

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: October 13, 2020

TO: Honorable Nury Martinez, Chair
Honorable Paul Koretz, Vice Chair
Honorable Paul Krekorian, Member
Honorable Gil Cedillo, Member
Honorable Mitch O'Farrell, Member
Energy, Climate Change and Environmental Justice Committee

FROM: Enrique C. Zaldivar, Director and General Manager
LA Sanitation and Environment



SUBJECT: LA SANITATION AND ENVIRONMENT (LASAN) - REPORTS BACK ON Coronavirus Outbreak / Skid Row / Hygiene / Public Health Outreach and Engagement Strategy, Coronavirus Outbreak / Covid-19 / Los Angeles Department of Public Health / Protocols / Encampments / Serving Encampments, Coronavirus / COVID-19 / Hygiene Facilities / Acquisition, (CF#20-0147, 20-0147-S3, 20-0147-S21, 20-0147-S52)

On July 29, 2020, the City Council heard motion 20-0147 (Buscaino - Krekorian) and instructed LA Sanitation and Environment (LASAN) to resume CARE+ comprehensive cleanings in A Bridge Home Special Enforcement Cleaning Zones (ABH SECZ) only.

Background

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) issued recommendations for people experiencing homelessness. One of the key recommendations was to prevent displacing people and allowing encampments to remain intact so that unsheltered individuals can shelter in place. In consideration of the CDC's recommendations and in concert with the Mayor's emergency declaration "Safer at Home" order, on March 17, 2020, the City Council instructed LASAN via motion 20-0147-S21 (Bonin - Harris-Dawson) to temporarily suspend the appropriate section of the protocols of Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) 56.11 which calls for the deconstruction of tents between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. To comply with this instruction, LASAN temporarily suspended CARE+ comprehensive cleanings, including the comprehensive clean-ups in ABH SECZ and city-wide CARE+ operations.

During the temporary suspension, LASAN's Livability Services Division (LSD) has been conducting operations under Spot Cleaning operations. These operations include identification, documentation, and removal of any and all health hazards, the enforcement of ADA access including: egress/ingress and removing trash, litter, and debris from the public rights-of-way. In response to the growing needs of the unsheltered population as well as the exacerbated health and safety conditions in the public rights-of-way, LSD quickly mobilized a pilot program to provide additional resources and enhanced services.

LASAN's Enhanced Services Pilot Program

In an effort to build upon the foundation of a services-led approach, LASAN combined several key programs: CARE+, Mobile Hygiene Units (MHU), Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) Mobile COVID Testing, and service provider-led outreach and engagement into an enhanced response.

The MHU program is now combined with the CARE+ comprehensive cleanings conducted within ABH SECZs. Additionally, the MHU program has incorporated a sanitary kit and tent distribution program for those sheltering on the public right-of-way in the ABH SECZs. The sanitary kits provided by LSD include a mask, gloves, and hand sanitizer. The tent exchange program allows those who voluntarily exchange an old tent to receive a new one. Tents that were deemed to be contaminated and/or surrendered will also be exchanged. Individuals without a tent who have requested a new one will also be provided with one.. The expansion of a tent distribution allows those who are experiencing homelessness to continue to shelter in place during the global pandemic. LASAN has also provided power washing and sanitizing the right-of-way as part of the Enhanced Services pilot operations. Once all identification and removal processes have been conducted, power washing of the site and the recovery of wastewater is conducted, leaving behind a cleaner and safer location.

Building upon the combination of the CARE+ and MHU programs, the LAFD Mobile COVID Testing program was added to the enhanced services platform. When available, LAFD has supplied staff and testing resources to the enhanced services offered during ABH SECZ comprehensive cleanings. The ability to co-deploy CARE+, MHUs, and LAFD Testing Teams along with tent and sanitary kit distribution assisted in providing the critical services to those in need. Additionally, having these components co-deployed on the same day of service allows for and provides a greater ability for those experiencing homelessness to practice social distancing, and receive masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer for their own protection. The deployment of these enhanced services for ABH SECZs is possible through continued coordination with the Unified Homelessness Response Center (UHRC), LAFD, and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA).

Since resuming comprehensive clean-ups in ABH SECZs July 31, 2020, LASAN has conducted 71 comprehensive clean-ups with enhanced services as of Friday, October 2, 2020. 276 tons of material has been removed including the removal of nearly 3 tons of hazardous and bio-waste. Additionally, LASAN has provided nearly 900 showers as part of the MHU program, has distributed more than 2,100 sanitary kits and more than 266 tents to people experiencing homelessness.

