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Greuel Warns More Must be Done to Improve City's Emergency Preparedness

LOS ANGELES – Controller Wendy Greuel today released her latest audit of the City's emergency preparedness, following up on a 2008 review which criticized the City's lack of a clear vision or strategic plan to respond to a major natural or man-made disaster. Four years later, Greuel found that although some progress has been made in creating a comprehensive disaster response, the City still has a long way to go to resolve the red-flags that were raised by the previous audit.

“Los Angeles is vulnerable to a multitude of disasters from earthquakes, mudslides and fires, to terrorist and other man-made threats and we need a world-class response plan to fulfill our most important obligation of ensuring the safety of all Angelenos,” said Greuel. “I urge the Mayor and Council to take a hard look at my audit and implement its recommendations.”

The report concludes that nearly half of the Controller's previous recommendations have not been implemented, with 22 of 56 recommendations still partially or not implemented at all. Most notably, the City's Emergency Management Department (EMD) and each of the five departments reviewed for this audit, including the Airport, Port, Convention Center, Department of Transportation and Recreation and Parks still need to strengthen inter-agency cooperation.

Additional findings from the report include:

- The City has not developed a comprehensive plan for sheltering persons in the event of a major disaster or emergency incident, and many park facilities that would serve as shelter sites do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act nor have they been assessed for seismic safety;
- Little progress has been made toward developing a system for identifying and locating the most vulnerable people during an emergency, developing suitable shelter infrastructure, or for ensuring availability of specialized equipment and other support;
- The economic recession and resulting budget reductions have impacted the City's ability to effectively fund staff resources to coordinate emergency preparedness activities or effectively conduct training and exercises, which could be exacerbated by the possibility that substantial Federal and State grant funds could be curtailed; and

- The Emergency Management Department does not assess or oversee department efforts to identify, prioritize, and mitigate facility and infrastructure hazards, diminishing the City's ability to strategically fund facility and infrastructure improvements that would improve emergency preparedness.

Additional recommendations that still need to be implemented from the 2008 audit include:

- Altering the Administrative Code to vest the Emergency Management Department with enough authority to effectively coordinate citywide preparedness;
- Establishing a process to prioritize mitigation efforts across departments and standardize threat assessments;
- Developing a long term strategy for sustaining emergency management activities in the face of diminishing Federal and State resources.

However, some actions have been taken to improve the City's preparedness efforts including establishing a new Emergency Operations Center to serve as the focal point for coordination of the City's emergency planning, training, response and recovery efforts. The City has also entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the American Red Cross to provide a collaborative framework for emergency planning and response.

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

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

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