



# UNITED FIREFIGHTERS of LOS ANGELES CITY

Local 112 IAFF AFL-CIO-CLC

April 9, 2014

Honorable Mitch Englander  
Chairman, Public Safety Committee

Honorable Paul Krekorian  
Chairman, Budget and Finance Committee

Dear Councilmembers Englander and Krekorian:

I am writing this letter in advance of Joint Public Safety and Budget and Finance Committee meeting on April 11, 2014 regarding the PA Consulting report and the Los Angeles Fire Department.

On March 3, 2014 the CAO released the PA Consulting report regarding the operations and recommendations for improvement of the Los Angeles Fire Department. Over the past few weeks, the United Firefighters of Los Angeles City (UFLAC) has dissected this report, talked with credible experts in Fire and EMS services throughout the country, and poured through countless reports and studies related to Fire Department operations. After taking the time to perform our own comprehensive analysis, we have come to the fundamental conclusion that the PA report on Los Angeles Fire Department operations is woefully lacking.

This is especially disappointing given the fact that the City spent \$500,000 of taxpayer money to produce this report and UFLAC agrees that the LAFD needs improvement. The 3,100 Firefighters, Paramedics, Dispatchers, and Inspectors of the United Firefighters of Los Angeles City want change with mutual collaboration. We want to have the best Fire Department in the country. However, the recommendations provided by this report are, for the most part, incomplete at best and completely lacking merit and substantive documentation at worst.



Specifically, the United Firefighters of Los Angeles City finds fault with the following major items of the report.

- **The United Firefighters of Los Angeles City were NEVER consulted as the interviews were conducted and the report was written.**

UFLAC was offered a "briefing" on the report after it was written. This is simply not acceptable. There are 10 members on the UFLAC Executive Board, 8 of whom work in Fire Stations throughout Los Angeles on a full time basis. Not only were none of our 10 Board members contacted, not one of them knows a single member of our 3,100 member bargaining unit of Firefighters, Paramedics, Dispatchers, and Inspectors who was in fact contacted for this report. While we can only assume that PA consulting did contact a handful of our members – it is simply unacceptable to produce a report recommending changes to our Department without thorough and widespread discussions with the people on the front lines – our Paramedics, Firefighters, Dispatchers, and Inspectors – the professionals who do this work in Los Angeles each and every day. This is a critical point, because had UFLAC been consulted, we could have informed PA consulting of several errors in their methodology which would have produced a more credible report.

- **The two leaders of the PA Consulting team, Andrew Rea and Jonathan Jacobs, have extensive experience in the field of energy. From what we can tell, they have little to no experience in consulting matters related to Firefighting or EMS.**

This is a major problem and perhaps explains their inexplicable decision to not consult UFLAC as part of this study. The notion that a consultant is a consultant is simply not true. Public safety issues are extremely complex, and energy consultants simply are not equipped to lead a comprehensive study of one of America's largest and most dynamic Fire Departments. To take on a position as large and important as this, you need experience and success in the field in question. Mr. Rea and Mr. Jacobs, from everything that we have been able to ascertain, simply don't have experience in public safety issues.

As part of this over-priced \$500,000 project, Mr. Rea and Mr. Jacobs hired two "expert" subcontractors. Mr. Art Hsieh has extensive experience in EMS issues. He was asked to contribute to the report and recommend changes to our EMS system. The problem with hiring Mr. Hsieh is that he came into this project with his conclusion already firmly set in his mind. For several years, Mr. Hsieh has

been a strong and vocal advocate for private ambulance services in municipal government and the use of civilians in the Fire service. It is, therefore, absolutely no surprise whatsoever that the final PA report recommends extensive contracting out of Fire Department positions and the use of civilians. This would be like asking a leading advocate of Charter Schools in America to do a report on the Los Angeles Unified School District. It would, of course, be absolutely no surprise when this individual came back recommending the extensive adoption of additional charter schools in Los Angeles. **This conclusion was determined before the "study" was even conducted.**

Another subcontractor on the project was Fire Rescue Solutions, a company based overseas in the United Kingdom. Why PA decided to subcontract with a firm that is based in another country is beyond us. This is especially true when there are literally dozens, if not hundreds, of qualified Fire related experts and consulting companies in California, let alone in America, who could have done the work in a more impartial manner for a fraction of the price.

