

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



RONNIE R. VILLANUEVA
INTERIM FIRE CHIEF

March 27, 2025

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 25-021

TO: **RN** Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: Ronnie R. Villanueva, Interim Fire Chief

SUBJECT: SERVICE IMPACT WITH PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

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 Withdrawn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 rising population of persons experiencing homelessness (PEH) in Los Angeles has significantly increased the demand for emergency services, particularly those provided by the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD). Since 2018, the City’s unhoused population has grown by 44.6%, from 31,285 to 45,252 individuals, as reported by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). Over the same period, LAFD call volume has risen by 13.58%, from 453,024 to 514,211 annual responses—underscoring the growing intersection between homelessness and public safety. As first responders, the LAFD plays a critical role in addressing the complex needs of this vulnerable population. This report outlines the operational impact of the PEH crisis on LAFD resources and explores strategic approaches to enhance service delivery to the unhoused community while preserving emergency response capabilities citywide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board:
Receive and file.

DISCUSSION

The LAFD routinely interacts with the PEH community. These interactions are guided by LAFD Core Values, Mission and Vision Statements, and the Rules and Regulations of the LAFD, which require that all members “Respond to all fires or emergencies to which they may be dispatched or detailed, and exert their greatest effort to perform to the best of their ability under all circumstances (Section 10 a.)” By policy, the LAFD makes no distinction on the level of service provided to any person. The PEH community is often helped, lifted, cared for, and transported when appropriate with the full dignity shown to any other resident or visitor of Los Angeles. Fire department field resources respond to incidents involving PEH as part of their normal duties and have absorbed the increase in call volume with no commensurate specific funding or additional resources.

The PEH community is often involved in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) calls for services that require care and/or transport. As measured by Electronic Patient Care Report (EPCR) data, PEH patients account for 11.62% of LAFD EMS incidents. It is important to note that this percentage and the associated number of 49,391 EMS incidents are recorded by LAFD members as part of a patient assessment. Not all incidents require an EPCR, and not all PEH patients are counted because the PEH field is not a required element of patient assessment. At no time is the gathering of this data allowed to delay or interfere with patient care. Action is currently underway to enhance the accuracy of PEH data collection. The PEH community also has a need for fire protection services.

Fires involving the PEH community vary in type and quantity. The documentation of whether or not a particular fire involved PEH is based on the incident commander's discretion and is digitally tracked electronically in the National Fire Incident Report System (NFIRS). The collection of PEH data is not required in NFIRS. The type and quantity of fire involvement that has been collected is demonstrated in the chart below:

2018-2024		
Type of Fire	Total Fires	PEH Related
Rubbish Fire	154,966	65,367
Structure Fire	26,510	3,394
Automobile Fire	21,980	2,194
Other Fire	18,707	2,172
Tree Fire	5,741	1,785
Grass Fire	2,199	926
Brush Fire	2,163	611
Grand Total	232,266	76,449

When evaluating all fire types combined in the period of 2018-2024, fires involving PEH account for 32.91%, or roughly 1/3rd of LAFD fire activity. Year over year, Rubbish Fires have shown the greatest increase in incident type. The increase from 2014 - 2024 showed a 475% increase, from 5,541 to 31,964. While not all of those have been documented as directly associated with PEH, many have. "Rubbish Fire" was the most dispatched call type in 2024 when that call type surpassed "Sick" and "Breathing Difficulty."

When evaluating a combination of all types of calls for service in a calendar year, the LAFD serves the PEH community 66,446 times. This volume of service represents 12.93% of all LAFD call volume. As stated before, if anything, this number is undercounted and will be improved in future reports.

During the same time period of 2018 - 2024, the City of Los Angeles appropriated \$1,430,972,507.00 of General Fund monies and \$5,036,911,184.00 of a combination of General and Special Fund monies "Total Funds". In each of the last four years, the total funds allocated to homelessness have exceeded the "Total LAFD budget."

Fiscal Year	Total Funds Committed	Total LAFD Budget
21/22	\$ 801,649,246.00	\$ 732,240,000.00
22/23	\$ 1,168,514,606.00	\$ 746,270,000.00
23/24	\$ 1,277,749,849.00	\$ 782,870,000.00
24/25	\$ 960,768,059.00	\$ 837,190,000.00

This report has shown that the LAFD is a direct component of the Los Angeles City response to the homelessness crisis. The LAFD could improve service if funded as a distinct part of the Los Angeles City approach to caring for the PEH community. Other City agencies such as the Los Angeles Police Department are funded in this manner.

Caring for the PEH community is in direct alignment with the 2023 - 2026 LAFD Strategic Plan. This issue is so important to the LAFD mission that it has its own stand-alone strategy under goal one:

- Goal 1: Deliver exceptional public safety and emergency service.
 - Strategy 5: Partner with Federal, State, and Local Agencies to ensure the delivery of exceptional public safety and emergency services to People Experiencing Homelessness (PEH).

Seven tactics support this strategy. Each tactic is ongoing and requires collaboration with Local Government, State, and Federal resources.

CONCLUSION

LAFD staffing and on-duty resources have decreased over the last two decades. While the calls for service, PEH population, and fire activity have grown. The LAFD has and will continue to be directly involved in the response to the homelessness crisis. Sufficiently staffing, funding, and resourcing the LAFD will directly contribute to the quality of care that the PEH community receives while ensuring that visitors and residents of Los Angeles have resources available for any emergency at any time.

Board Report prepared by Battalion Chief Eric Roberts, Planning Section.

Attachment: Google Slide Presentation