

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE



Date: April 22, 2025

To: Honorable Katy Yaroslavsky, Chair
Budget and Finance Committee

Budget and Finance Committee Members

From: Carol Parks, General Manager 
Emergency Management Department

Subject: **MAYOR'S PROPOSED FY 25/26 BUDGET**

As requested in your letter to department heads dated April 10, 2025, the Emergency Management Department (EMD) has prepared written comments relative to the Mayor's Proposed Budget for FY 25/26. The attached documents include:

- Descriptions of the Top-Line Core Services of EMD
- Current Departmental Organizational Chart
- Current Palisades Fire Recovery Organizational Chart
- Details on Divisional Programs and Responsibilities
- Grants/Contracts
- Requested Alterations to the Mayor's Proposed Budget

If you have any questions or need additional information, I am available at 213-280-1324 or carol.parks@lacity.org.

Attachments

City of Los Angeles

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
DEPARTMENT COMMENTS ON**

PROPOSED BUDGET

FY '25/26



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OVERVIEW

Los Angeles faces unparalleled threats due to seismic activity, wildfires, adverse weather, and other catastrophic risks. Recent experience, particularly the City's response to the January 2025 fires, underscores the necessity of a fully staffed Emergency Management Department (EMD). During this crisis, EMD personnel managed our Emergency Operations Center (EOC) continuously for several weeks, demonstrating that even our existing staffing levels strain our ability to adequately address significant emergencies. Despite resource limitations, our team also successfully established essential recovery capabilities, adhering closely to FEMA's National Disaster Recovery Framework, particularly in implementing crucial Recovery Support Functions such as Housing, Infrastructure Systems, and Economic recovery, as well as standing-up and staffing the Disaster Recovery Center which provided support and services directly to fire survivors.

Comparative analyses show that EMD already operates below staffing norms of other major metropolitan areas, such as New York, Chicago, and Houston, which all allocate greater proportional resources to emergency management. Our \$4.2M General Fund operating budget is among the lowest of all city departments. According to best practices established by FEMA and reflected in comparable jurisdictions, maintaining steady-state staffing is critical for preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery operations.

Moreover, the City's Administrative Code (Division 8) mandates EMD with extensive responsibilities, ranging from interagency coordination to public information dissemination and long-term disaster recovery planning.

The greatest responsibility of the City of Los Angeles is protecting its residents and ensuring that the City is ready to respond to and recover from all emergencies and disasters. Additionally, we have the task of planning for the safe execution of five world-stage events that will take place between 2026 and 2028. EMD plays a key role in consequence management and public alert messaging related to each of these events. Without adequate staffing now to do the necessary planning, training, exercising, and community engagement, we will be unprepared to face unexpected or adverse emergency incidents that could occur during these events when the world's eyes are on the City.

TOP-LINE CORE SERVICES

The City of Los Angeles Emergency Management Department (EMD) delivers five critical core services, primarily focusing on:

1. **Disaster Preparedness:** Conducts extensive community and inter-agency planning to mitigate risks associated with natural and man-made disasters.
2. **Incident Response Coordination:** Operates the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), providing centralized coordination and control during large scale and significant events, major emergencies, crises, and disasters.
3. **Recovery and Reconstruction Management:** Coordinates citywide recovery and restoration operations per the Los Angeles Administrative Code, and in line with FEMA's National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF), including the Recovery Support Functions (RSFs):
 - Community Planning
 - Economic Stability
 - Health and Social Services
 - Housing Solutions
 - Infrastructure Systems
 - Natural and Cultural Resources
4. **Public Information and Warning:** Manages emergency communications, alerts, warnings, and public education and awareness to ensure community safety.
5. **Interagency Coordination:** Facilitates coordination between city departments, county, state, and federal agencies, as well as non-governmental and private-sector stakeholders.

