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June 17, 2020

The Honorable Public Safety Committee  
City of Los Angeles  
City Hall, Room 395  
Attn: City Clerk

**Council File 20-0473**

Honorable Members:

In response to City Council action on April 22, 2020, and the motion filed by Councilwoman Monica Rodriguez, the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) appreciates the opportunity to submit the following report regarding the LAFD's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent changes to fire department operations. This report is hereby transmitted to the City Council's Public Safety Committee for consideration and approval.

Should you need additional information, please contact Deputy Chief Graham Everett, Chief of Staff at (213) 978-3840.

Respectfully,

RALPH M. TERRAZAS  
Fire Chief

## **SUMMARY**

The Los Angeles Fire Department has spent considerable time evaluating all department operations and how the effects of COVID-19 will impact the delivery of our public safety efforts. The following report will be broken down into several categories to make a distinction between response, training, and fire prevention considerations.

### **Fire Department Response**

The following expectations have been communicated to all members in the Los Angeles Fire Department through the annual department brush preparedness bulletin. The safety of all members operating at an incident will be the primary objective.

- Where possible, adopt the “Module as One” concept wherein resources/crews maintain strict crew unity and separation from other resources to minimize exposure and allow efficient contact tracking. The concept includes minimizing exposure by not mixing personnel and vehicles.
- Stock each pumping apparatus with a 7-day supply of infectious disease equipment and cleaning supplies (gloves, masks, eye protection, hand sanitizer, hand soap, sanitizing wipes, disinfectant spray, etc.).
- Ensure fire department apparatus are stocked to support self-sufficiency for remote assignment locations.
- Ensure each fire department apparatus is stocked with a 72-hour supply of Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) and drinking water for each member.
- All members will be directed to follow the COVID-19 precautions, including:
  - Avoid physical contact with co-workers and the public; maintain a 6’ spacing (social distancing)
  - Practice personal hygiene
  - Practice self-observation – remaining alert for subjective fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.
  - Monitor assigned members for symptoms of infection twice daily, including use of temporal thermometers.
  - Discourage shared use of phones, radios, or other work tools and equipment.
  - Wearing a facemask, bandana, brush shroud, firefighting hood or other suitable cloth covering when social distancing is compromised.
  - Use of hand sanitizer anytime handwashing is not practicable (when getting in and out of vehicles, after fueling, before eating, etc.).

- Developing routine daily cleaning procedures for vehicles and other equipment.
- The ventilation of fire department vehicles during and after an assignment.

### Incident Command Post Operations – Incident Leadership

- Emphasize that firefighters are to manage risks from fire and the virus simultaneously, rather than separately.
- Acquire and ensure availability of necessary equipment and/or support to disinfect personnel and equipment.
- Obtain additional hand washing stations as needed.
- Expand use of emerging technology: leverage remote operations with virtual technology.
- Consider increased use of Unmanned Aerial Systems for situational status.
- Limit access to facilities for all non-fire-assigned personnel.
- Require appropriate personal protective equipment for all interaction with infected individuals
- Allow time for resources to complete COVID-19 mitigation and decontamination. Resources should document this activity.
- All incident briefings need to address COVID-19 mitigation
- Assign a Safety Officer in all cases.
- For extended incident organization structure - consider placing Infectious Disease Technical Specialist into the command structure
- Base camp layout for extended operations will be coordinated to reflect social distancing measures.

It is anticipated that most, if not all of these directives, will remain intact for the foreseeable future. With the threat of a second wave of the virus, the LAFD will continue to look for ways to enhance and improve the protection of all City employees.

### Fire Department Training

As the City of Los Angeles grapples with a “new normal” because of the pandemic, the LAFD has identified three specific areas of training that will continue to see the impacts. The different sections of training include the following:

- Firefighter Recruitment Section (FRS)
- Recruit Services Section (RSS)

- In-Service Training Section (ISTS)

### Firefighter Recruitment Section

The FRS is responsible for the recruitment and hiring of women and men along with the coordination and management of LAFD youth programs which include the Fire/E.M.S. High School Magnet Program, the LAFD cadet program, and Girls Camp.

Currently, all LAFD Youth programs are suspended due to COVID-19, however, the plan to reinstate the programs will proceed with an abundance of caution and will most likely occur this Fall. The LAFD will remain flexible in approaching the restoration of youth programs as the plan depends on a variety of factors, including the timeline and parameters for reopening parts of the City and County of Los Angeles.

Some of the safety measures are wearing the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment, body substance isolation, social distancing, daily temperature checks, and a complete decontamination before and after events. Additionally, the LAFD is considering reducing participant contact levels with a rotational or shift concept along with the utilization of on-line platforms such as Zoom and Google Hangouts.

### Recruit Services Section

The overall goal of the RSS at the Valley Recruit Training Academy (VRTA) is to continue a high level of training for the Recruit firefighters, while prioritizing safety for the Staff and Recruits. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, the following measures and procedures have been implemented:

- Official Notification to LAFD membership indicating the start date of the Training Academy and restricting visitation to official business only.
- Expectations discussed with Recruits to limit their exposure and risk when not at the Academy.
- Daily temperature checks (Recruits and Staff).
- The Recruit Class has been split into an "A" and "B" Platoon to allow for and establish consistent and meaningful social distancing.
- Additional hand washing and hand sanitizer stations have been deployed throughout the training facility.
- Surface decontamination is being conducted twice daily (along with normal housework).
- A weekly comprehensive disinfecting of the training facility.
- Face coverings and masks are utilized as appropriate.
- Routine weekly COVID-19 testing has been established for Staff members and Recruits.

