

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA

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DEPARTMENT



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April 23, 2024

The Honorable Budget, Finance and Innovation Committee Members
c/o Luigi Verano, Legislative Assistant
200 North Spring Street, Room 395
Los Angeles CA 90012

**RE: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT COMMENTS ON THE
MAYOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2024-25**

Dear Honorable Members,

The Emergency Management Department (EMD) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Mayor's FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget. We understand the economic situation the City faces, but we are optimistic for the future. The City will soon be on the world stage, and now, more than ever, we need a strong, functional, and fully staffed Emergency Management Department.

FY 23/24 Review

This year, EMD has continued to rebuild capacity in the delivery of critical services in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery while coordinating a number of incidents and pre-planned events. Of note, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has been activated fifteen (15) times so far this year. EMD has:

- Coordinated the response to three declared disasters: Tropical Storm Hilary, the I-10 Freeway Fire and Closure, and the Early February Storms
- Served as the lead on-site coordinating entity supporting the arrival of 39 buses carrying 1,434 asylum seekers from Texas
- Monitored emerging infectious disease impacts in close coordination with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and other local, state, and federal partners

- Responded to 30 localized emergencies or events requiring coordination by EMD's Duty Officer. A full list of activations and incidents supported in FY 23/24 is included as [Attachment I](#).
- Supported the Mayor's Inside Safe Initiative and associated Declaration of Local Emergency on homelessness

EMD's websites ([Ready.LACity.gov](#) and [Emergency.LACity.gov](#)) each address unique aspects of community preparedness and disaster response, and its @ReadyLA social media profiles dynamically inform an ever-growing portion of the City's population to better prepare for emergencies. This year, [Emergency.LACity.gov](#) experienced a near 300% increase in traffic compared to the same period a year ago (693K vs. 174K site visits). The department's @ReadyLA social media exceeded 2.2 million impressions for FY 23/24, growing 54% over this period a year ago on the heels of nearly doubling the previous fiscal year. Web traffic detail is included as [Attachment II](#).

This increased attention translates into substantially increasing contacts between the public and EMD in the form of requests for information and emergency preparedness materials. More significantly, EMD is receiving roughly triple the number of requests for collaboration, such as participation in emergency or health fairs, by both for-profit and non-profit organizations. Since these events are typically annual events, we are expected to participate yearly, resulting in an increasing workload over time. We believe that this increased interest in recent months is being driven by the severe February storms and organizations' desire to ensure the safety and well being of their employees, members, and residents.

FY 2024-25 Priorities for Budget Allocation

In the coming year, the six (6) most important priorities EMD will be able to achieve with the allocation provided for supporting existing staff, as well as critical operational and technical capabilities, are as follows:

- (1) Operational Readiness:** EMD's operational readiness relies on ensuring the EOC facility is capable of supporting the public safety departments in communications and resource deployment as it responds to emergencies and special events. EMD's Operations and Training Division staff will continue to coordinate the completion of repairs and upgrades to communications systems. EMD is also coordinating the replacement of the end-of-life equipment throughout the EOC complex. Additionally, the team will be focused on furthering training and exercise opportunities for all City department personnel engaged in emergency response. These training and exercise opportunities will be the foundation on which a new LA City EOC credentialing program will be built.

(2) Preparations for Mega Events: In less than two years, the City will begin hosting a number of significant high profile, pre-planned events. These include: 2026 Women's US Open Golf Championship, the FIFA World Cup (2026), Super Bowl LXI (2027), and the Olympic and Paralympic Games (2028), which already require significant departmental coordination. EMD facilitates stakeholder engagement across all levels of government, and contingency planning for challenges that will arise in conjunction with these events. 2028 Olympic planning has begun and will increase over the next four years. All EMD staff will be required to lead and participate in advanced planning.

(3) Homelessness: With the three (3) Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) I positions approved last fiscal year, EMD continues to ensure disaster plans and response efforts address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. These positions provide more robust engagement and coordination of the City's preparedness and response efforts and address the needs of LA's most vulnerable residents; which support the directives in the Emergency Declaration by Mayor Bass.

(4) Planning for Evolving Hazards: EMD is reimagining all of the City's 40 emergency response plans to close gaps and ensure ease-of-use during fast tempo responses. The Department is focused on analysis of lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters to incorporate best practices across all of the City's plans, including major updates of the Emerging Infectious Disease and Medical Points of Distribution Annexes. EMD is also leading a regional effort with private sector and other local government agencies to create a supply chain resiliency framework and situational awareness dashboard, as well as a City-specific consequence management plan as it relates to food and water disruptions. EMD is leading planning efforts to address emerging threats such as cyber and physical attacks on critical infrastructure and mass casualty incidents.

