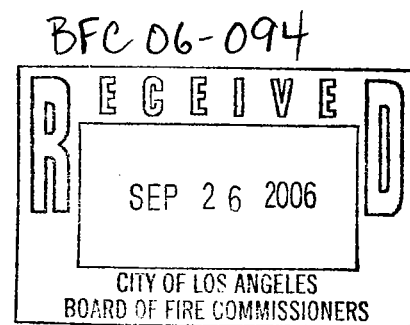


LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



WILLIAM R. BAMATTRE
FIRE CHIEF

September 20, 2006



TO: Honorable Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: William R. Bamattre, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: **FIRE DEPARTMENT PLANNING AND RESPONSE TO MARCH 25, 2006
DEMONSTRATION AGAINST HOUSE RESOLUTION 4437**

SUMMARY

On Saturday, March 25, 2006, members of various community and student groups participated in a demonstration march and rally in opposition to House Resolution 4437, the "Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005." Although the Special Event Permit Application initially filed with the Los Angeles Police Department on March 6, 2006 by the event organizers estimated that up to 7,000 people would attend, participation vastly surpassed this estimate and a crowd of over 500,000 converged upon the civic center. As requested by the Honorable Board, this report addresses the Department's pre-event planning, incident response, and lessons learned from this event.

PRE-EVENT PLANNING

Pre-event planning for large-scale, special events is conducted by members assigned to the Tactical Planning Section in coordination with representatives from affected Fire Department Bureaus and other City Departments as applicable to the event. The Section develops Incident Action Plans scaled to the event based upon information provided by a variety of sources. Considerations for pre-event planning include the size, location and nature of the event, anticipated number of participants and spectators, threat intelligence, weather conditions, and the potential for the event to negatively impact the Department's ability to provide timely response to the event and/or areas adjacent to the event venue.

In the case of public demonstrations, the Section relies upon three primary sources for event notification: 1) The Special Event Permit Application Unit (SEPU) of the Los Angeles Police Department, 2) The Public Safety Section of the Fire Department, and 3) The Major Crimes Division (MCD) of the Los Angeles Police Department. The first two entities provide information related to the particulars of the event and the latter entity provides a threat intelligence assessment. Based upon information received from these sources, the Tactical Planning Section will take action ranging from "Information Only" notification to the affected Division and Battalion Offices to assisting the affected Battalion Commander in the development of a formal Incident Action Plan.



Initial notification of the HR4437 event was received on March 3rd via fax from the LAPD Major Crimes Division (MCD) reporting that the event would be held at the Placita Olvera Kiosko at Olvera Street. The notification provided a very brief overview with a statement that the number of participants was unknown and that there was no adverse intelligence related to the event. This information was relayed to the Battalion 1 Office with a notation that further information would be provided when available.

On March 16th, MCD forwarded a follow-up notification indicating that the event organizers had filed a Special Event Permit Application for review and approval by the Police Commission. The application changed the venue from a demonstration at Olvera Street to a demonstration march and rally beginning at Olympic and Broadway and concluding at the South Lawn of City Hall with up to 7,000 participants expected. Events of this reported size are typically managed by the concerned Battalion Commander visiting the venue in the early stages of the event to determine whether crowd size and/or behavior warrants a predeployment of resources. Therefore, development of a formal Incident Action Plan for the predeployment of emergency resources did not appear warranted at this time and the updated information was relayed to the Division I and Battalion 1 Offices for action as deemed appropriate.

On Monday, March 20th, the LAPD Special Event Permit Unit (SEPU) forwarded a copy of the actual Special Event Permit Application with a notation that participation was now estimated at 10,000. On the same date, the Department's Public Safety Section made initial contact with the Tactical Planning Section reporting the event and a participant assessment consistent with that provided by the SEPU. Based upon these increased participation estimates and the mobile nature of the event, the Battalion 1 Office was contacted to discuss the need to predeploy resources.