The continued co-deployment of these enhanced services are essential to protecting the health of the unsheltered population residing within the ABH SECZs, as well as the general public, and there is further public health benefit to expanding this model to areas outside of ABH SECZs. In the interest of public health, many areas of the City that have gone without comprehensive CARE+ cleanings need immediate sanitary services. The identification of these locations can be made on a determination by the Director and General Manager of LASAN, or his designee and through coordination between LASAN, Council Offices, the Board of Public Works and the UHRC. Based on LASAN's recommendations and the subsequent coordination with Council, the Board of Public Works and the UHRC, LASAN will generate a schedule for a limited number of locations receiving a comprehensive clean-up with LAHSA and the UHRC for the continued coordination of outreach and engagement services. LAHSA is requested to visit and conduct outreach to people experiencing homelessness, both prior to and during a comprehensive clean-up. Due to our integrated approach, LASAN will

no longer request LAHSA to sign-off on an authorization as a prerequisite prior to conducting a comprehensive cleaning.

Conducting Comprehensive CARE+ cleanings within the ABH SECZs provides the basic sanitation services and public health protection that the majority of Angeleno residents typically access on a daily basis and take for granted. Health risks associated with poor sanitary conditions include a multitude of illnesses and diseases, for example dysentery, hepatitis A, typhus, tuberculosis, and infection by the norovirus. An excellent example of LASAN's prompt response to an outbreak that could have led to an epidemic was in October 2017 when several cases of hepatitis A, a disease transmitted via fecal-oral route, were reported from the Skid Row area of downtown LA. LASAN proceeded to clean the affected area, provided proper hygiene practice information to staff, implemented its decontamination protocol in the Skid Row area, required pertinent staff to wear the appropriate PPE, provided disinfectant sprays in LASAN vehicles, and arranged for hepatitis A vaccinations of staff. LASAN shared all this information to the Public Health Departments of San Diego County (450 cases with 17 fatalities), Santa Cruz County (70 cases), and Los Angeles County (12 cases); all three were experiencing increasing cases of this disease. Due to LASAN's assistance, the outbreaks at all three counties were quickly reduced to zero.

Through conducting these trials, LASAN has found a way to minimize disturbances to the COVID-19 Shelter in Place Policy, while still safeguarding the other public health protections services - for people experiencing homelessness *and* the general public - that come with CARE+.

Challenges

In addition to the onset of the global pandemic, recent legal challenges including pending litigation, injunctions, and contempt of court orders have caused LASAN to adjust and refocus efforts related to the storage of personal property, in the public rights-of-way. LASAN will continue to identify, document, and remove “line of sight” health hazards as well as remove trash, litter, and debris during spot cleaning, CARE operations, and CARE+ comprehensive clean-ups both inside and outside of ABH SECZs. LASAN will continue to work with the City Attorney’s Office and will update and inform Council, the Mayor’s Office, UHRC, and other City partners as developments arise.

Supplemental to legal challenges, LSD continues to face challenges with an ever evolving and dynamic workforce. The recent implementation of a City-wide hiring freeze has negatively affected LSD’s ability to fully staff all 13 CARE+, 17 CARE teams and 13 MHU teams. A readjustment of the team structure will be made to offset and lessen this impact with the goal of not adversely impacting days of service to Council Districts.

Further, the requested, limited expansion of CARE+ operations outside of ABH SECZs will require additional support to address the current conditions. Additional funding will ultimately be required for the storage of property that does not allow for ADA egress/ingress compliance as this requirement was not contemplated in the existing budget process. Included in this addition would be the need to increase overtime funding to ensure scheduled operations are completed, including any supplemental operations that would be required to conduct a comprehensive cleaning, including postings, storage activities, and other support services and activities.

LASAN’s Findings and Recommendations

LA Sanitation – COVID-19 Report Back

October 9, 2020

Page 4 of 4

LSD was able to launch the enhanced services pilot program prior to the resumption of CARE+ comprehensive clean-ups in ABH SECZs. LSD has made several key findings and recommends the following:

1. Authorize the Director and General Manager of LA Sanitation and Environment or his designee, including LASAN's Chief Scientist, to identify a limited number of locations outside of the ABH zones, in need of public health protection, sanitation services and to provide such services following the established protocols for CARE+.
2. Exempt Livability Services Division from the current hiring freeze.
3. Exempt Livability Services Division from the 3% budget reduction.
4. Continued pairing of CARE+ and MHU programs in ABH SECZs.
5. Continued co-deployment of LAFD Mobile COVID Testing on ABH SECZ Day of Comprehensive Service, when resources are available.
6. Continued outreach and engagement of the LAHSA Homeless Engagement Teams.

Thank you in advance for your continued support of LASAN. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of these items further, please feel free to contact me or Jose P. Garcia, Assistant Director, at (213) 485-2210.

LBM/ECZ:lbm

c: Members of the City Council

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