

APR 13 2010

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



MILLAGE PEAKS
FIRE CHIEF

March 30, 2010

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 10-028

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: Millage Peaks, Fire Chief *m.p.*

SUBJECT: INFORMATION PURSUANT THE BUDGET PROPOSAL
CLOSING 10 BLS AMBULANCES

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| FOR INFORMATION ONLY: | <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 Withdrawn |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 |

For Information Only

The City Administrative Office (CAO), prior to releasing the mid-year Financial Status Report, approached the Department regarding their plan to eliminate all 57 Staff Assistant positions in order to save money in the current fiscal year budget. The Department, citing the negative impact that eliminating Staff Assistants would have on firefighter accountability, firefighter safety, and the management of complex emergencies, offered an alternative plan that would virtually save the same amount of money, but would not have such a profound impact on public safety and emergency operations.

In the Department plan, staffing for ten of the least active Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances is eliminated. The Department's plan recognizes that demand for service varies by time of day. Under this plan, each BLS ambulance is re-activated daily during the busiest 12-hour period utilizing variable staffing.

The Department currently staffs 38 BLS ambulances and 89 Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances. BLS Ambulances were selected in the alternative plan because they normally respond to lower-priority, non-critical incidents. Also, ambulance resources have not been reduced as much as other Department resources under the Modified Coverage Plan (MCP).

| <u>Resource Type</u> | <u>Quantity</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Aerial Ladder Truck | 5 | 10.2% |
| Engine Company | 10 | 9.7% |
| Rescue Ambulance | 6 | 4.8% |

BLS Ambulance Selection

Response information from 2009 was examined to select BLS ambulances with the least number of daily responses. Additional factors considered include the type of resource remaining in the station where the BLS ambulance is closed and the quantity, type, location, and response levels of resources in adjoining districts. Collectively, the ten BLS ambulances selected average 30.7 responses per day. Individually, the daily average is 3.07 responses per BLS ambulance. Each ambulance selected is housed in a fire station that contains an Assessment Engine (AE) that will remain active. Assessment Engines can begin ALS measures when required but cannot transport.

The ten proposed BLS ambulances to close are listed below:

| Unit | Location | *BLS responses per Month | *BLS responses per Day | Closest Resource | Closest Ambulance |
|-------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| RA906 | West Hills | 186 | 6.1 | AE 106 | RA 105 |
| RA818 | Knollwood / Granada Hills | 110 | 3.6 | AE 18 | RA 87 |
| RA876 | Cahuenga Pass | 109 | 3.6 | AE 76 | RA 86 |
| RA816 | Hillside Village | 92 | 3.0 | AE 16 | RA 47 |
| RA808 | Porter Ranch | 103 | 3.4 | AE 8 | RA 828 |
| RA849 | Wilmington / East Basin | 82 | 2.7 | AE 49 | RA 39 |
| RA908 | Coldwater Canyon | 90 | 2.9 | AE 108 | RA 78 |
| RA842 | Eagle Rock | 71 | 2.3 | AE 42 | RA 55 |
| RA824 | Sunland | 55 | 1.8 | AE 24 | RA 74 |
| RA840 | Terminal Island | 40 | 1.3 | AE 40 | RA 36 |

* BLS responses = # of basic life support responses for the units indicated during 4th quarter 2009.

To minimize impact, the ten selected ambulances will be staffed during the busiest 12 hours of each day using variable staffing hours. The busiest hours were determined by plotting a distribution of all ambulance responses by time of day. This distribution shows the 12-hour period from 0900 to 2100 hours accounts for 62% of all responses made by ALS and BLS rescue ambulances. The percentage of responses made by the ten selected ambulances during this period is even higher (66%).

Basic Life Support Ambulance (BLS) Overview

A BLS ambulance can alternately be referred to as a BLS rescue, BLS RA, 800 ambulance, 800 rescue, 800 RA and/or just 800. They are staffed with 2 Firefighter/EMT-1s and normally respond alone to the lowest priority, non-critical medical calls.

