

FIRE CHIEF'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 2020

This entire year, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors is commemorating and celebrating the 100th year of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment which grants women with the right to vote.

Along with other County partners, our Department has proudly participated and joined in the centennial celebration by recognizing this important milestone. This 100th anniversary also acknowledges the work and effort that must continue to be done, so all voices are heard and represented in our workforce and communities.



First District Supervisor Hilda Solis and Fourth District Supervisor Janice Hahn join the Fire Department at the 2018 ARISE Summit.

Our Department's own workforce is made up of nearly 4,900 employees. Of those, women overall represent nearly 14% of our team members which includes personnel in the fire and lifeguard series, Dispatch, Health Haz Mat, Forestry, Prevention, Information Management, and other management and administrative positions.

This percentage shows us there is more to be done as we work toward our Department and labor's goal of cultivating a workforce that represents the communities we serve. Diversity is important and necessary to the success of any organization, especially ours.

When there is a broad representation of gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, and sexual orientation, it fosters a safe, inclusive place where there is a wide range of perspectives, ideas, and thoughts that are equally respected and welcome. We have always supported that initiative and strive for that every single day.



As you know, we continually promote inclusion during our recruitment efforts and work toward minimizing disparities within the fire service. This is primarily why we developed the Community, Outreach, Recruitment, Diversity, and Inclusion (CORDI) Section and partnered with the Los Angeles County Women and Girls' Initiative to collectively increase diversity by identifying and implementing solutions.

These past few years, the fire service as an industry witnessed a paradigm shift as it has re-focused its energy and efforts toward creating systemic change, especially in supporting women firefighters and lifeguards as they enter this profession and move up the career ladder.

Our efforts to bridge any gaps and pave a new road toward greater understanding were reinvigorated with the 2018 ARISE Summits which established a safe, interactive forum for women first responders throughout the region to express their concerns and ideas for inclusivity with executive leadership.



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Those successful and highly attended events influenced the formation of the Women's Fire Alliance (WFA) which represents women in fire service within the Southern California region. Founded and governed by women firefighters, members proactively address issues while empowering women and advocating for an equitable work environment.

Supporting diversity in the workplace does not end there. There are several Department-led programs and initiatives in place that help us encourage anyone interested in fire service careers.

From the Boots-to-Badges Veterans' Pathway Program and the Women's Fire Prep Academy to the Girls' Fire Camp and Lifeguard Division's Young Women's Academy, the Department is consistently implementing creative solutions to provide information, understanding, opportunities, and financial assistance that prevent challenges from becoming obstacles to anyone who wants to pursue their dreams. We aim to remove the barriers - whether financial, geographic, or otherwise.

Ultimately, it is our responsibility to open the doors and create fair and equitable pathways, so anyone and everyone can achieve what they set out to do.

Our success as a Department depends and relies upon the success of each individual that is part of our extended Fire family. For us to move forward and make progress, no one shall be left behind; no voice left unheard. Let us all strive to uplift each other and allow everyone to shine.

Empowering, encouraging, and supporting one another - that is what our Fire family is all about and that is why we will keep growing and learning, united as one. My Executive Team, along with our labor partners, share in our commitment to continue to work with all team members to ensure we build upon our recruitment successes and work toward creating a more inclusive culture.

Thank you to all those brave and dedicated women who have paved the way over the decades as true trailblazers in our Department. I commend all of you for breaking through the barriers and possessing the unbreakable will and stamina to continue through challenging times.

Your strength and courage are admirable and highly respected. Your sacrifices made a difference. Your decisions were not in vain. Your hard work and commitment have not been overlooked by me, the Executive Team, or your peers. We see you. We hear you. We have much more work to do - for you.