In consultation with the Battalion 1 Office, the Tactical Planning Section developed an Incident Action Plan with the objective of predeploying resources to facilitate rapid response to fire and/or EMS incidents associated with event participants and/or coincidental incidents arising along the demonstration march route or adjacent to the rally site. The objective was to be achieved by assigning a Battalion Command Team and EMS Captain to coordinate response by an Engine Company, ALS ambulance, and BLS ambulance deployed to shadow the march along a parallel route and then staged near the rally site for response as needed. Additionally, one EMS Captain, Engine Company, ALS ambulance, and BLS ambulance were to be staged at Fire Station 3 to augment the other resources and/or provide relief as necessary. All resources were assigned under a Unified Command structure with the Los Angeles Police Department.

During the balance of the week of March 20th, the Tactical Planning Section made periodic contacts with the LAPD Central Area Special Event Coordinator to obtain any additional information that may have resulted from the ongoing contacts with event organizers. On each occasion no changes to the event or number of anticipated participants was reported.

On the morning of March 24, the Fire Prevention Bureau's Public Safety Section reported that the event organizers were anticipating a "large turn-out" and that Spanish-language media outlets were actively promoting participation by members of the community. Although the LAPD Central Area Special Event Coordinator did not amend the estimated participant size in a follow-up contact that morning, the previously approved Incident Action Plan for the event was reviewed with the Commander of the Bureau of Emergency Services due to the potential that the participant level would exceed previous estimates. As a result, the plan was augmented by adding two Task Forces and an additional ALS ambulance.

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Fire Department resources initially assigned to the event included one Battalion Command Team, two EMS Battalion Captains, two Task Forces, one Engine Company, three ALS ambulances, and one BLS ambulance. These resources were scheduled to be in place at 0900 hours, one hour in advance of the 1000 hours assembly at Olympic and Broadway planned by the event organizers. The Unified Command Post adjacent to Parker Center became operational at 0800 hours and immediately began receiving information from LAPD officers and LAFD Public Safety Section personnel deployed to the event that tens of thousands of people were converging on the civic center to participate in the demonstration.

At approximately 0900 hours, the Division I Commander, Assistant Chief John Ware, assumed command of LAFD resources, established a Command Post at Fire Station 3, and reassigned Battalion 1 as the LAFD Liaison at the LAPD Command Post. At this time a Tactical Area encompassing the demonstration march route and rally area was also established to facilitate response to incidents arising from the demonstration march and rally or routine incidents within the Tactical Area. Additionally, two Battalion Command Teams, two EMS Battalion Captains, one Task Force, one ALS ambulance, one Air Ambulance, and one observation helicopter were added to the incident. These resources were all on scene by 1010 hours and deployed to positions flanking both sides of the demonstration march route.

The enormous crowd size quickly overwhelmed the capacity of the defined Assembly Area at Olympic and Broadway and spread onto surrounding streets. In an attempt to accommodate the growing crowd, the event organizers continuously moved the starting point of the demonstration march north on Broadway as participants filled in from the south and surrounding streets. In effect, the anticipated demonstration march became a continuously moving assembly process until reaching the South Lawn of City Hall. At approximately 1130 hours, Division I added two additional Battalion Command Teams, three Engine Companies, seven ALS ambulances, and six BLS ambulances to the event now involving a crowd estimated by LAPD personnel on scene as exceeding 500,000 people.

During the course of the subsequent rally centered on the South Lawn of City Hall, Division I deployed resources at a variety of locations surrounding the event encompassed by the area bounded by Temple on the north, Los Angeles Street on the east, Fifth Street on the south, and Hill Street on the west.

Overall, there were fourteen medical incidents associated with the event, none of which required more than basic emergency medical care. Total Department resources assigned included one Division Command Team, five Battalion Command Teams, four EMS Battalion Captains, three Light Forces, eight Engine Companies, eleven ALS ambulances, 9 BLS ambulances, two helicopters, and 6 Fire Safety Officers.

LESSONS LEARNED

Importance of pre-event intelligence - Although the size of the March 25th demonstration was unprecedented in the City of Los Angeles and vastly exceeded the expectations of the event organizers, the fact that a similar demonstration against HR 4437 occurred in Chicago on March 10th which drew over 100,000 participants should have been considered when planning for the Los Angeles event. The scope of the Chicago demonstration should have been recognized as an indicator of the depth of sentiment against the legislation and cast doubt upon the level of participation forecast for the demonstration held in Los Angeles. Subsequent to this event, the Tactical Planning Section researches available news media and Internet sources for information related to an event or similar events occurring in other locations. Additionally, action has been taken to ensure that a Tactical Planning Section member is included in pre-event meetings involving event organizers, LAPD Special Event Coordinators, and LAFD Public Safety Section members.

