


November 15, 2011

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. BFC 11-163

DATE: November 7, 2011

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: Stephen Miller,  Independent Assessor

SUBJECT: **INITIATION OF AN AUDIT OF FIRE DEPARTMENT BONUSES AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS LISTED ON PROMOTIONAL APPLICATIONS FOR SWORN PERSONNEL**

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 Withdrawn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

Recommendation:

That the Board receives and files the Independent Assessor's board report.

Summary:

Pursuant to Los Angeles City Charter section 523(c), the Office of the Independent Assessor announces initiation of an audit of Fire Department bonuses and educational achievements and certifications listed on promotional applications for sworn personnel.

Analysis:

Sworn Fire Department personnel may be eligible for a number of bonuses depending on their educational achievements and current assignments. Some of the bases for receiving a bonus include, among others: maintaining an EMT-1 certification, having a valid paramedic license, holding an Associate's or Bachelor's degree, or working at a designated Hazardous Materials or Urban Search & Rescue work location. The value of these bonuses varies from a percentage of base pay (i.e., 1% for an Associate's degree and 3% for a Bachelor's degree under MOU 23) to a set monetary amount paid on a biweekly or annual basis (i.e., \$170 biweekly for assignment at a Haz Mat fire station).

Approximately 2,300 sworn members currently receive some form of an educational bonus and the Department employs almost 800 licensed paramedics. At least an EMT-1 certificate is required for firefighters who may have patient contact and more than 80% of the calls for service are for emergency medical services. While members may list educational achievements or certificates on promotional applications, not all seek bonus pay for the degree or certificate listed.

On December 15, 2005, the City Controller published its *Review of Bonus Eligibility at Selected Departments*. The Controller's audit made findings and recommendations involving the Fire Department. These findings and recommendations involve ensuring that bonus criteria are met, properly documented, tracked, approved and monitored.

The Fire Department did provide verification that employees who the Controller identified as having received educational bonus pay without proof of verification on file did meet eligibility requirements. The Fire Department also responded with a plan to implement the Controller's recommendations.

The first purpose of this audit is to review the Department's progress in complying with the Controller's recommendations, as well as verify that the proper procedures are in place to ensure only those who are eligible for bonuses receive them. The second purpose of this audit is to examine the procedures in place for reviewing promotional applications to ensure that all claims to educational achievements and certifications that are used in promotional decision-making are true and accurate.

Fiscal Impact:

None.

Conclusion:

Los Angeles City Charter section 523(c) says the Independent Assessor shall have the power and duty to initiate any assessment or audit of the Fire Department or any portion of the Fire Department with prior notice to the Board of Fire Commissioners, and subject to the authority of the Board by majority vote to direct the Independent Assessor not to commence or continue an assessment or audit. Pursuant to this Charter section, the Independent Assessor announces initiation of an audit of Fire Department bonuses and certifications and educational achievements listed on promotional applications for sworn personnel.