

Date: December 6, 2023

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Dennis Buchanan, Fire Chief, Fire Department 

For: Mayor and Members of City Council

Subject: **Update on the Fire Department's 2023A Fire Recruit Academy**

This memo is provided to summarize the Long Beach Fire Department's (LBFD) most recent Fire Recruit Academy, termed Recruit Academy 2023A (2023A). This will also provide an overview of the Fire Department's staffing levels, overtime demands, fiscal impact, and graduation information for 2023A.

2023A began on August 14, 2023, and concluded on November 17, 2023. The 2023A Fire Recruits were promoted and transitioned to the Probationary Firefighter classification as of November 18, 2023 and are currently assigned to the department's fire stations throughout Long Beach.

Overview of the Fire Recruit Academy Timeline and Process

LBFD's most recent Fire Recruit Academies include 2022A which graduated 20 Fire Recruits on May 21, 2022, and 2022B which graduated 11 fire recruits on January 21, 2023. 2023A concluded on November 17, 2023, and transitioned 39 Fire Recruits to the Probationary Firefighter classification.

The LBFD Recruit Academy is composed of two major phases: (i) candidate evaluation and (ii) recruit instruction. For the Recruit Academy 2023A, candidate evaluation and the first seven weeks of Fire Recruit instruction took place in FY 23. The remaining seven weeks of Fire Recruit instruction occurred in FY24. Once Fire Recruits transition to the Probationary Firefighter classification, employees remain on a probation period for one-year.

Ideally, Recruit Academies are structured to graduate Fire Recruits in December or January of each year. This allows the department to fill sworn fire vacancies caused by employee attrition throughout the calendar year as well as retirement filings that tend to concentrate in the month of December.

Strategic Goals for Recruit Academy 2023A

LBFD implemented lessons learned after concluding Recruit Academies 2022A and 2022B, which took place in FY 22 and early FY 23, respectively. Regional trends point to many concurrent and competitive recruitments among Los Angeles, Orange County, Riverside, and San Bernardino agencies. Specifically, lateral firefighter/paramedic recruitments were released by LA County, Arcadia, Escondido, Hemet, Manhattan Beach, Montclair, Napa,

Oceanside, Redondo Beach, Ventura, and other jurisdictions. Due to these regional trends, LBFD pursued the following goals when operating Recruit Academy 2023A.

- LBFD set a goal to graduate a sufficient number of Fire Recruits to fill permanent and temporary vacancies forecasted to be realized in December 2023. Achieving this goal will reduce Firefighter mandatory callbacks and overtime expenditures.
- Graduate a Fire Recruit class with increased gender and racial/ethnic diversity to better represent the composition of the Long Beach community.
- Provide additional instructor support for the Fire Recruit participants by supplying specialty instruction support and a lower student to cadre instructor ratio to ensure higher recruit success.

LBFD achieved these goals that it set at the beginning of 2023A. Recruit Academy 2023A started with 49 Fire Recruits and of those recruits, 39 have transitioned to Probationary Firefighters.

Regarding the racial/ethnic composition of the Recruit Academy 2023A, the following table demonstrates the diversity of the class. In addition to the race/ethnic composition below, 2023A includes one (1) female firefighter.

Table 1: Race/Ethnic Composition of 2023A

Race/Ethnicity	2023A Start of Academy		2023A End of Academy	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
White	25	51%	20	51%
Hispanic or Latinx	14	29%	12	31%
Two or more Races	4	8%	3	8%
Black	3	6%	2	5%
Asian	3	6%	2	5%
Total	49	100%	39	100%

Staffing Levels and Mandatory Callback Shift Trends

LBFD provides 911 fire and emergency medical services on a 24/7 basis through 128 daily post positions. This means that any vacation, holiday, workers compensation injury, FMLA leave, or other long-term leave causes a fire callback for a 24-hour shift. It is preferred that Fire sworn staff volunteer to fill these 24-hour callback shifts, but when a volunteer is not identified, staff are required to work a mandatory callback and are directed to work vacant shifts.

Over calendar year 2023 mandatory callbacks have reached exceptionally high levels. Specifically, between the months of September to October, Firefighter mandatory callbacks averaged nine 24-hour shifts per day, while Paramedic mandatory callbacks averaged seven 24-hour shifts per day. This equates to LBFD scheduling 303 mandatory callbacks for

Firefighter shifts and 225 mandatory callbacks for the Paramedic shifts. The requirement to fill these high number of mandatory callbacks has put significant strain on the current Firefighters and Paramedics who must work their current shift schedules in addition to the mandatory callbacks identified above.

The 39 new Probationary Firefighters will fill the Department's current 19 Fire sworn vacancies as well as anticipated retirements to be filed in December. With the Department being temporarily overstaffed by 20 Probationary Firefighter personnel, this will greatly relieve the 303 mandatory Firefighter callbacks and 225 mandatory callbacks for Paramedic shifts.

The temporary overstaffing will also provide the needed personnel to accomplish mission-critical operations in FY 24. Specifically, LBFD received \$500,000 in one-time funds to operate a peak-load paramedic rescue unit. With this additional staffing, a 24/7 additional paramedic rescue unit will be provided to the community for 6 to 7 months in FY 24 and will provide support during the busiest times and days of the week when the City experiences 911 emergency medical service calls. The temporary overstaffing will also allow LBFD to send 14 Firefighters to the multi-month paramedic education program (Paramedic School), which is the State requirement for working on an Advanced Life Support ambulance unit. Enrolling 14 Firefighters in Paramedic School will ensure the department is equipped with 90 Paramedic staff, which is its current budget level for this position.

Fire Recruit 2023A Graduation Information

Due to the critical staffing needs summarized above, the members of Recruit Academy 2023A transitioned to the Probationary Firefighter classification without celebration of an official graduation in order to meet the operational needs of LBFD and the City of Long Beach. The 2023A ceremonial graduation will take place on the following date and time. Members of Council and the public are welcome to attend to celebrate the achievements of Recruit Academy 2023A.

- Date: December 16, 2023
- Time: 11:00am – Conclusion
- Location: Captain David Rosa Regional Training Center
2249 Argonne Ave., Long Beach, CA 90815

If you have any questions, please contact me at (562) 570-2509.

Cc:

DAWN MCINTOSH, CITY ATTORNEY
DOUGLAS P. HAUBERT, CITY PROSECUTOR
LAURA L. DOUD, CITY AUDITOR
TERESA CHANDLER, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
GRACE YOON, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER

MEREDITH REYNOLDS, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
APRIL WALKER, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
KEVIN LEE, CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER
MONIQUE DE LA GARZA, CITY CLERK
DEPARTMENT HEADS