

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Jim Dryden

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**Council File No:** 20-0473

**Comments for Public Posting:** Re: Preparing for the Wildfire Season Amid Covid-19 No one knows what the future holds this fall. Will COVID-19 overlap our fire season? Are we ready? It's reassuring to me that Monica Rodriguez, Councilwoman, 7th District recognizes the unique dangers we face in this particular year and has presented to the Los Angeles City Council, a motion to address such complexities. The reason I am writing to you is to ask the City to consider using an already trained group of volunteers to augment the fire service should they become stretched thin as forecasted in Ms. Rodriguez's motion. As you know, the CERT program serves as a model to many fire agencies throughout the country, even FEMA, in showing how a quality curriculum, taught by LAFD professional staff, can produce a corps of volunteers ready to serve their communities. The LAFD CERT program continues to be a robust and embedded complementary force, serving the City of Los Angeles. My background is not in fire science, but healthcare where I learned the concept of the "physician extender" model as a method to overcome a shortage of doctor services in many areas of medicine. Many of us have received medical treatment from a nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or physical therapist that extended the primary doctor's reach, thus facilitating efficient and timely care. I propose a similar assistant model for the fire service. Presently, CERT members have a restricted scope of practice. To expand their usefulness in the scenario described, supplemental training, taught by LAFD CERT instructors would ensure a safe, yet interconnected assistance to fire department personnel. The role, as envisioned, is subordinate to that of the firefighters and does not involve any frontline exposure to CERT members that might put them in peril. Their purpose is to serve as instructed, staying out of the way of firefighters but taking the lead where appropriate in areas that sustain the mission. Possible duties could be: Before the event: Work in neighborhoods to establish a community organizational structure for preparedness and mitigation using Firewise-USA, Fire Safe Council, or LAFD CERT Wildland/Urban Interface Module ideals. Communicate "Ready, Set, Go" program goals with an emphasis on evacuation timing and safest routes. Preplanning shelter options in light of COVID-19. Discourage "Stay and Defend" homeowner strategies. Discuss Shelter in

Place methods in cases of last resort. During the event: Identify endangered populations and those needing assistance to evacuate and pass that information to arriving LAFD personnel. Fill logistical roles; assist with perimeter control, staging, repopulation, resupply, facilitate hydration. Use as lookouts, augment communication, especially between LAFD and CERT, secure established safety zones, direct traffic to evacuation routes. Coordinate efforts with other responding volunteer agencies. A CERT training module already exists for home preparation. It includes a course syllabus, PowerPoint presentation, and instructor guide. The training staff could then add pertinent material on topics necessary to round out a CERT team member's limited working knowledge of WUI fire operations. Training should be prioritized first to those CERT members living in a VHFHSZ. These areas of the city would be the first threatened, requiring quick action. The CERT member's familiarity with the local residents, the living conditions, and evacuation routes would be extremely beneficial to their neighbors and arriving fire units alike. I'm sure many factors influence a city's decision to utilize volunteers to fill vital roles in an emergency. Perhaps the framework and experience gained by programs such as Los Angeles Emergency Medical Corps, Disaster Healthcare Volunteers, and many more, instituted during the COVID-19 pandemic will pave the way to allow LAFD CERT volunteers to serve our city. Respectfully, Jim Dryden, Battalion 12 CERT Team member Tujung@pacbell.net