It is important to note the fact that PA Consulting played a major role in the failed FiReControl project in England. An article in *The Guardian* from September 18, 2011 stated:

*"An attempted reorganization of the fire service by the last government cost nearly 500 million pounds (\$835 million US dollars) and was one of the worst cases of project failure MPs (Members of Parliament) have ever seen."*

*"The project's development was heavily reliant on advice from PA Consulting, whose services alone cost 42 million pounds." (the equivalent of more than \$69 million US dollars)*

The universally accepted failure to restructure fire services in the United Kingdom based on a flawed consultant's report that was "heavily reliant on advice from PA Consulting" makes UFLAC wonder why PA Consulting was selected to do the evaluation of the Los Angeles Fire Department in the first place.

- **One of the major recommendations that the PA study calls for is a merging of the LAFD & LAPD Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems, but it is completely silent on how this is actually done.**

UFLAC wants to be clear that we understand that this merger is a priority to Mayor Garcetti, and we are certainly open to discussions regarding this issue.

However, the PA report – which cost an astonishing \$500,000 dollars – completely fails to recognize a number of leading studies published on this topic, including the Unified CAD Functional Requirements and the Feasibility Study for Establishing a Consolidated Emergency Communications Center for the City of Boston. The reports were written by true experts in the field and apparently were completely overlooked by PA Consulting.

The discussion on the merging of these CAD systems also completely overlooks the problems that New York City, Boston, Long Beach, and many other urban cities throughout America have had in attempting similar mergers of their CAD systems. In reading the report, one might come to the conclusion that a merger of our CAD system is a relatively simple task, without major risk of collapse or failure. This is simply not the case. Had PA done their homework, or talked to UFLAC while producing their report, they would have realized that CAD mergers in other major American cities have been complete failures. Failures which cost hundreds of millions of dollars and led to an increase in response times and confusion for our first responders. This is not a simple issue, but it is one that UFLAC is willing to discuss in good faith with those who don't have an uninformed pre-disposition that this is something that we absolutely must do.

The PA report also discusses the “efficiencies” of merging the CAD systems, but never talks about exactly what these efficiencies are.

This is an issue that needs to be carefully vetted. Hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars are at stake. More importantly, from an ethical standpoint, Angelenos throughout our City should not be human guinea pigs in a grand experiment unless and until we are convinced that this merger can be effective.

- **The PA report makes very little mention of the massive cuts that the LA Fire Department sustained over the past several years, nor does it provide any analysis on the impact that these cuts have had on our service delivery.**

This is critical, because the impact of permanently cutting 370 positions in our Department and not hiring a single new Firefighter in over 5 years cannot be glossed over or ignored. Again, to provide an analogy, this would be equivalent to the Dodgers playing an entire season with only eight players in the field, only to have their year-end evaluation and discussion for the upcoming season make no mention of the impact that this had on the team or even recommend adding back the desperately needed ninth player for the new season. As concluded by

the independent Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury, response times have risen and public and Firefighter safety has been put in jeopardy as a result of these cuts. The PA report hardly mentions the impact of these cuts.

A study using US Census number and Fire Department data looked at firefighters per population in 2013 showed that the Los Angeles Fire Department had only 0.88 Firefighters per 1,000 residents. This ranked us #46 in the country behind other big cities including Baltimore at 2.91 per thousand, Boston at 2.35 per thousand, Houston at 1.79 per thousand, Chicago at 1.59, and New York City at 1.31 per thousand. These numbers are actually misleading and the lack of Firefighters in Los Angeles is even greater when you consider that many of the other cities in this study don't provide the comprehensive EMS and ambulance services that Los Angeles City provides. The bottom line is that our City is woefully short of Firefighters when compared to other big cities throughout America and with the spike in fires in Los Angeles, we are currently on track to set a new record for civilian fire-related deaths in 2014. I have attached a copy of this chart for your review.