(5) Resilience & Climate Change: As the severity of climate change increases the impacts of hazards, it is imperative for City-wide communication and coordination be the foundation of resiliency. Climate change coupled with geography has resulted in Los Angeles being ranked as the highest risk County in the nation on [FEMA's National Risk Index](#). In collaboration with the Climate Emergency Mobilization Office (CEMO) and City Planning, EMD has submitted our Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) to the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) for approval, making the City eligible for potential grant funds.

The LHMP will also inform additional City-wide climate efforts including the Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA), Heat Action & Resilience Plan (HARP), and applicable emergency response plans. EMD is expanding the Ready Your LA Neighborhood (RYLAN) Program to build the resilience of LA's most vulnerable communities, such as public and low-income housing developments and senior housing projects, in response to climate-related shocks and stresses, as well as other emergencies.

(6) Consequence Management/Recovery: Recovery efforts may continue for years after the initial response of an incident. While EMD is mandated to coordinate recovery efforts per the City's Administrative Code, currently no full-time staff are funded and dedicated to fulfill this function as their primary duty. EMD remains engaged in ongoing recovery operations and coordination of past events (e.g., 27th Street explosion, I-10 Freeway Fire and Closure and 2024 Winter storm recovery). EMD intends to create standard operating procedures to maximize the amount of support available during the recovery process and standardize our recovery efforts.

Proposed Budgetary Changes / Restructuring Impacts

Department 35 (EMD):

1. Fund and fill two (2) EMC 1 regular authority positions (currently being recommended for elimination)
2. Authorize one (1) new EMC 2 regular authority position (originally requested in EMD's budget proposal)

EMD proposes to fully fund and fill two (2) recently vacated positions eliminated from our FY 24/25 budget. The Mayor's proposed budget calls for the elimination of two (2) EMC 1 regular authority positions. EMD is a public safety department with key roles and responsibilities before, during and after a disaster. EMD is one of the City's smallest departments, therefore, any reduction in staffing has a disproportionate impact on operations. These vacancies are in two of our most critical divisions which will cause us to be unable to conduct essential emergency planning and community outreach.

EMD also requests consideration to add one (1) regular authority Emergency Management Coordinator 2 position not considered in the Mayor's proposed budget. The Emergency Management Coordinator 2 position would oversee a new division called "Resilience and Recovery". EMD would reorganize to coordinate response efforts in the short term, and bolster our leadership in the several simultaneous long-term

recovery missions as required by the City Charter and Administrative Code. Note: Originally EMD requested authority to add three (3) new positions in our FY24/25 budget proposal: Assistant General Manager, Public Information Director, and Emergency Management Coordinator 2. The department is withdrawing its request for the additional AGM and Public Information Director due to the City's fiscal situation and prioritizing the Emergency Management Coordinator 2 which could be funded using EMD's current budget allocation.

Department 34 (EOF):

1. Allocate \$75,000 for the replacement and maintenance of equipment and technology in the EOC

The Emergency Operations Fund supports the facilities and technology for multidisciplinary emergency response. Increasingly, the EOC is utilized by our public safety partners not only for training and meeting space but for Unified Command Post (UCP) operations, which are also outlined in [Attachment I](#).

The underfunding of the AV maintenance and repair budget request in the EOF limits EMD's ability to address current and unexpected equipment failures within key portions of the facility. As the EOC is 15 years old, ongoing repairs and equipment obsolescence continue to arise due to end-of-life equipment failures. Your **reconsideration** to reinstate a minimum of \$75,000 to provide funding for no-notice repairs, maintenance and replacement of end-of-life equipment. This is in addition to the \$562,823 proposed allocation.

Service Level and Equity Impacts

EOC Response

EMD already faces severe challenges staffing the EOC during prolonged activations with current staffing levels. The department has primary responsibility for filling nearly twenty EOC positions when activated at our highest level. At current levels without position eliminations, the Department is unable to fully staff the EOC on a 24/7 basis for more than 2 days without exceeding 12 hours per shift. If EMD were to have additional vacant Emergency Management Coordinator positions eliminated, the positions of multiple EOC responders would not be filled, reducing the efficacy of the EOC and the city's overall disaster response.

Disaster Recovery - EMD is the City's lead in Recovery and Reconstruction in the wake of a disaster. EMD is currently leading three (3) simultaneous recovery efforts: 27th

Street Explosion, I-10 Freeway Fire and Closure, and the 2024 February Storms. EMD proposed new positions dedicated to improving our capability to coordinate and communicate with Angelenos to help them along the path to recovery. Without these positions, our service level will be greatly impacted on this front. Disaster recovery is the most challenging for those individuals in socially vulnerable communities. Investing in disaster recovery planning ensures those communities receive resources needed to reduce their vulnerability.

The consequences of not filling these positions will negatively impact the businesses and residents of Los Angeles. Currently, the department lacks the experience and dedicated staff to oversee long term recovery projects which are being covered on an ad hoc basis by other department personnel resulting in delays, postponements and possible denial of disaster relief funds.

