



Date: December 24, 2019

To: Thomas B. Modica, Acting City Manager *T.M.*

From: Xavier Espino, Fire Chief *X.E.*

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Update on Basic Life Support Ambulance Staffing**

This memorandum provides an update regarding the Basic Life Support (BLS) Ambulance staffing issue initially reported to the City Council in a memorandum published on November 1, 2019. The Long Beach Fire Department (LBFD) elected to stop using mandatory overtime for Ambulance Operators to staff one of the City's two day-time peak BLS units due to staffing shortages, beginning October 18, 2019. This action was taken to provide temporary relief to full-time Ambulance Operators who were being required to work an excessive amount of additional hours to staff the BLS units.

Since October 18, a one-month staffing rotation has been established between BLS 12 and BLS 13. For the first rotation, October 18 to October 31, BLS 13 was staffed 14 times and BLS 12 was not staffed at all. During the month of November, BLS 12 was staffed 18 times and not staffed 12 times, and BLS13 was staffed 17 times and not staffed 13 times. For the month of December, BLS 12 will be staffed 19 times and not staffed 12 times, while BLS 13 will be staffed 17 times and not staffed 14 times.

An Ambulance Operator Academy comprised of 9 people began on December 2, 2019 and was completed on December 18. Graduates from this academy began covering shifts on BLS units as early as December 19. BLS 12 and 13 will both be in service on a daily basis beginning January 2, 2020. This date is a couple of weeks ahead of the anticipated schedule due to the December Ambulance Operator Academy. The next Ambulance Operator Academy is slated to commence on January 13 and run through 24, 2020 with at least 15 individuals.

Ambulance Operator Staffing

Currently, the LBFD has 12 full-time Ambulance Operator vacancies and 12 non-career Ambulance Operator vacancies. Additionally, three full-time Ambulance Operators are requesting to change to non-career status and three others are considering resigning within the next two months. LBFD is working to fill these vacancies with current and upcoming Ambulance Operator Academies in December 2019, January 2020, and April 2020. These Academies are expected to result in the hire of 44 new Ambulance Operators.

Ambulance Operator Program Changes

An internal review of the Ambulance Operator Academy and hiring process has resulted in the following improvements, including:

- Reduction in the Academy length from 3 weeks to 2 weeks;
- Decreased hiring timeline from 6 weeks to 3 weeks due to streamlined processes for background checks and physical exams; and,
- Daily Telestaff Roster review to fill the temporary closures and ensure the signup requirements are being met.

Staff expects these improvements to expedite and strengthen the process as a whole.

Incentives to Hiring and Retaining Ambulance Operators

The highest incentive to most Ambulance Operators will be providing an understanding of what is needed for entry into a career in the fire service. LBFD is committed to considering currently serving Ambulance Operators to become Fire Recruits, provided they meet the City of Long Beach hiring standards. LBFD management is open to the idea of developing mentorship workshops that will expose people to the steps necessary to being hired LBFD Staff is exploring the concept of an Ambulance Operator Task Book, which will provide further personal instruction and career development. It is also intended to serve as a tool for use by Fire Captains with input from their respective crews. Staff are also pursuing the possibility of non-monetary sponsorships to Basic Fire Academies and Paramedic Schools in the local area. This will provide increased opportunities for LBFD Ambulance Operators to advance in their fire service careers.

Preventing Future Closures

The current Civil Service job bulletin for the position of Ambulance Operator allows applicants to determine their employment status, either full- or part-time, at the end of the Academy. LBFD Staff is working with Civil Service to edit future bulletins to allow for more LBFD control of employment status. Additionally, LBFD is working with Civil Service to start a continuous hiring cycle. This will allow prospective new employees to enter the workforce on a timelier basis.

By increasing non-career staffing from 20 to 30, we have enlarged the pool of people available to draw from for additional relief for full-time employees. To accommodate this increase, there are three Ambulance Operator Academies scheduled for calendar year 2020 in January, April and sometime in the fall. Thereafter, one class will be scheduled annually, with a potential increase to two classes if needed.

LBFD staff is continually analyzing the BLS Program, looking at costs, retention rates, and other factors. Staff also monitors the Telestaff Roster daily to ensure volunteer callbacks

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are being filled as well as ensuring the sign-up commitment is fulfilled. With these program improvements and staffing increases, the LBFD is confident in its ability to fully staff the BLS Program.

If you have questions regarding this matter, please contact Xavier Espino, Fire Chief, at (562) 570-2509.

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