- **The PA report recommends staffing our Dispatch Center with civilians. Unfortunately, this recommendation doesn't take into account a number of studies conducted by experienced, LAFD Chief Officers that have shown that keeping sworn Firefighters at our Metropolitan Fire Communications (MFC) Center is actually more cost effective than civilianizing these positions.**

In a report written to the City Council in 2007 by former Fire Chief Douglas Barry, it was stated that:

*"The attrition rate for Firefighters in OCD (the Metropolitan Fire Communications dispatch center used to be called OCD) dispatch training averages approximately 18%, while the attrition rate for LAPD civilian PSR trainees assigned to the Communications Division has consistently averaged approximately 42.5% over the last 19 years."*

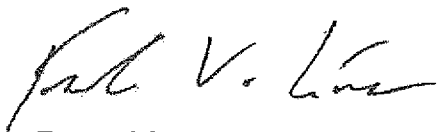
This is important, because when factoring in the substantial training costs associated with filling a revolving door of civilian dispatchers who have an attrition rate more than double the rate of sworn personnel, the City will ultimately be paying more for this service while the quality of the work of these critical positions will inevitably suffer with less experienced call takers who have never worked as a Firefighter or Paramedic in our communities. The MFC has also

served as a great profession for injured Firefighters who wish to continue to serve the City but can no longer work in the field. These Firefighters don't want to drain the system and collect Disability pensions. They want to keep serving the City and they are able to apply the expertise that they have learned from years of experience in the field to their positions as sworn dispatchers.

UFLAC has read through the PA report very carefully. We have consulted with numerous experts and we have outlined an overwhelming number of flaws with their recommendations. Having said that, UFLAC agrees with some of the recommendations of the report including the need to have a Technology expert and the need to reform our broken discipline system. We are not defenders of the status quo and we agree that our Department needs major changes. The fundamental problem with this report stems from the fact that our leadership and rank and file members were not included in the process. Had we been included, we could have collaborated on meaningful recommendations that would have been supported by the 3,100 Firefighters, Paramedics, Dispatchers, and Inspectors who we represent.

We look forward to continuing the dialogue on the critical issues facing our Fire Department and working collaboratively to institute positive reforms. Our members are dedicated to public safety in Los Angeles. We desperately want to be a part of the solution to restoring the LAFD to once again being the premiere Fire Department in the nation.

Sincerely,



**Frank Lima**  
President  
United Firefighters of Los Angeles City, Local 112

CC: Mayor Eric Garcetti  
Los Angeles City Council  
Interim Fire Chief James Featherstone  
Board of Fire Commissioners  
City Administrative Officer Miguel Santana

### Firefighters per Population 2013

Source: US Census 2011 and Individual Fire Department Data

Agency	Rank	# of Residents per FF	FF per 1,000 Residents
Baltimore	1	344	2.91
Washington	2	356	2.81
Honolulu	3	358	2.79
Memphis	4	387	2.59
Boston	5	426	2.35
Atlanta	6	462	2.16
San Francisco	7	478	2.09
Kansas City	8	487	2.06
Indianapolis	9	487	2.05
Louisville	10	493	2.03
Cleveland	11	498	2.01
Columbus	12	521	1.92
Nashville	13	532	1.88
Houston	14	559	1.79
Tulsa	15	573	1.75
Oklahoma City	16	593	1.69
Seattle	17	609	1.64
Detroit:	18	619	1.61
Chicago	19	628	1.59
Milwaukee	20	629	1.59
Omaha	21	643	1.56
Dallas	22	672	1.49
Denver	23	678	1.47
Jacksonville	24	690	1.45
Raleigh	25	703	1.42
Charlotte:	26	719	1.39
Austin	27	747	1.34
Miami	28	750	1.33
New York City	29	764	1.31
Philadelphia	30	779	1.28
Tucson	31	779	1.28
El Paso	32	779	1.28
Albuquerque	33	790	1.27
San Antonio	34	837	1.20
<b>Toronto, ON</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>1.19</b>
Fort Worth	36	866	1.15
Sacramento	37	876	1.14
Portland	38	890	1.12
Phoenix	39	925	1.08
Oakland	40	945	1.06
Minneapolis	41	974	1.03
Colorado Springs	42	985	1.02
Virginia Beach	43	1018	0.98
Long Beach	44	1098	0.91
San Diego	45	1141	0.88
Los Angeles City	46	1142	0.88
Las Vegas	47	1144	0.87
Mesa	48	1148	0.87
San Jose	49	1334	0.75
Arlington	50	1410	0.71
Fresno	51	1765	0.57

