



May 18, 2025

TO: All Los Angeles City Fire Department Members
SUBJECT: LAFD BUDGET CUTS – THREAT TO FIREFIGHTER SAFETY

From Hero to Zero in 4 months:

On Friday, May 16, 2025, the Los Angeles City Budget and Finance Committee made up of Councilmembers McOsker, Yaroslavsky, Blumenfeld, Hutt and Hernandez told the members of the LAFD that their lives are expendable, and they are not interested in their safety and survival while we save lives and property as an LAFD Firefighter.

They communicated this by voting to forward the recommendation to cut the LAFD budget and eliminate 42 Emergency Incident Technicians. They are cutting the very people that work hand in hand with Incident Commanders in tracking where you are when fighting a fire and assist in running a Mayday when the crap hits the fan and you are missing, downed or trapped.

The fate of the LAFD and your safety and survival are now in the hands of the full City Council and the Mayor as the budget goes to them this week for final approval. The Mayors original balanced budget did not include the elimination of EIT's; however, the Budget and Finance Committee slipped it in at the last minute. Yes the City is in dire financial circumstances; however, Firefighter lives should not be used to balance the budget and add back to the graffiti abatement program or restore 1 million for Represent LA, which provides legal defense of immigrants facing deportation or other enforcement actions (requested by Councilperson Hernandez).

The bad news is if the recommended cuts to the LAFD are passed, your safety and survival at emergency incidents and structure fires are at risk due to the elimination of the EIT that is responsible for tracking where you and your company are at a structure fire/brush fire and assisting the Chief in running a Mayday incident in the event you are missing, downed or trapped.

The good news is that if you are killed, your loved ones (wife, significant other) will receive your pension and if you are critically burned like the Firefighters at Boyd St, Workers Compensation will pay your medical bills. No sweat for the City Council and nothing for them to worry about. Additionally, the LAFD is keeping the two Chiefs (AC Crowley and BC Guggenheim) as the Wellness Chiefs, vs. utilizing that money for EIT's.

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Politicians have short memories, but we the LAFD remember. In 1998, EIT's were cut and that was a documented contributing factor in the death of Engine 57 Captain Joe Dupee. EIT's have been a critical part of successful Firefighter Mayday Rescue incidents including the 2020 Boyd Street fire where 9 Fire personnel were critically burned, 2023, South Los Angeles Victory Baptist Church collapse ,2007 A/O through the roof successfully rescued and many more Firefighter Mayday incidents.

In January 2025, the Mayor and every Councilperson was praising the heroism and actions of the LAFD during the Palisades fire, the largest, most destructive fire in the history of the City of Los Angeles. Since that time, many Firefighters who worked at the Palisades fire for 3-5 days straight have shown elevated blood levels of carcinogens.

Four months later, those same politicians are now cutting the LAFD and eliminating a fellow Firefighter whose main responsibility at a fire is to track where you are in the event you suffer an emergency and are missing, downed or trapped. Politicians are temporary; but their policies can have lasting effects

Even though the Mayor and City Council may cut the very people (EIT's) that assist in ensuring your safety at fires, the good news is if you develop a debilitating respiratory illness or cancer because of the Palisades fire, you will be covered by Workers Compensation.

We should be asking how the EIT's came up on the chopping block. Interim Fire Chief Villanueva informed the Budget and Finance Committee during a hearing, that eliminating the EIT's would "come back and bite us". Letters have been sent to the Mayor, City Council and the Fire Commission with a detailed explanation of the 1998 EIT budget cut, the connection to the death of Captain Dupee and the duties and responsibilities of an EIT. In short, they know how valuable EIT's are, yet they are still willing to cut them and gamble with our safety and our lives.

In 1998, when EIT's were eliminated, Pat McOske, the brother of current Councilman Tim McOske was the President of UFLAC and very supportive of and assisted the Mayor in eliminating EIT's during a very tough budget year for the LAFD. It was no secret that Pat McOske (then UFLAC President) despised Chief Officers and had no problem recommending the elimination of the EIT, a partner to the Chiefs. Fast forward to 2025 and Tim McOske as a member of the very powerful and influential Budget and Finance Committee supports the elimination of EIT's. Go figure how he knew to cut them.

One must wonder how that recommendation made it to Matt Szabo the CAO and Sharon Tso, the CLA, both advisors to the Budget and Finance Committee. Neither the Mayor, the Fire Chief or anyone on the Fire Department budget team recommended cutting EIT's from this budget. How did Mr. Szabo even know about EIT's, and whether they should be cut. This needs to be investigated.

In closing, unless the Mayor and or City Council act, EIT's will likely be eliminated and our workplace, the fireground will become much more dangerous than it already is. We swore an oath to protect life and property and if necessary we willingly sacrifice our safety and place our lives in jeopardy for strangers. Will we all continue to feel that way knowing that the Mayor, and City Council do not have our safety, our well-being, our family's well-being and our back?

Take care of each other, take care of your family and be safe.