EMD ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DIVISIONAL PROGRAMS

With 31 Full-Time Employees (FTEs), EMD serves the City as a single entity bringing leadership and coordination before, during, and after disasters and during major events, whether localized or citywide. Currently, EMD is organized into five Divisions. However, noticeably absent is a “Recovery and Reconstruction” Division that exclusively focuses on the monumental task of the Palisades Fire rebuilding efforts and coordination of recovery for future disasters.

Innovation and Technology

The Innovation and Technology Division engages in emerging issues including cybersecurity, climate change, artificial intelligence, mega events, and extreme heat. The Division contains alerting specialists responsible for developing Citywide training on emergency alert and warning systems, including providing specialized training for the Fire and Police Departments and participating in drills with test alerts. They also issue emergency alerts for dangerous conditions (heat, rain, winds) and emergency actions (evacuation, shelter-in-place, etc) via NotifyLA and Wireless Emergency Alerts. The Division’s technical specialists guide issues related to public health, access and functional needs, geographic information systems (GIS) and grants. The Division also

manages the emergency software utilized by the EOC and EMD, including online mapping/GIS systems, EOC coordination software (Veoci) used for situational awareness, response tracking, and resource requests, and earthquake early warning systems.

Administration and Finance

The Administration and Finance Division develops and administers the annual budgets for the Department and the City's Emergency Operations Fund (EOF). The Division provides management and administrative support functions, as well as other ancillary services. These include, but are not limited to financial analysis and forecasting, general accounting, accounts payable and procurement, revenue and grants tracking, payroll and timekeeping, ethics reporting and compliance, contracts, and grants fiscal monitoring. The Division also liaises with other City departments such as the Offices of the City Administrative Officer, City Attorney, Controller, Department of General Services, and Personnel Department.

Community Partnerships and Engagement

The Community Partnerships and Engagement Division provides preparedness, outreach, and engagement to the over four million people who live, work, or visit Los Angeles. It runs the Ready Your LA Neighborhood (RYLAN) program which builds community resilience by empowering Angelenos to prepare themselves and their neighborhoods for a disaster. It also maintains robust partnerships with City agencies and external partners across all sectors and through strategic alliances with Los Angeles Police Department Senior Lead Officers, Los Angeles Fire Department CERT, Housing Authority, Mayor's Office, LA Chamber of Commerce, the Business & Industry Council for Emergency Planning and Preparedness, the Earthquake Country Alliance, Emergency Network Los Angeles, and faith-based organizations.

Operations and Training

The Operations and Training Division maintains the operational readiness of the EOC, including the upkeep and maintenance of all hardware systems that support it, alternate EOC locations, and the EOC complex's perimeter, infrastructure, and common areas. The Division is responsible for preparing, coordinating, and administering training programs that significantly increase the knowledge and abilities of City employees to respond effectively to disasters or other incidents. In addition, the Division develops and conducts exercises that test and continually improve upon the plans, processes, and procedures of the City as they relate to emergency management and FEMA core capabilities.

Planning and Mitigation

The Planning and Mitigation Division is responsible for developing and managing citywide emergency plans and mitigation strategies. This includes the City's comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan, along with its functional and hazard-specific annexes and appendices. This Division also manages and tracks the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to the EOP annexes. Additionally, it tracks after-action items to ensure that best practices and improvement plans are incorporated into the plans. The Division also oversees updates to the City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) and represents the City in the administration of the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program. As part of the LHMP planning cycle, the Division compiles the City's official risk assessment and coordinates the identification and tracking of actions to mitigate those risks. Furthermore, the Division facilitates the annual update of the Department Emergency and Continuity of Operations Plans (DECOOP) for all City departments.

