

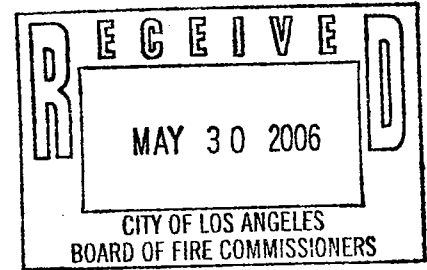
LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



JUN 6 2006

WILLIAM R. BAMATTRE
FIRE CHIEF

May 30, 2006



TO: Honorable Board of Fire Commissioners
City of Los Angeles

FROM: William R. Bamattre, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: **PROGRESS REPORT - TOPANGA BRUSH FIRE OPERATIONS
SEPTEMBER 28, 2005 TO OCTOBER 4, 2005**

As a result of a discussion at the Board of Fire Commissioners' meeting on October 3, 2005 and subsequent meetings, direction was given to provide an overview of the Topanga Brush Fire, which began on September 28, 2005. During the overview, Deputy Chief Rueda described the outstanding cooperation between multiple agencies and the heroic work of firefighters in combating the 24,175 acre fire. He also discussed several lessons learned and areas of improvement that the Department planned to focus on prior to next year's season. This progress report is intended to update the Board of Fire Commissioners regarding the progress on issues and lessons learned from this fire.

Communications

Since this incident, the Department has conducted several meetings with Ventura County, and Los Angeles County Fire Departments to develop standard pre-plans. A working document has been developed to create an Initial Action Zone agreement. The key elements of the agreement provide for a simultaneous dispatch of resources to any brush fire reported within one-half mile of the Los Angeles City, Los Angeles County, and Ventura County borders along the western edge of the San Fernando Valley, establishes participating agencies in the Unified Command, provides for pre-planning of the deployment of resources in the Chatsworth Corridor, and provides for initial common interoperable communications.

The Department also realized the need to communicate on the VHF radio band for better interoperability during wildland fire incidents. The Department has purchased 80 Motorola XTS5000VHF Fire Scope compliant portable radios for VHF interoperability. Some of these radios were deployed at a recent wildland fire in Orange County. The feed back by having a VHF portable radio in addition to the VHF mobile radio was a great improvement. This enhanced communication tool has also improved firefighter safety on the fire line.

In addition, all new fire apparatus are being ordered with VHF and UHF mobile radios for improved interoperability. Each radio is programmed with every fire agency frequency in the county to ensure maximum interoperability until a county-wide radio system can be implemented.

Two VHF and two 800 Mhz portable repeaters will cost \$14,000 each and have been ordered and should arrive in mid-July. These repeaters will be deployed into a wildland fire, or other tactical area to fill in communications. To date, the Department has expended over \$250,000 to improve VHF radio interoperability as a result of the Topanga fire.

Additional communication specialists are being recruited and trained. These members will be cross-trained in USAR, Interoperability and Wildland Fire Communications. Additional member training will be completed in approximately one year.

Logistical Support

A qualified Logistics Section Chief has been recognized as the key person to ensure that our members' needs are supported. The Department has requested that those members interested in working as part of an Incident Management Team (IMT), qualified in Logistics, regardless of rank, submit their names to be on a roster currently being formed. These qualified members have been trained to deal with the issues surrounding the supply and requisition of food and equipment.

The Department has also reinforced the policy to provide meals to members when they are involved in extended incidents including brush fires. Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) and bottled water are stored at all fire stations. The 2006 Departmental Bulletin addressing Brush Fire Operations will again reinforce the direction to place MRE's and water on the apparatus during periods of high

hazard brush weather. Fire agencies throughout Southern California recognize that these meals may be the only nourishment firefighters will receive for the first 24 to 48 hours of an incident, or until logistical support can catch up with the fire.

Relief

The Brush Committee is planning a one-day summit to discuss issues that presented problems during the Topanga Fire, one of which is the relief of personnel during major incidents. Relief policies vary among fire agencies across Southern California. The Department's policy for relief after up to seven days was not enforced due to the close proximity of the incident to the City. This caused confusion, which in some cases delayed relief of personnel. In an effort to fairly address the relief issue, a representative from United Firefighters of Los Angeles City was asked to sit on the Brush Committee. Firefighter Steve Tufts has volunteered and will participate in all scheduled meetings.

Incident Command

The Department is currently in the process of identifying qualified members to participate as IMT members. Teams will consist of members filling necessary ICS Command and General Staff positions and should be deep enough to provide continuous, 24-hour operations over multiple days.

Once established, the Department will have the ability to provide incident management for large scale, complex, and/or extended incidents within the City. They will be utilized to assist an existing Incident Commander (IC) and management structure established by initial attack field officers or take command of incidents extending over multiple operational periods. They may manage an incident independently or meld into a unified command with other agencies where an incident impacts multiple jurisdictions.

The Department recognizes that large-scale incidents require diligent oversight when it comes to the use and cost of resources used to assist other agencies. Therefore, personnel from the Bureau of Emergency Services and Bureau of Administrative Services attended Finance/Administrative Chief Training in Sacramento during March, 2006. This 40-hour course was sponsored and taught by qualified Finance Administrative Chiefs from the United States Forest Service at the McClelland Training Center in Sacramento, California. In addition, the same cadre also attended a three-day Cost Apportionment course sponsored by the Ventura County Fire Department detailing the process for reimbursement of services rendered.

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As a result of After Action reviews from this incident, the Department has taken steps to improve our response to major brush incidents.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William R. Bamattre". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "W".

WILLIAM R. BAMATTRE
Fire Chief

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