

TRANSMITTAL

To: **THE COUNCIL**

Date: **08/22/19**

From: **THE MAYOR**

TRANSMITTED FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION. PLEASE SEE ATTACHED.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Eric Garcetti', written in a cursive style.

(Ana Guerrero) for

ERIC GARCETTI
Mayor

Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) Operational Guidelines

This document describes the City's planned approach to implement a verbal notification requirement for individuals present in restricted areas within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ or Zone). As many such persons are unhoused, the operations will primarily run through the Unified Homelessness Response Center (UHRC), increasing the level of proactive operations, ensuring the City's overall level of emergency preparedness, and removing individuals from the VHFHSZ with greater efficiency prior to and during critical incidents.

Coordination of Interagency Operations

The planning and deployment of resources in the VHFHSZ will be coordinated through the Los Angeles Fire Department, with support from the UHRC. In its role, the UHRC will help to:

- Convene planning processes to assist operational decision-making in the VHFHSZ;
- Support command post operations during critical incidents and emergencies; and
- Serve as a central hub for the collection of departmental data and information.

Identifying Risk in the VHFHSZ

An accurate assessment of the extent and nature of individuals present in restricted areas of the VHFHSZ will allow the UHRC to more effectively coordinate efforts to mitigate risks in the Zone and make real-time operational decisions during emergencies. There are presently three main sources of data collection and mapping in the VHFHSZ: 1) the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD), which conducts a bi-annual survey of homeless encampments in the VHFHSZ; 2) the Recreation and Parks Department (RAP), which owns and maintains significant portions of land within the VHFHSZ and regularly documents homeless encampments on land under its control; and 3) the UHRC, which maps and analyzes layers of data from multiple City departments in its ArcGIS platform.

LAFD Windshield Survey

The LAFD conducts a "windshield survey" to count and document the location of homeless encampments in the VHFHSZ twice a year: one in January and one in August. Windshield surveys involve firefighters driving through the VHFHSZ and, from their vehicle, counting the number and documenting the location of encampments. The LAFD does not collect any personal information about individuals experiencing homelessness in the VHFHSZ. The August 2019 windshield survey has been completed and the data is being finalized and mapped.

RAP Data Collection

In addition to receiving and completing service requests for homeless encampment clean-ups in City parks, RAP also leads and coordinates homelessness-related outreach and engagement operations within these parks. Because RAP owns and maintains parks within the VHFHSZ, data gathered by RAP rangers and other field staff is critical to completing the operational picture of homelessness throughout the Zone.

UHRC VHFHSZ Mapping

The UHRC maps and analyzes data from multiple City departments in its ArcGIS platform. These data include:

- LAFD windshield survey results
- LA Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN) service requests in restricted areas within the VHFHSZ
- RAP service requests in areas within the VHFHSZ under its control
- Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) data
- Caltrans service requests in restricted areas within the VHFHSZ under its control

These data will create an approximated census of homeless encampments within the VHFHSZ. Extremely remote locations may not be captured.

Operational Deployment and Decision-Making in Restricted Areas within the VHFHSZ

Departments and the UHRC have developed a three-tiered plan for operational deployment and decision-making that reflects the level of fire risk on any given day, as determined by the LAFD. The UHRC also helps to coordinate deployment and decision-making with local, regional, and state partners such as LA County, Metro, Caltrans, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and others.

If the ordinance change passes, the LAPD anticipates its patrol officers will be called upon to respond to homeless encampments in the VHFHSZ. Accordingly, the LAPD will provide training to its officers on how to effectively enforce the ordinance and request follow-up resources to address property left behind.

The three tiers are as follows:

Tier 1: No imminent fire danger

Although in Southern California, many fire service professionals believe that fire season is experienced year-round, the vast majority of the year, the LAFD will register no imminent risk of fire inside the VHFHSZ. During such days, departments will focus on proactive engagement and education for any individuals in the brush area, and risk mitigation for encampments with fire hazards present. These proactive operations will be scheduled and coordinated through the UHRC.

Proactive engagement

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) will lead engagement on Tier 1 days. LAHSA Homeless Engagement Teams will engage with individuals encamped in brush areas that are accessible to their fleet, sharing information about fire safety and the trespass rules throughout the Zone. If LAHSA outreach workers observe any hazardous or flammable material, they will immediately notify the LAPD, LAFD, and the UHRC for review and action if necessary. LAPD Homeless Outreach and Proactive Engagement (HOPE) Team officers will accompany outreach teams in the VHFHSZ, as needed and when available.

Risk mitigation

The UHRC, with support from LASAN, LAPD, LAHSA, LAFD, and RAP, will set a proactive schedule of noticed cleanings in and around encampments in restricted areas within the Zone to mitigate any potential increased fire risk. LASAN will lead these operations, with Environmental Compliance Inspectors providing on-site coordination. LAPD HOPE Team officers will accompany sanitation crews in the VHFHSZ.

Tier 2: Red Flag status day, or augmented LAFD operations

On Red Flag status days¹, parking restriction days, or on days when LAFD augments its operations either in anticipation of a Red Flag status day or due to anticipated weather and brush conditions, the UHRC will coordinate with departments to increase operations and possible enforcement throughout restricted areas within the VHFHSZ. The primary focus of operations on a Tier 2 day is to proactively remove individuals who refuse to voluntarily leave a restricted area within the Zone individuals from the VHFHSZ. On Tier 2 days, the UHRC will share updated information with City officials, department representatives, and other partners consistent with its notification protocols.