EMD ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The attached organizational charts identify personnel assignments across the five Divisions and staff that were reassigned from their day-to-day responsibilities to Palisades Fire Recovery Support Functions (RSFs). Upon final adoption of the FY 25/26 budget, organizational changes will be made to reflect the addition of the needs and opportunities outlined below:

Need and Opportunity for Reorganization

Given the extensive impacts and the scale of recovery efforts following the January 2025 fires, there is both a need and an opportunity to reconsider the current organizational structure of EMD:

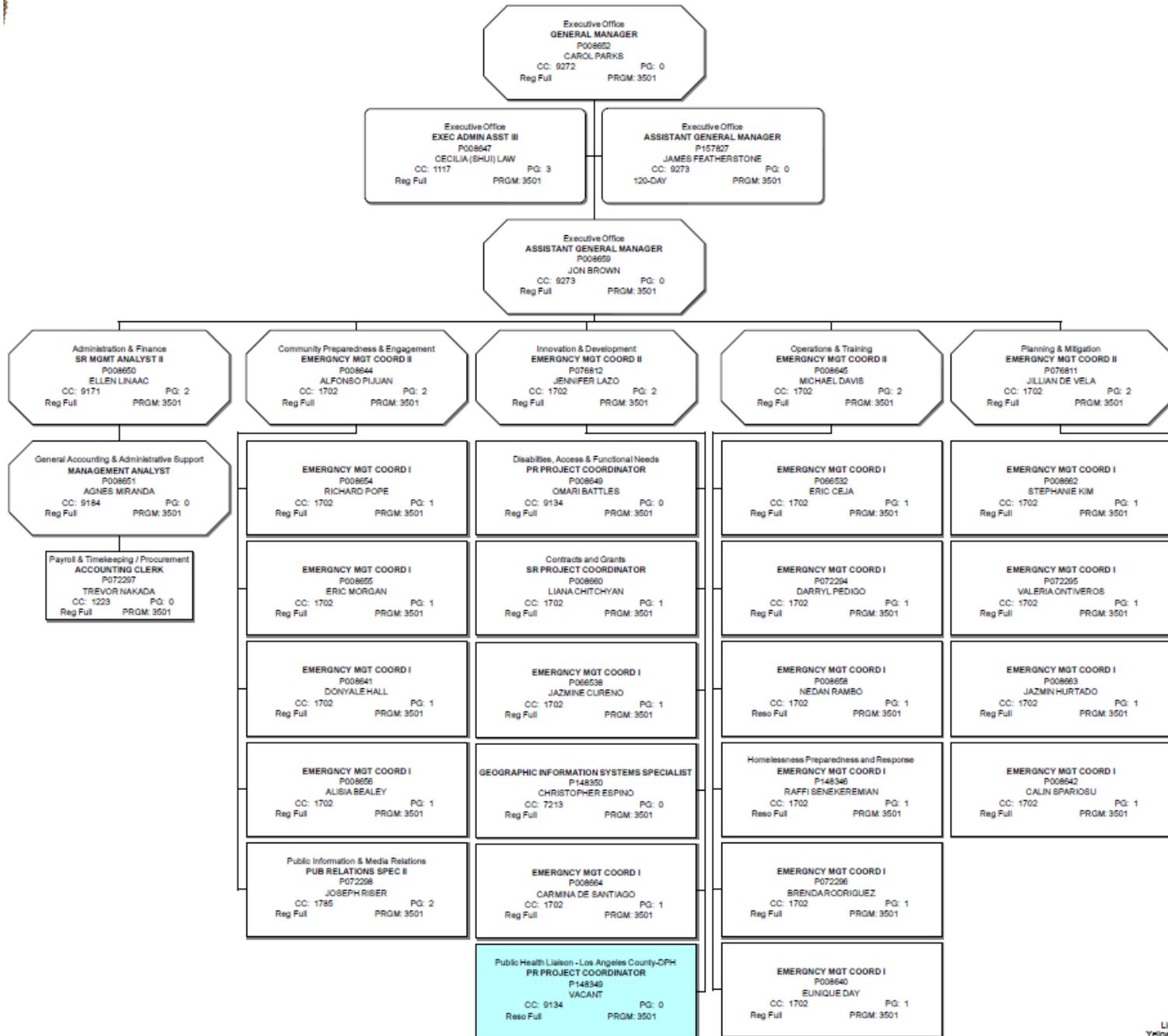
- **Resource Strain:** During the January 2025 fires, EMD's resources were significantly stretched, highlighting existing operational limitations and staffing challenges.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Comparative analyses indicate that Los Angeles EMD operates below recommended staffing norms compared to similar metropolitan emergency management departments.
- **Enhanced Coordination:** Adjusting EMD's internal structure to better align with the NDRF Recovery Support Functions (RSFs) can streamline recovery operations, enhance clarity of roles, and improve coordination among city departments and external agencies.