BLS ambulances respond alone as the closest resources to all lower priority medical incidents. They respond with an ALS ambulance as the closest resource to moderate risk medical incidents. On moderate risk incidents, BLS ambulance EMT(s) fill many

roles. If they arrive first on scene, BLS ambulance EMTs initiate basic life support measures until the ALS unit arrives. Basic life support measures include the extrication of patients from hazardous environments, airway management, rescue breathing, Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), control of bleeding, and splinting of suspected fractures. Once Paramedics arrive on scene, BLS ambulance personnel assist with advanced life support measures.

BLS ambulances respond with an ALS ambulance and a Fire Company as the closest resource to high-risk medical incidents. As with moderate risk incidents, the BLS ambulance role is to provide basic life support, staffing and/or transport. By utilizing the BLS ambulances to transport low risk patients with non-life threatening conditions or injuries, ALS ambulances can be made available for critical responses.

BLS ambulances also respond to structure fires and other incidents. They are the primary staffing resource for Brush Patrols deployed during high hazard weather events and for the tractor company.

Response to Incidents where the BLS Resource is Closed

The chart below shows the closest units to the selected BLS ambulances. Each BLS ambulance selected to be closed is housed with an Assessment Engine (AE) that will not be closed. Assessment Engines are staffed with one Captain I-EMT, One Engineer-EMT, one Firefighter-EMT and one Firefighter Paramedic. These ALS Engines can begin advance life support measures while awaiting the arrival of an ambulance for transportation.

| Ambulance | Nearest ALS | Distance in Miles | Nearest Transport Resource | Distance in Miles | Nearest BLS Ambulance | Distance in Miles | # OF Ambulances w/in 5 Miles |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 808 | AE 8 | 0 | RA 828 (BLS) | 0.6 | RA 828 | 2.8 | 8 |
| 816 | AE 16 | 0 | RA 47 (ALS) | 1.5 | RA 844 | 4.0 | 12 |
| 818 | AE 18 | 0 | RA 87 (ALS) | 2.0 | RA 828 | 4.4 | 5 |
| 824 | AE 24 | 0 | RA 74 (ALS) | 1.8 | RA 898 | 5.6 | 2 |
| 840 | AE 40 | 0 | RA 36 (ALS) | 1.8 | RA 848 | 4.5 | 4 |
| 842 | AE 42 | 0 | RA 55 (ALS) | 1.2 | RA 850 | 2.6 | 7 |
| 849 | AE 49 | 0 | RA 38 (ALS) | 1.0 | RA 848 | 5.0 | 7 |
| 876 | AE 76 | 0 | RA 86 (ALS) | 2.1 | RA 827 | 2.4 | 13 |
| 906 | AE 106 | 0 | RA 105 (ALS) | 2.1 | RA 828 | 7.6 | 6 |
| 908 | AE 108 | 0 | RA 78 (ALS) | 1.3 | RA 860 | 5.3 | 9 |

ALS: Advanced Life Support

BLS: Basic Life Support

AE: Assessment Engine - 1 Captain, 1 Engineer, 1 Firefighter EMT, 1 Firefighter Paramedic

As stated above, the ten BLS ambulances selected to be closed would be staffed during the 12 busiest hours of the day utilizing variable staffing hours. If there are requests for BLS response during the 12 hours the ten BLS ambulances are closed, the Assessment Engine assigned in each district will respond. Since these engines are housed in the same fire station as the BLS ambulances, there will be no difference in the response distance from the station. If the patient requires transportation to the hospital, the nearest BLS or ALS ambulance will be dispatched from an adjoining district. On average, about 50% of BLS responses result in a transport.

If there is a request for an ALS response in one of the ten districts while the BLS ambulance is closed, the Assessment Engine assigned in each district will respond in addition to the closest ALS Ambulance. During the hours the BLS ambulance is staffed, it will also respond because it is closer to the incident than the ALS ambulance.

