



MILLAGE PEAKS  
FIRE CHIEF

August 18, 2010

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS  
FILE NO. 10-088

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: Millage Peaks, Fire Chief *mlp*

SUBJECT: APPROVAL FOR THE LAFD TO DETERMINE CONTRACT FEASIBILITY  
FOR PROVIDING ON-CALL HELICOPTER SERVICE

FOR 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 Withdrawn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

### **Recommendations:**

That the Department, working cooperatively with the Chief Legislative Analyst and the City Administrative Office, establish the contracts necessary to provide emergency and non-emergency on-call helicopter service to adjoining municipality public safety agencies.

### **Summary:**

The Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) utilizes six helicopters to support EMS, fire, rescue, command and planning missions. Helicopters are available on a 24/7 basis. The Department's Air Operations Section is staffed by 5 Pilots and 4 Firefighter/Paramedics daily, plus necessary service technicians and support staff who work normal business hours. Demand for service is highly variable.

Many neighboring municipalities do not have access to helicopters. The LAFD has been approached by outside public safety agencies requesting our service as an "on-call" helicopter service provider. The revenue stream generated by a service agreement to provide "on-call" helicopter service would help offset the expense incurred to maintain helicopter service. Reserving the "first right of refusal" in the service contract would eliminate overlap in service demand between the LAFD and the subscribing municipality

### **Background:**

LAFD Helicopters are a critical resource that can be deployed on an immediate basis to accomplish a wide array of missions. Helicopter missions include firefighting, search and rescue, hoist operations, brush fire operations, air ambulance transports, and a

variety of support/logistical functions. The Department has the capacity to deliver these critical services to other agencies and charge full cost recovery.

In the proposed agreement, the LAFD would offer on-call helicopter service to outside public safety agencies for an annual retention fee that is coupled with an hourly operating fee. The service provided can extend beyond traditional emergency needs to include: aerial surveys of community development, mapping, evacuation preplanning, and other support functions.

Under the service agreement, the Department retains the "first right of refusal" with respect to helicopter deployment. If simultaneous emergencies occurred, the service agreement ensures that LA City emergencies have priority, that the LAFD would provide full service to the City of Los Angeles before responding to a contracted agency. The agreement would also include language giving the City of Los Angeles the ability to redirect the aircraft back to the City to respond to a spontaneous emergency.

In January, LAFD Air Operations had 64 emergency responses with over 50 hours worked. Additionally, there were 188 hours of training flight time. The annual cost of operation for the 6 aircraft is \$6,026,241.00.

Unit ID	Type	Estimated Annual Flight Hours	Estimated Annual Cost of Operation
Fire 1	Bell 412	300	\$923,457.00
Fire 2	Bell 412	300	\$923,457.00
Fire 3	AW 139	300	\$1,627,935.00
Fire 4	Bell 412	300	\$923,457.00
Fire 5	AW 139	300	\$1,627,935.00
Fire 6	Bell 206B-III	1000	\$587,800.00

Preliminary cost recovery estimates for hourly operating rates for each type of aircraft are being developed.

**Fiscal Impact:**

The Department estimates that service contracts could range from \$100k to \$400K annually per municipality, based on the service level required. Contracts could be executed with multiple agencies. This would have a positive impact on the Department's budget without reducing service availability. The additional benefit would be the increased training hours provided by the additional flight time.

**Conclusion:**

There is a cost of ownership, whether the aircraft are in flight or on the ground. Establishing contractual on-call service agreements with outside public safety agencies will provide a means to offset helicopter operating costs without impacting service availability.