Benefits of Reorganizing the EMD

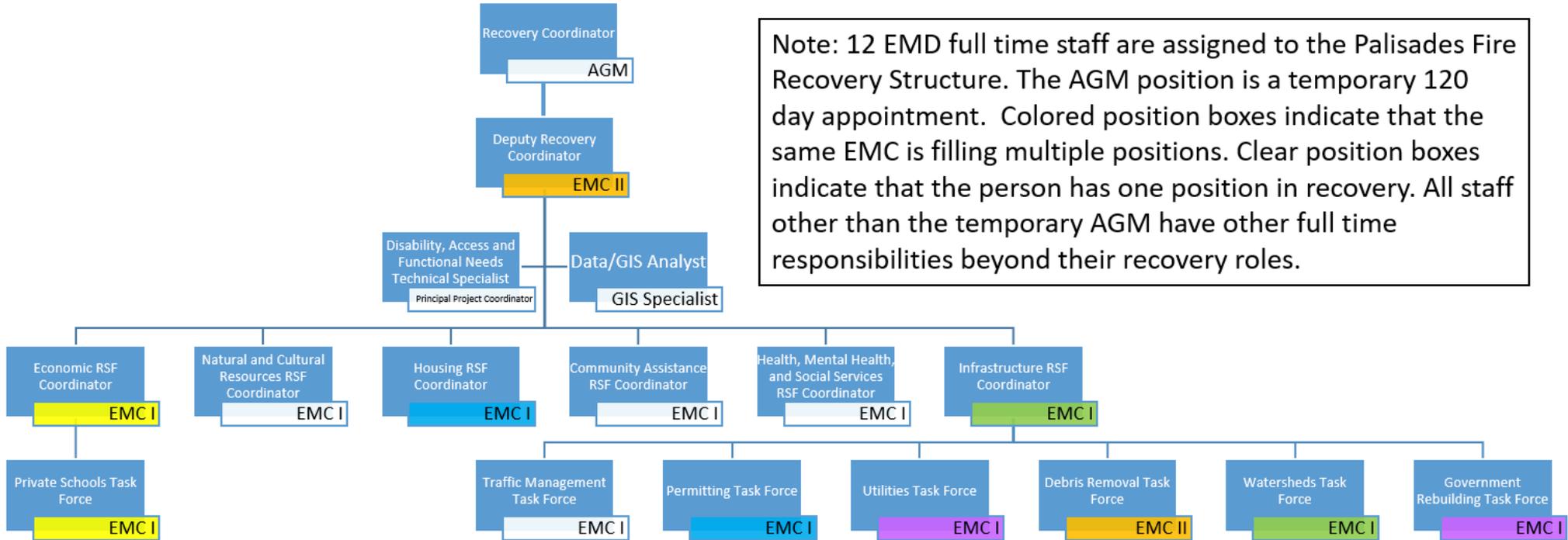
Reorganization could significantly enhance EMD's ability to provide core services by:

1. **Improved Response Capabilities:** Enhanced staffing and clearly defined operational units aligned with RSFs will ensure swift and effective responses to future incidents.
2. **Increased Preparedness and Mitigation:** Focusing additional resources on pre-disaster planning and mitigation efforts can reduce long-term risk and improve city resilience.
3. **Strengthened Recovery Framework:** Aligning the organizational structure directly with the established Recovery Annex and the RSFs under the NDRF can better position Los Angeles for efficient and comprehensive post-disaster recovery.
4. **Enhanced Community Engagement and Transparency:** Reorganization could facilitate better communication strategies and community outreach efforts, promoting transparency and public trust.
5. **Maximized Resources and Funding:** A clear, efficient structure can streamline grant application processes for state and federal post-disaster funding, ensuring quicker financial recovery support.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT- ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



PALISADES FIRE RECOVERY STRUCTURE - EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT



GRANTS/CONTRACTS

The City of Los Angeles Emergency Management Department (EMD) leverages grant funding to expand the capabilities of the department, such as purchasing regionally utilized response equipment, modernizing the city's Emergency Operations Center, and ensuring staff are able to take advantage of regional training.

