

Los Angeles Fire Department personnel speak out on shortage of rescue ambulances

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Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) paramedics are speaking up again against their management and departments due to the shortage of rescue ambulances to cover emergencies, the local Los Angeles Fox News affiliate reports. The whistleblower paramedics are discussing the ongoing shortage of rescue ambulances in the city after an incident that occurred on April 21, when twin 4-year-old brothers from Porter Ranch drowned in the family pool. The boys were found to be in cardiac arrest upon the arrival of LAFD personnel to the scene.

According to the timeline provided by anonymous LAFD paramedics to Fox 11 News, Engine 8 from Station 8 arrived at the scene within four minutes of the 911 call, but Station 8 does not have a rescue ambulance, one of eight LAFD stations does not have an ambulance assigned to it, the paramedics said. The next closest fire station with a rescue ambulance was Station 107, located in the San Fernando Valley. Fire personnel from Station 107 were on the scene within six minutes, but their rescue ambulance was unavailable because paramedics were handling an emergency in a different district. LAFD personnel continued cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) until the rescue ambulance arrived 10 minutes later.

Paramedics stated that all rescue ambulances in that area were busy and unavailable. It took 14 minutes for the first ambulance and 15 minutes for the second ambulance to arrive to one of the most high-level emergency calls: children in cardiac arrest. One of the 4-year-old twins died at the hospital and the other twin is in critical condition, fighting for his life.

On April 25, a few days after the tragic drownings, a mother was killed and her 6-year-old daughter critically injured when a pick-up truck slammed into them as the mother walked her daughter to school in the Los

Angeles Mid-Wilshire neighborhood. Several LAFD personnel arrived at the scene, but the first rescue ambulance did not arrive until 16 minutes later; the second arrived 17 minutes later. LAFD paramedics told Fox 11 News that, tragically, this is the norm.

LAFD paramedics reported to the Fox channel last February about the need for more fire stations, ambulances, medical supplies and more personnel. Freddy Escobar, president of the United Firefighters of LA City (UFLAC), said that the department has not kept up with the population growth of the city. In May of 1989, the department was averaging 500 calls per day; today that average is approximately 2,000 calls per day. There are fewer fire stations and firefighters today than there were 33-plus years ago.

Increasing emergency medical service (EMS) response times are an alarming indicator of deteriorating pre-hospital emergency services. In the most urgent of cases, such as cardiac arrest, myocardial infarction, strokes and major trauma, an average response time of less than 7 minutes is a critical factor in patient outcomes, with deleterious consequences when exceeded.

Yet response times have increased dramatically in major cities across the US. According to a recent *Boston Globe* report, the city of Boston has seen the slowest response times since 2014, with certain neighborhoods such as Hyde Park reaching 11 minutes, while West Roxbury averaged 9.5 minutes. According to New York City's most recent management report, the average response time was 9 minutes 30 seconds in 2022 compared to 8 minutes 28 seconds in 2019.

A major factor in the crisis facing emergency medical services (EMS) is a historically high turnover rate, which reached 20 to 36 percent for EMTs and paramedics, an increase of 6 percent in 2022, according

to a report from the American Ambulance Association (AAA). Such a high turnover rate represents a critical loss in experience and knowledge and is also manifested in chronic understaffing.

With the collusion of the unions, the response of all municipalities and employers to this disastrous situation is to further intensify the hours and workload of the remaining EMS workers in a vicious cycle, making conditions intolerable and putting workers and the public in increasing danger.

The UFLAC, an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, has done nothing to oppose cuts to LAFD resources other than to maintain a close relationship with LA City Council members, such as newly elected councilwoman Traci Park, a Republican turned Democrat. There is no opposition being mounted by the UFLAC executive board to cuts in emergency services and the shortage of rescue ambulances.

Newly-elected Mayor Karen Bass, a Democrat, has pledged a full commitment to address LAFD response times, according to the Fox 11 report. But for the last 30-plus years the mayorship has been controlled by California Democratic Party politicians, with the exception of Republican Mayor Richard Riordan, who held office from 1993 to 2001.

One has only to look at the homeless crisis in the City of Los Angeles to understand the attack on the living standards being carried out in the state by politicians of both big-business parties. Mayor Bass takes in a salary of \$300,526 and her 12 deputy mayors each collect six figure salaries. While there are 178 billionaires residing in California, the claim is made that there is not enough money to fund basic services and social programs.

The unions representing Los Angeles teachers and school workers have worked to push through sellout contracts with unacceptable staffing ratios and wages. But teachers, health care and other workers are fighting back. The working class must break free of the stranglehold of the union apparatus and form their own independent organizations to take forward a fight against cuts to emergency response and other vital services relied upon by the population.



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