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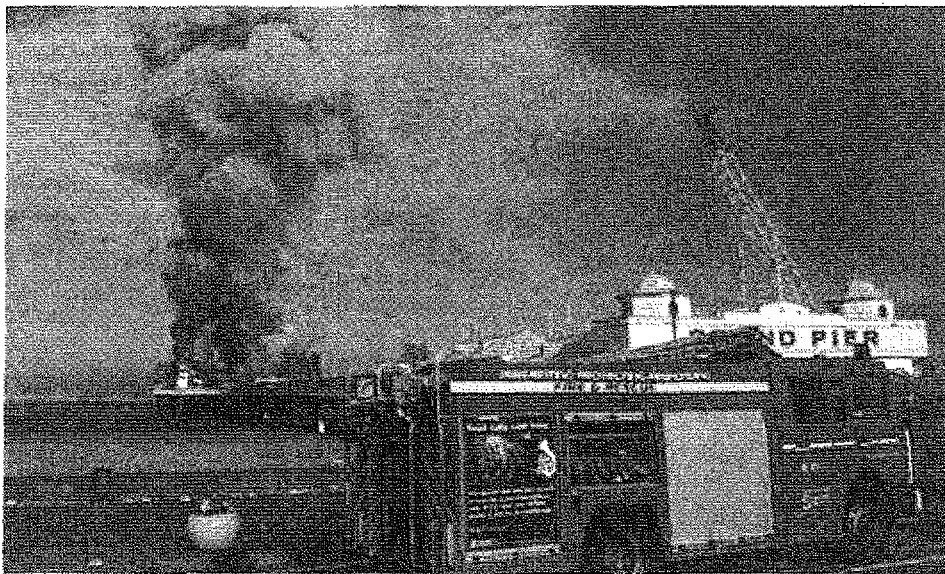
# Fire service reorganisation was a £500m failure, say MPs

Report published by Commons committee warns getting the system working properly is likely to cost an additional £85m

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**Stephen Bates**

The Guardian, Monday 19 September 2011



The last government's FiReControl project was launched too quickly with insufficient consultation, the report says. Photograph: John Killick/AFP/Getty Images

An attempted reorganisation of the fire service by the last government cost nearly £500m and was one of the worst cases of project failure MPs have ever seen, according to a highly critical report published on Tuesday by the all-party Commons public accounts committee (PAC). It warns that finally getting the system working properly is likely to cost an additional £85m.

The damning report – published following an investigation and hearings by the committee this summer – says that the concept of abolishing 46 local fire and rescue

control rooms and reorganising them into nine regional control centres was flawed from the start. The FiReControl project was launched too quickly with insufficient consultation, it is claimed.

The committee also says a contract for designing, developing and installing an IT infrastructure was awarded three years late, to European Air and Defence Systems, now Cassidian, a company with no experience of dealing with emergency services. The project's development was heavily reliant on advice from PA Consulting, whose services alone cost £42m.

The scheme was terminated last December with no objectives achieved and at least £469m wasted, the MPs say.

Margaret Hodge, the Labour chair of the PAC, said the scheme had been a complete failure. "The taxpayer has lost nearly half a billion pounds and eight of the completed regional control centres remain as empty and costly white elephants.

"No one has been held to account for this project failure, one of the worst we have seen for many years, and the careers of most of the senior staff responsible have carried on as if nothing had gone wrong at all, and the consultants and contractor continue to work on many other government projects."

The project, launched in 2004, was intended to produce a more co-ordinated response to emergencies such as train crashes and terrorist attacks, but the intention of abolishing local control rooms and replacing them with regional centres was undermined from the start because the Department for Communities and Local Government lacked powers impose such a framework and failed to consult local fire services, despite the costs and potential liabilities they would face from reorganisation.

The report says the department pushed ahead without undertaking basic project approval checks, taking decisions before testing the ideas for feasibility. It adds: "The result was hugely unrealistic forecast costs and savings, naive over-optimism on the deliverability of the IT solution and under-appreciation or mitigation of the risks.

"The department demonstrated poor judgment in approving the project and failed to provide appropriate checks and challenge.

"The new fire control centres were constructed and completed whilst there was considerable delay in even awarding the IT contract, let alone developing the essential IT infrastructure. Consultants made up over half the management team (costing £69m by 2010) but were not managed ... The committee considers this an extraordinary

failure of leadership. Yet no individuals have been held accountable for the failure and waste."

The MPs say the department now estimates it will cost a further £84.8m to put the project right and is inviting bids from fire and rescue services, but remains unable to say whether that will provide value for money, or provide a more efficient and co-ordinated service in the event of a major emergency. It says the eight empty regional control centres are costing the taxpayer £4m a month to maintain and it is likely that only five of them will ultimately be used.



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