

MOTION

PUBLIC SAFETY

The City of Los Angeles is one of the most well-prepared municipalities in the United States, and we are constantly evolving to changing threats, both natural and man-made. In light of the increasing frequency and severity of wildfires, the City has taken a number of actions in recent years to begin to adapt to this threat. This includes increasing the LAFD helicopter fleet through the purchase of fifth water dropping aircraft, restoring eight of the 11 engine companies closed as a result of the Great Recession, increasing the City's participation in the statewide mutual aid system, the purchase of improved Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) for firefighters, and passing an ordinance to ban the use of metal cutting blades for brush clearance. However, we still must go further in order to adapt to this new normal.

The last two fire seasons not only underscore the grave threat that wildfires pose to our neighborhoods, but they have also demonstrated how these wind-driven events can wipe out entire communities and take many lives in the process. Prolonged drought, climate change, and additional development, when considered together in the context of the Wildland-Urban Interface, raise several interrelated issues that we must carefully reevaluate both within and beyond the roughly 133 square miles of the City of Los Angeles that fall into the state-defined Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). These factors include, but are not limited to: street width requirements, parking restrictions, the effectiveness of emergency alert systems and evacuation plans, shelter-in-place procedures, the suitability/survivability of designated evacuation sites, safe refuge and evacuation locations for animals - including horses, current building codes and standards, and the need for stricter enforcement of construction activities on narrow roads.

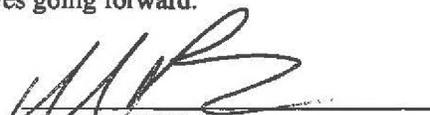
We must also give consideration towards issues such as whether or not the current Red Flag Parking Restrictions should be expanded to apply on days when the Burn Index (BI) reaches "Extreme", whether or not high-voltage overhead transmission and distribution lines need to be shut-off during strong wind events, and if the VHFHSZ itself needs to be expanded beyond currently defined boundaries. For instance, the Coffey Park neighborhood of Santa Rosa lost 1,200 homes in the 2017 Tubbs Fire, despite the fact that it is not located within a Wildland-Urban Interface. It was also determined that this fire was caused by sagging power lines during a strong northeast wind condition. While not all policies and programs require wholesale change, they are likely in need of review. For example, the City's Red Flag Parking Program was launched in 2005, but since then, there has not been a comprehensive Citywide assessment of street system bottlenecks within the VHFHSZ. Further, while the danger of a fast-moving and destructive brush fire is greatest on a Red Flag day, there are many more days each year when the LAFD pre-deploys and augments neighborhood fire resources due to "Extreme" fire weather, yet parking restrictions are not triggered as a result of this increased risk.

Lastly, we need to leverage technology to the greatest extent possible, which includes expanding the existing network of Remove Automated Weather Stations (RAWS) both inside and outside of the City, to enable more precise neighborhood-specific measurements of temperature, relative humidity, and wind speed. This is in addition to the further development of predictive fire spread modeling tools such as WIFIRE, which the LAFD recently launched in partnership with UC San Diego. Also critical is the need for improved public information sharing. We should begin development of a public-facing app that incorporates real-time fire weather, Red Flag parking alerts, the NotifyLA system, 'Ready, Set, Go!' material, and push notifications with information on designated evacuation sites, and should residents become trapped, the location of pre-designated safe refuge areas. The integration of this information into a single app could dramatically improve the level of public awareness, readiness, and safety during the next major wildfire.

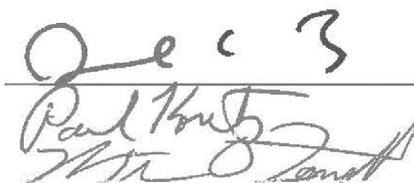
I THEREFORE MOVE that the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) and Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) jointly assemble and lead a Wildland-Urban Interface Hazard Mitigation Task Force (Task Force), consisting of representatives from the Police Department, Emergency Management Department, Department of Transportation, Department of Recreation and Parks, Department of Animal Services, Information Technology Agency, Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, Department of Building & Safety, Department of City Planning, Department of Water & Power, and any other internal and external partners deemed necessary, to discuss the issues described in the above-mentioned text, along with any related matters.

I FURTHER MOVE that the LAFD and CLA jointly convene an initial meeting of the Task Force, and provide a written report to the City Council outlining the scope of work and objectives going forward.

PRESENTED BY:


MIKE BONIN
Councilmember, 11th District

SECONDED BY:


Paul Kuntz


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