Coordination of efforts

On Tier 2 days, the UHRC and LAFD will convene a morning briefing to establish operational roles and responsibilities for that day. Department roles will be as follows:

- LAPD leads enforcement and the removal of individuals who refuse to voluntarily leave a restricted area within the Zone
- LAFD leads fire prevention efforts and accompanies all teams in the field
- LASAN leads removal of all hazardous materials found in the restricted areas within the VHFHSZ and storage of personal property removed
- RAP, with support from LASAN, leads removal of all hazardous materials found on land under its control within the VHFHSZ and storage of personal property removed
- LAHSA leads engagement and emergency shelter placements, with support from RAP
- LADOT defines safe routes for egress from restricted areas within the Zone

Evacuation notifications

LAPD, with fire/life safety support from LAFD and overall operational support from the UHRC, will coordinate teams to notify and remove individuals in the VHFHSZ. In these teams, LAFD Brush Patrol personnel will be tasked with locating encampments, confirming parcel ownership, and identifying fire hazards. LAPD HOPE Teams will respond to vehicle-accessible areas within the VHFHSZ to educate and advise individuals that they cannot remain in the Zone and will verbally notify individuals to vacate.

¹ The LAFD defines a “Red Flag status day” as having winds greater than 25 mph and humidity less than 15 percent. This is different from a “Red Flag warning” issued by the National Weather Service.

LAPD Air Support Division (e.g., helicopters or fixed wing aircraft) will assist with reaching more inaccessible areas of the VHFHSZ, including through use of the aircrafts' public announcement systems, to advise individuals of the potential fire danger and notice to vacate. LAPD will also deploy Off-Road Units to respond to less-accessible areas to deliver verbal notice to vacate.

Providing services

LAHSA outreach teams are not currently prepared with the proper training or equipment to enter many brush areas within the VHFHSZ. Therefore, on Tier 2 days LAHSA will be stationed in the field in more accessible and areas with less imminent fire danger to triage and offer services to individuals who voluntarily vacate.

Enforcement through verbal notice

Individuals who do not voluntarily leave restricted areas within the VHFHSZ when verbally told to vacate by LAPD or RAP Rangers will be arrested for criminal trespass.

Private property

If encampments are located on private property within the VHFHSZ, the LAPD will send trespass authorization letters (Los Angeles Municipal Code §41.24). Property owners in these instances will be notified of their responsibility to remove any hazardous materials from their property.

Tier 3: Brush fire emergency

In the event of a brush fire in the VHFHSZ, LAFD will lead coordination of first responders with support from an activated UHRC. LAFD will follow all department protocols to manage a critical incident, including standing up an incident command post with on-the-ground support from the UHRC. The UHRC VHFHSZ maps will be available during critical incidents to assist with targeting resources to the areas with the highest likelihood of having inhabited homeless encampments.

During a Tier 3 event, LAPD will make its resources available (e.g., patrol, specialized units, and detectives) to help facilitate evacuation of the VHFHSZ.

Property storage

When a custodial arrest for trespass occurs in the restricted areas within the VHFHSZ, the LAPD, with the arrestee's consent, will take the arrestee's medication, medical equipment, and important paperwork. Absent consent, the arrestee's medication, medical equipment, and important paperwork will be left with all the other personal property at the location. LASAN will screen for health and safety hazards and store any personal property that is not a health and safety hazard.

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Resources

The LAPD, LASAN, and RAP have identified the need for additional resources to safely operationalize this plan. These include:

LASAN

- Personnel
 - Five full-time employees (FFE) for a dedicated Brush Area Team
- Equipment
 - Heavy equipment with tracks (e.g., Kubota-type / skid steer with tracks)
 - One 4-wheel drive vehicle (e.g., SUV / stake bed)
 - Smaller off-road vehicles (e.g., Polaris Razor-type)
 - Boom lift for excessive height locations
 - Fall protective equipment
 - Fire protection personal protective equipment (PPE)

LAPD

- Personnel
 - LAPD will use existing resources (e.g., HOPE Teams, patrol, SLOs, specialized units, and detectives) to support this plan
 - LAPD anticipates requesting a pool of approximately 800 hours of overtime for the Chief of Police to authorize to augment on-duty HOPE resources or in the event that a Red Flag status day falls on a weekend
- Equipment
 - Off-road vehicles (e.g., Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTV)) for each of the 14 areas that need to safely access their portions of the VHFHSZ
 - Battle Dress Uniforms (BDUs) and boots
 - Fall protective equipment (e.g., safety harnesses, guide ropes) as standard equipment for each UTV
 - PPE for all HOPE officers and supervisors, as well as eleven sets to be deployed in each of the above-referenced 14 areas

RAP

- Personnel
 - Four Gardener Caretakers
 - One Equipment Operator
 - One Park Ranger
 - Two Security Officers
- Equipment
 - Dump trucks: one 5-yard dump truck and two 3-yard dump trucks
 - Two Ranger trucks
 - Trailer
 - Skid Steer
 - Fall Protection Equipment for the above-referenced personnel
 - Fire Protection PPE for the above-referenced personnel