Impact of Closures

The Department anticipates that response time, service delivery and the ability to handle simultaneous large-scale incidents will be negatively impacted if this plan is adopted.

The National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Standard 1710, Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Department, give response time goals for BLS and ALS resources. The Department cites Standard 1710 as the foundation for the goal to have the first resource arrive to all emergencies within 5 minutes and for Paramedic resources to arrive on scene to ALS medical emergencies within 8 minutes.

Response time improved through 2006 as the Department added resources. Response time hit a plateau when resource expansion stopped. During the last 12 months, response time has increased slightly due to an increase in the number of responses, due largely to the economic downturn and more people using 911 for primary care.

During January and February this year, responses by Department resources increased 1.6%. Closing ten BLS ambulances will cause response times to increase.

During calendar year 2009, BLS incidents comprised 36% of dispatched medical incidents. This amounted to over 110,000 calls for service. Approximately 50% of those BLS incidents resulted in a patient transport. Reducing the number of BLS resources by 26% (ten BLS Ambulances) will reduce the resources available to make these non-critical patient transports. Using BLS ambulances to make non-critical transports helps ensure that ALS resources are available for critical, life-threatening incidents.

Currently, the Department uses the two firefighter EMT-1s assigned to BLS ambulances for additional staffing during a wide variety of emergency incidents. Firefighters assigned to BLS ambulances staff our Brush Patrols during high hazard days and large brush fires. They also provide staffing to cover for training, medicals, heavy equipment operators for the tractor unit and other functions critical to the safe and effective daily operation of the Department. In the event of a major emergency, or several large-scale emergencies, the Department will have fewer resources to deploy, less staffing to cover operational needs, and less ability to rapidly respond to the emergent needs of the citizens.

The closure of the ten least active BLS ambulances will have negative impact on the Department's ability to provide for public safety and deliver service. However, if directed to make cuts, the plan to cut ten BLS ambulances would have less impact than eliminating 57 staff assistant positions.

Financial Impact:

The estimates in the table below were provided by the CAO. They are based on the Department's ability to place 60 firefighters into vacant positions.

| Reassignment of 60 BLS Firefighter EMT Positions - Projected Savings | | | |
|--|--|-----------------|---------------|
| Acct. No. | Account Name | Full Year Costs | |
| 1012 | Salaries - Sworn | | \$5,570,940 |
| 1030 | Salaries - Bonus | | \$54,780 |
| 1093 | Overtime - Constant Staffing | | \$1,671,282 |
| 4430 | Uniforms | | \$336,000 |
| | Subtotal | | \$7,633,002 |
| 1098 | Overtime - Variable Staffing | | (\$3,942,000) |
| | Total | | \$3,691,002 |
| 1093 | Reassign 60 F/F to reduce Constant Staffing OT | | \$9,000,000 |
| | Total | | \$12,691,002 |

The Department is currently saving approximately \$40M annually through the MCP. The MCP closes 20 resources daily. Members displaced by closed resources are utilized to fill vacancies occurring due to compensated time off. MCP saves money because it uses displaced Members to fill vacancies instead of using overtime.

Eliminating positions saves money if there are vacancies to put Members into, or, if the Members occupying positions eliminated are laid off. We currently have 60 firefighters more than the number of authorized positions. The Department anticipates that 12 members will leave by June 30, 2010. This means that 16 firefighters must be placed each day, reducing the number of positions available for members being placed through

the MCP. If there are not sufficient vacancies, then the Department will not recognize the \$40M savings anticipated through MCP. Eliminating 60 positions will increase the pool of firefighters and thereby reduces MCP savings.

The Department anticipates that attrition will not absorb the 60 additional vacant positions created by the ten BLS ambulances eliminated until November, 2010. Additionally, the Department has not been able to fill promotions due to constraints imposed by the managed hiring process. If the managed hiring process continues, then absorption of the 60 additional firefighter positions will not occur until April 2011.

Board report prepared by Brian Cummings, Battalion Chief, Planning Section.