- Leverage technology and utilize on-line platforms such as Zoom and Google Hangouts to conduct and direct pre-academy workout sessions.

### In-Service Training Section

The overall objective and commitment of the ISTS is to provide essential training to LAFD members and ensure personnel is trained to the highest levels of competency in a safe environment utilizing Federal, State, and local guidelines. The preparation and delivery methods of training utilize a holistic approach focusing on safety, effectiveness, and efficiency while preparing Department members responding to an all-risk environment.

The following control measures have been put in effect due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Limit the total number of members at LAFD training facilities and classes by regulating the events.
- Maintain a single point of entry to all training facilities to obtain temperature checks, ensure shoe disinfection upon entry, and utilize a QR code to sign in for classes.
- Installed multiple hand sanitizer/disinfectant and face mask stations throughout facilities.
- Posted signs throughout the training facilities and classrooms which assert safety guidelines and directives.
- Reduced classroom occupancy by 50% to provide for physical distancing.
- Providing multiple coffee stations to reduce gathering in one area which contributes to awareness and social distancing.
- Leveraging technology by procuring Audio Video equipment to provide a live stream/webinar based training platform to utilize satellite classrooms.
- Disinfect tables and chairs before and after instruction.

### Fire Prevention

Members of the Fire Prevention and Public Safety Bureau (FPB), composed primarily of Fire/Life Safety Inspectors, Civilian staff, Captains and Chief Officers, responded to this health and safety crisis aggressively and proactively. The following actions were implemented to assist with the aforementioned efforts.

The FPB's entire sworn staff comprised of 140 Inspectors, Captains, and Chief Officers staffed;

- The initial four COVID-19 drive through testing sites
- Staffed the Disaster Operations Center (DOC)
- Staffed the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

- Staffed the Testing Site Notification Center
- Staffed the Mobile Homeless Testing Sites
- Staffed vacancies for emergency field resources

Also, FPB civilian staff was provided telecommuting capabilities to ensure ongoing administrative needs and functions remained intact.

On March 07, 2020, the Industrial Commercial Section Commander and all Brush Clearance Unit staff took part in plans meeting to analyze and discuss every facet of the COVID-19 mitigation effort. The discussion concentrated on lessening the impact on the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). Per the Los Angeles Municipal Code, Brush Clearance Ordinance (LAMC 57.322.0), the LAFD has an ongoing nuisance abatement program and responsibility to ensure proper defensible space/clearance parameters are maintained year-round within the VHFHSZ. This comprehensive COVID-19 plan was formulated to address the ongoing needs of the 2020 Brush Clearance Program.

The plan includes:

- With the “Safer At Home” guidelines implemented within Los Angeles City, timelines for Brush Clearance inspections (non-compliance notices only) were adjusted from May 1, 2020, to June 1, 2020, to allow parcel owners additional time to properly prepare their parcels for defensible space compliance.
- Re-inspection for parcel owners who fail to comply with the initial inspection was lengthened from 30 days to 45 days.
- Outreach and correspondence detailing the above-referenced changes affecting parcel owners in the VHFHSZ were implemented and consist of;
  - LAFD website updated for COVID-19 information and direction
  - SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN - continually updated information detailing 2020 Brush Clearance information and timelines;
  - Emails to registered parcel owners detailing changes to the initial inspection and re-inspection timeline, and;
  - Information phone lines are staffed during business hours, by trained workers to provide continual updates.
- Staffing plan to provide brush inspections within the VHFHSZ guidelines for:
  - Social distancing protocol;
  - Proper personal protective equipment compliancy, and;
  - Follow-up and review of all violations with parcel owners to ensure proper communications while adhering to established Center for Disease Control/Department of Health Safety (CDC/DHS) COVID-19 recommendations and protocol.
- Brush Clearance Contractor training and affidavit acknowledgment to ensure compliance with all CDC/DHS COVID-19 requirements are strictly adhered to.
- Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to augment Brush inspections.
- Implementation of Virtual Training for the Brush Inspection Cadre.
- Civilian personnel telecommute protocol established:
  - Virtual computer access capabilities and licensing provided.
  - Cell phones provided to all assigned personnel with proper support infrastructure to ensure public information and instructions are provided.

## Discussion

FPB personnel is directed to adhere to the strict standards of COVID-19 to ensure the possibility of initial spread or anticipated secondary surge threats is reduced throughout the Brush Clearance Season. This plan will be assessed and remain compliant with all CDC/DHS recommendations.

The Brush Clearance effort has proven to be extremely effective. As of June 09, 2020, the cadre assigned to accomplish Brush Clearance has provided exceptional service delivery.

There are approximately 146,000 parcels in Los Angeles.

FPB has completed inspections on 112,658 parcels – which have successfully passed. Additionally, 6,393 are found to be in violation, with 18,448 inspections still due for the remainder of July and August.

The FPB is on track to complete the 2020 Brush Inspection season on time with little to no quantitative impact on the general fund.

#### Productivity

- Inspections Due - 18,448
- Passed - 112,658
- Noncompliance - 6,393

#### **Total Complete May 1, 2020 - June 09, 2020**

**119,051-Total Inspections Completed**

#### **CLOSING**

The LAFD will continue to assess and analyze the data generated by the response to COVID-19 and determine how to adjust and or amend policies, practices, and procedures to more effectively contend with large scale communicable disease and enhance our continuity plans for improved service delivery.