Homeland Security grant funding such as that from Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), and Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program (RCPGP) are used to enhance EMDs EOC readiness and provide emergency services throughout the city.

EMD has benefited from UASI funding since its inception. UASI was created in 2003 by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as a response to September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The grant funds regional preparedness and capabilities in high-threat, high density areas. EMD uses UASI funding to train staff, purchase equipment and increase mitigation efforts in the City.

Annually, EMD contributes \$500K - \$780K to the general fund through the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG).

The Department currently has only one position that is funded through a grant program managed by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

REQUESTED ALTERATIONS TO THE MAYOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET

EMD understands the challenging fiscal environment and appreciates the proposed preservation of current staffing and being identified as a priority for expansion with future funding. However, the public safety needs of Angelenos cannot wait until preferable budget conditions exist. A full-time Recovery and Reconstruction Division is necessary to continue the expedited efforts to rebuild the Pacific Palisades while balancing the other crucial mandates of the Department. Additionally, fast-approaching mega-events will require significant planning and readiness to ensure the City is prepared to overcome any challenges that arise. Historically, EMD has exhausted its overtime budget due to annual special events and emergent disasters. The addition of events such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Olympic Games will require EOC activations spanning multiple weeks, command post representation, Joint Information Center (JIC) operations, and significant pre-planning and training. All of these activities will require the City to plan appropriate funding to meet the increased staffing needs. EMD respectfully requests the Budget and Finance Committee's consideration of the following requests:

Emergency Management Department Request (Estimated budget - \$1.1 M):

- I. Increased Staffing for on-going Recovery Coordination / EOC staffing:
 - 1 - Assistant General Manager (regularization)
 - 6 - Emergency Management Coordinator I's
 - 1 - Emergency Management Coordinator II
 - 1 - Public Information Director II
 - 1 - Principal Project Coordinator
- II. Increased EMD Overtime - An additional \$50,000 to augment EMD's annual budget of \$100,000 for special event planning and operations

Separately from the Departmental budget, EMD manages and administers the Non-Departmental Emergency Operations Fund (EOF). The EOF utilizes the contingency revolving fund, previously funded at \$100k, for urgent public safety expenditures that require immediate fiscal flexibility such as emergency supplies for disaster survivors. In addition, the EOF funds critical facility needs utilized by all public safety departments. The EOC facility is home to several public safety critical command centers. These centers form the majority of the public safety command and control for the City and include:

- EMD - Emergency Operations Center and EMD offices
- LAPD - Department Operations Center (24/7 Operation)
- LAPD - COMPSTAT
- LAFD - Department Operations Center
- LAFD - Metropolitan Fire Communications
- ITA - Security Operations Center

The absence of a proper security video management system and lack of funding to repair the access control system presents a real threat to the City and staff who inhabit the facility. Multiple incidents have occurred where the safety and security of the facility have been compromised without resolution due to the failing camera system. As activities at the critical facilities housed on the EOC campus increase for the upcoming mega-events, the City should prioritize the safety of first responders, civilian public safety staff, elected officials, and other VIPs who will occupy the complex. EMD kindly requests that the Budget and Finance Committee reconsider the funding prioritization for the EOF.

Emergency Operations Fund Request (Estimated budget - \$1.2 M):

- I. Replacement of the EOC Facility Security Video Management System at the Denied Based on Funding (DBOF) amount of \$209,000
- II. Replenishment for the Contingency Revolving Fund at \$1,000,000