Outreach and Neighborhood Preparedness - EMD takes great pride in reaching out to our communities to teach the benefits of being prepared for disasters. The success of the Ready Your LA Neighborhood (RYLAN) program in recent years has helped hundreds of Angelenos not only help themselves, but their neighbors as well. With the elimination of vacant positions in the department, we will be forced to reduce the amount of outreach events we participate in, RYLAN workshops we conduct, and public engagements we attend. The lack of personnel for community outreach directly affects our effort to address our community's resilience which FEMA rated as "very low" in the FEMA National Risk Index.

Infrastructure in Support of EOC Activations - While prior FY cost savings have allowed EMD to repair and upgrade the training room, media center and management room, there is **no funding** available for the current and inevitable failure of originally installed audio/visual equipment from the EOC construction in 2008 in the main coordination room, the new Joint Information Center and breakout rooms. For example, the Master Antenna Television (MATV) system is the original installation from 2008 and is used to monitor local and national media and networks throughout the complex. The MATV is currently degraded and several of the monitors have failed. With no identified funds for repairs of the MATV system (\$50,000) or any other audio/visual/comms system, we will be unable to repair critical failures which usually happen as systems are used during EOC activations. The shortfall of funding in EOF 34 for any repairs or maintenance of audio/visual equipment will result in not being able to utilize media sources, video conferencing, and virtual coordination between various department operations centers and other regional EOCs.

Conclusion

In planning for the upcoming hearings, we ask the Budget, Finance and Innovation Committee to consider the aforementioned budgetary adjustments as a priority as we work to protect the residents of Los Angeles and ensure that the City is ready to respond to and recover from all emergencies and disasters.

We are incredibly grateful to the Mayor, the Budget, Finance and Innovation Committee, and the City Council for your continued support of EMD's mission of promoting a culture of readiness. If you have questions, please contact me directly at 213-280-1324.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carol P. Parks".

CAROL P. PARKS
General Manager

CC: Matt Szabo, City Administrative Officer
Sharon Tso, Chief Legislative Analyst
Bernyce Hollins, Budget Director, Office of the Mayor
Brian K. Williams, Deputy Mayor of Public Safety

ATTACHMENT I - EOC ACTIVATIONS / EMD-SUPPORTED INCIDENTS

Date	Incident/Event	EOC Activation Level
July 1, 2023	Asylum Seeker Bus #2	Level III (Lowest)
July 12, 2023	Hollywood Apartment Fire	EMD Duty Team Coordination
July 13, 2023	Asylum Seeker Bus #3	Level III (Lowest)
July 18-August 9, 2023	Sylmar RV Eviction	EMD Duty Team Coordination
July 18, 2023	Asylum Seeker Bus #4	Level III (Lowest)
July 22, 2023	Asylum Seeker Bus #5	Level III (Lowest)
July 27, 2023	Asylum Seeker Bus #6	Level III (Lowest)
August 4, 2023	Asylum Seeker Bus #7	Level III (Lowest)
August 17, 2023	Asylum Seeker Bus #8	Level III (Lowest)
August 19-23, 2023	Tropical Storm Hilary	Level II (Middle- Overnight)
August 21, 2023	Asylum Seeker Bus #9	Level III (Lowest)
August 26, 30 September 4, 9, 19, 22, 25	Asylums Seeker Buses 10-16	EMD Duty Team Coordination
August 29, 2023	Asylum Seeker Bus #17, 18, & 19	Level III (Lowest)
September 30, 2023	Asylum Seeker Bus #20	EMD Duty Team Coordination
October 3, 2023	Asylum Seeker Bus #21, 22, & 23	Level III (Lowest)
October 10, 11, 15, 22 November 1	Asylum Seeker Buses 24-29	EMD Duty Team Coordination
November 11-21, 2023	10 Freeway Structure Fire/Closure and Command Post	Level III (Lowest)
November 27 December 12, 16, 21, 27	Asylum Seeker Buses 30-39	EMD Duty Team Coordination

Date	Incident/Event	EOC Activation Level
January 1, 4, 9, 12, 16, 20		
February 4-16, 2024	Early February Storm	Level II (Middle- Overnight)
February 17-23, 2024	Mid February Storm	Level II (Middle- Overnight)
February 20-21, 2024	POTUS Command Post	EOC Command Post Support
March 10, 2024	Academy Awards Command Post	EOC Command Post Support
March 17, 2024	Marathon	Level III (Lowest)
March 20, 2024	Dodgers Opening Day Command Post	EOC Command Post Support
May 1, 2024	May Day Command Post	EOC Command Post Support

ATTACHMENT II - EMD PRIMARY WEBSITE Site Visit Growth - Year-after-Year

Emergency.LACity.gov: Comparative FY Site-Visit Growth, 2022-2024*

