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Greuel Releases Analysis of LAFD Emergency Response Times

LOS ANGELES – As City Council begins debating the budget for the upcoming fiscal year, City Controller Wendy Greuel today released her analysis of the Los Angeles Fire Department's incident response times. Greuel's report found that although LAFD has been able to maintain full deployment response times for fire and non-medical incidents, there has been an increase in the response times for medical first responders.

The report shows that as compared to the full deployment period, between January 2007 and July 2009, average response times for turnout and travel for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) incidents have increased by 12 seconds, from 4 minutes and 45 seconds to 4 minutes and 57 seconds.

The effects of the new deployment plan varied across different Los Angeles neighborhoods. Total EMS response times in the San Fernando Valley were the most significantly impacted by the changes in deployment, with average response times increasing by over 20 seconds. East Los Angeles, San Pedro, and the Metro area each had response times increase by an average of 18 seconds.

"It's unacceptable that the LAFD has not been able to accurately track its emergency response times," said Greuel. "My analysis lays the ground work for the Mayor, City Council and the Fire Department to have a real discussion about what needs to be done to improve public safety for all Angelenos."

In contrast to the EMS times, response times for turnout and travel for fire and non-EMS incidents have actually decreased since the end of full deployment, from an average of 5 minutes and 18 seconds to 4 minutes and 57 seconds. Advanced Life Support (ALS) First Resource average response times have decreased by 16 seconds, from 5 minutes and 21 seconds to 5 minutes and 5 seconds, since the full deployment period, and structure fire response times have stayed relatively flat, going from 3 minutes and 36 seconds to 3 minutes and 37 seconds.

"Public safety is absolutely the City's top priority," said Councilmember Mitch Englander, Chair of the Public Safety Committee. "We must have accurate numbers on fire response times because you can't fix what you can't measure."

Even though the LAFD presented its data in comparison to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, Greuel's review found that LAFD's performance cannot be compared to those standards. Nearly 650,000 of the 1.9 million incidents the Controller's office reviewed were coded unclearly, as they could be categorized as either an emergency or a non-emergency, at the discretion of the dispatcher. As a result, there is no way to determine whether the LAFD has met its 90% goal, because emergency incidents were not clearly identified.

"I'm troubled to learn San Pedro has seen one of the largest increases in EMS response times in the city," said Councilmember Joe Buscaino. "If your heart has stopped, 18 seconds can mean the difference between life and death."

Greuel's report calculated both the actual response times, which include just turnout and travel, and real response times experienced by the caller, which include call processing. Since July 2009, real response times for EMS have increased by 20 seconds, from 6 minutes and 48 seconds to 7 minutes and 8 seconds. Nearly half of this increase is attributable to a 9 second increase in call processing time, which has increased from 95 seconds to 104 seconds.

"I want to thank the City Controller for providing her analysis of the LAFD's incident response times," said Councilman Dennis P. Zine, Chair of the Audits & Governmental Efficiency Committee. "I share her concerns about the inconsistencies related to the processing and reporting of the statistical information. It is important that we receive honest, accurate, and precise information when making policy decisions, especially while we consider the budget for the upcoming fiscal year. This audit will help make some sense of where we can make improvements."

"The next step is to scrutinize the LAFD deployment plan to determine how to best deploy our scarce city resources," added Greuel. "It is imperative that the LAFD implement the recommendations in this analysis to improve the use of tracking resources so that there will always be an honest assessment of how well the Fire Department is doing."

Controller Greuel has conducted more than 50 audits and uncovered nearly \$130 million that the City has lost to wasteful spending, fraudulent activity, and abuse of government resources over the last two years.

For more information, log on to the Website of Los Angeles Controller Wendy Greuel: <http://controller.lacity.org/index.htm>

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