

# LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



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FIRE CHIEF

March 11, 2015

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS  
FILE NO. 15-024

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: *RMT* Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: REMOVAL OF ANSWER BACK AT FIRE STATIONS

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 Withdrawn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

## SUMMARY

In an effort to improve response times, the Department is directing all members to discontinue the use of the "answer back" feature at all fire stations. On February 20, 2015, a Special Notice was published indicating that it would no longer be required to push the answer back button following the notification of an emergency alarm. Historically, the answer back panel has acted as a linking device between Metro Fire Communications (MFC) and each fire station that communicates the receipt of an emergency alarm when resources are in quarters. Department policy, prior to the Special Notice dated February 20, 2015, had station members proceed to the answer back panel to acknowledge the alarm before continuing to the emergency apparatus. Over time the usefulness of the answer back practice has become negligible to MFC. A more accurate indicator of alarm receipt is by pushing ENR via the Mobile Data Computer (MDC) when en-route to the incident. As the Department pursues the replacement of the current Fire Station Alerting System (FSAS), it is not recommended that re-configuration of the existing FSAS architecture take place at this time.

## RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:  
Receive and file this report.

## FINDINGS

The current FSAS architecture involves an answer back panel located in each fire station that is integrated with Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) software. Located on each panel is a series of buttons that indicate the receipt of an emergency alarm and the night time feature. The night time feature allows the station to mute dispatch audio and communicate the alarm to the appropriate telephone line only. The intent of this configuration is to not have dispatch audio triggered at all times during the night. If a

chief officer or rescue ambulance is dispatched while the night time feature is activated, they will simply hear the dispatch phone ring. This allows for members not to be awakened each time a call comes in to the station for an assigned resource.

The current answer back configuration will still require manipulation through both the emergency phone and the push of the button. If the button and the phone are not activated other features associated with the software will activate, such as the time-out gong lights.

Disabling the answer back feature, on the answer back panel, can be problematic in that it requires the updating of CAD software to ignore buttons (lights) and timing related to dispatch requirements. According to the system engineers, the integration between the answer back and the night time feature requires the architecture to remain intact if the night time feature is to function properly. Therefore, it is recommended that until a new FSAS is installed, the existing design remain intact to preserve system integrity.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact for this policy. Eventually, this directive should be included as a requirement for the new FSAS.

### **CONCLUSION**

Until a new FSAS can be implemented, Department policy will provide updated direction to all members. This new policy allows members to proceed to the apparatus first without having to acknowledge the alarm at the answer back panel. It is anticipated that this policy will have a direct impact on improving response times.

Board Report prepared by Assistant Chief Trevor Richmond, Metro Fire Communications.