Inclusion of contingency guidelines within Incident Action Plans - The Incident Action Plan developed for the event did not include contingencies for an expanded crowd. Although pre-event intelligence consistently estimated a crowd size of 10,000, inclusion of a contingency plan prescribing additional resource needs would have assisted the Incident Commander with readily expanding and organizing the resources needed to meet an unanticipated crowd size. Subsequent Incident Action Plans for similar events contain contingency guidelines to address this shortfall.

EMS Gator and Cycle Team Deployment - EMS Gators and Cycle Teams were not included among the resources planned for deployment to the event. These resources are ideally suited for events where large crowds or the venue configuration impedes rapid patient access by personnel responding on conventional apparatus. Predeployment of these resources on the basis of the mobile nature of this event would have provided the Incident Commander with resources more readily capable of accessing medical incidents occurring within the crowd. Staffing these resources is normally accomplished through overtime hiring and therefore they are not among constant staffing resources immediately available upon request through OCD. Therefore their deployment must be pre-planned well in advance of a

scheduled event. Subsequent Incident Action Plans developed by the Tactical Planning Section for demonstration marches and rallies include EMS Gator and Cycle Teams among the resources assigned to the event.

Importance of maintaining a single, Unified Command Post - Although a Unified Command Post location was pre-designated and established at 0800 hours on the morning of the event, Division I elected to establish an LAFD Command Post at the Division I headquarters rather than co-locating with the LAPD Incident Commander. Due to the unanticipated convergence of massive numbers of people prior to the expected assembly phase of the event, Division I implemented an Area Command in quarters where enhanced command post resources and trained command post personnel were immediately available. Subsequent planning for similar events includes predeployment of the Department's mobile Command Post Unit to the identified Unified Command Post location.

Pre-identification of Tactical Areas - A Tactical Area encompassing the demonstration march route and rally site was not pre-established with OCD due to the anticipated scale of the event. Establishing a defined Tactical Area facilitates reconciling incidents between those arising from an event which are the Incident Commander's responsibility and those arising from coincidental incidents adjacent to the event which remain the responsibility of OCD. In the case of a mobile event, multiple Tactical Areas must be identified to effectively manage resource deployment as the event progresses along a defined route. Subsequent planning for similar events has incorporated establishing multiple Tactical Areas encompassing the anticipated event site and adjacent areas that may become impacted if the event grows beyond expectations. Additionally, OCD dispatchers are hired overtime to staff positions at OCD and the Unified Command Post to facilitate dispatch and coordination with OCD.

Force protection - As anticipated, demonstration participants were well behaved and posed no threat to personnel deployed to the event. However, given the overwhelming size of the crowd, Division I pro-actively requested resources from the LAPD to provide force protection in the event that crowd behavior changed. Unfortunately, the LAPD Incident Commander lacked sufficient resources to fill the request and rather than addressing the request by accessing law enforcement mutual aid partners through LAPD channels, the LAPD Incident Commander advised Division I to seek assistance directly from other law enforcement agencies. Although the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department could not provide resources, the California Highway Patrol was able to provide personnel within 30 minutes after being contacted by OCD. In concert with LAPD staff, subsequent planning for similar events includes allocating specific LAPD resources to perform force protection duties as required and contingency planning by LAPD to facilitate prompt mutual aid from their law enforcement partners.

CONCLUSION

The unprecedented scale of the March 25th demonstration clearly exceeded the expectations of all city agencies and served to highlight shortfalls in planning for such events. Incident Action Plans developed for immigration rights and other demonstrations of a similar scale that occurred following the event incorporated numerous changes and enhancements to effectively address previous shortfalls. Additionally, closer working relationships have been established with event planners and response partners from other city agencies to ensure a coordinated response to such events.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William R. Bamattre". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "William" and last name "Bamattre" clearly distinguishable.

WILLIAM R. BAMATTRE
Fire Chief