing paramedics in the Firefighter selection process. This would serve as the most cost-effective means of supplementing the ranks by negating the need to fill behind a Firefighter while they attended school. The drawback to this option is the length of time it would take a candidate to go through the drill tower and complete their one-year probationary period. This change would also need to be made in consultation with the Personnel Services Section and could potentially affect the makeup of the candidate pool.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The feasibility of creating and hiring a single function paramedic job classification, although challenging, has proved to be a promising alternative to addressing the current paramedic staffing challenges faced by the LAFD. Creation of the EMT job classification with its five-year term will increase the appeal to prospective candidates. The candidates serve a vital role as part of a comprehensive strategy in meeting staffing needs.

Board Report prepared by Peter Hsiao, Assistant Chief, Emergency Medical Services Bureau.