



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION  
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 525  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-2766  
PHONE: (213) 974-8301 FAX: (213) 626-5427



J. TYLER McCAULEY  
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

March 30, 2001

TO: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley  
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **LIFEGUARD OVERTIME FOLLOW-UP**

Attached is our report on the efforts of the Fire Department to implement the recommendations contained in our February 2000 report on lifeguard overtime. The prior report addressed allegations that the Lifeguard Division of the Fire Department was spending more money on overtime than was necessary and other problems related to overtime.

**Summary of Findings**

In an effort to reduce the amount of overtime worked by Ocean Lifeguard Specialists, the Fire Department hired six additional B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists in April 2000. However, the total number of Ocean Lifeguard Specialists available to cover work shifts during the peak summer months did not change from the prior year. The Department did not have a current B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialist promotional list to hire additional lifeguards. As a result, overtime was not reduced during this period. After that period, the total number of lifeguards increased and the six B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists became available to cover shifts previously worked by A-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists working overtime. During November and December 2000, overtime hours worked by the Ocean Lifeguard Specialists were reduced 60% compared to the same period in 1999.

In addition, the Department revised its guidelines regarding overtime. The new guidelines limited the number of overtime shifts that a lifeguard can work to three shifts per week. However, individual lifeguards can continue to work 60 to 70 hours per week indefinitely and still comply with the Department's overtime restriction. The Department

needs to reevaluate its new lifeguard overtime guidelines to limit the amount of overtime lifeguards can work.

**Acknowledgement**

We thank the Fire Department management and staff who were cooperative during our review and actively participated in the review process. The Department's response, attached, indicates general agreement with the findings and recommendations. If you have any questions regarding this report, please call me, or have your staff contact Pat McMahon at (213) 974-0301.

JTM:PTM

Attachment

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer  
Fire Department  
P. Michael Freeman, Chief  
Randy De Gregori, Chief of Lifeguards  
Kathleen Zelenski, Compliance Officer  
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer  
Public Information Officer  
Audit Committee

## **Fire Department Lifeguard Overtime Follow-up**

### **Background**

In February 2000, we issued a report regarding allegations that the Lifeguard Division of the Fire Department was spending more money on overtime than was necessary and other problems related to overtime. In our review, we noted that the amount of overtime hours worked by Ocean Lifeguard Specialists had increased from prior years and that some lifeguards were working excessive amounts of overtime. The Fire Department concurred with our findings and agreed to implement the three recommendations contained in the report.

### **Scope**

We reviewed the Fire Department's efforts to implement the recommendations contained in our February 2000 report. The Fire Department had indicated that the recommendations would be implemented by April 2000. Our review consisted of interviewing lifeguard personnel and reviewing related departmental records. The following are our findings:

### **Implementation Status**

**Recommendation 1:** The Fire Department evaluate its current policy for assigning overtime.

**Department Response:** In response to our February 2000 review, the Department agreed that current staffing procedures should be modified to ensure that posted positions are staffed in the most cost effective manner possible. The Department agreed to appoint six additional B-item (monthly temporary employee) Ocean Lifeguard Specialist positions through competitive examination, provide them the necessary training, and utilize them to back-fill positions that were previously back-filled by using permanent lifeguards on an overtime basis. The Department noted that using B-items to cover most backfill requirements would reduce overtime costs while providing services with the necessary skill level.

**Current Status:** During April and May 2000, the Department promoted six temporary Ocean Lifeguards (Item 2923E) to monthly temporary Ocean Lifeguard Specialists (Item 2924B) to fill vacancies that were previously covered using permanent Ocean Lifeguard Specialists (Item 2924A) working overtime. From April 2000 to November 2000, the six B-item lifeguards worked a total of 6,800 hours at the normal rate of pay. However, the number of overtime hours worked (Chart 1) and overtime cost (Chart 2) for the Ocean Lifeguard Specialist position did not significantly change from the previous calendar year during this period.

### Ocean Lifeguard Specialist Overtime Hours

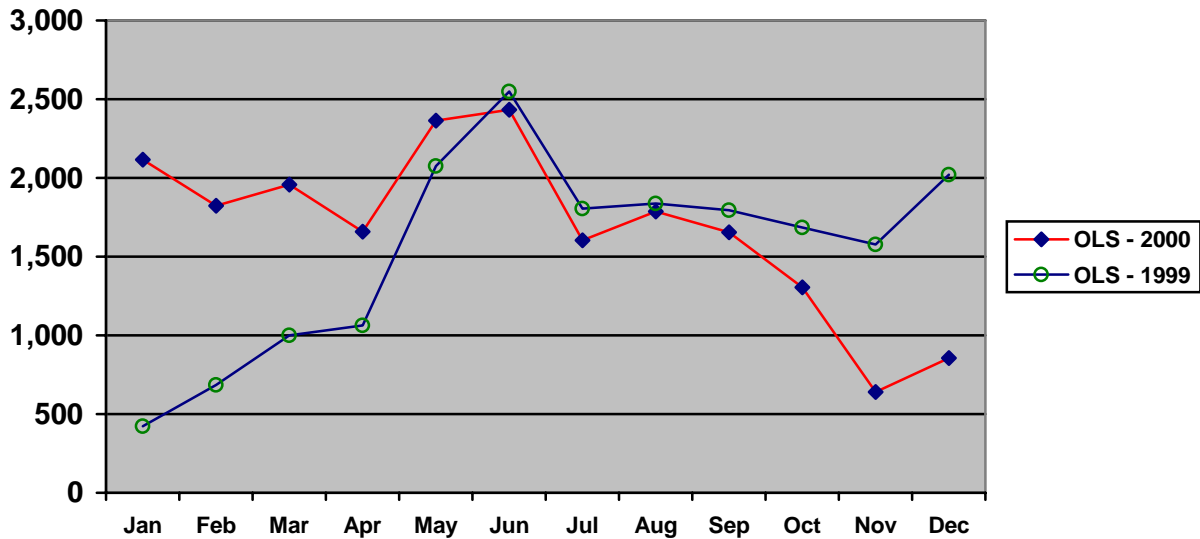


Chart 1

### Ocean Lifeguard Specialist Overtime Dollars

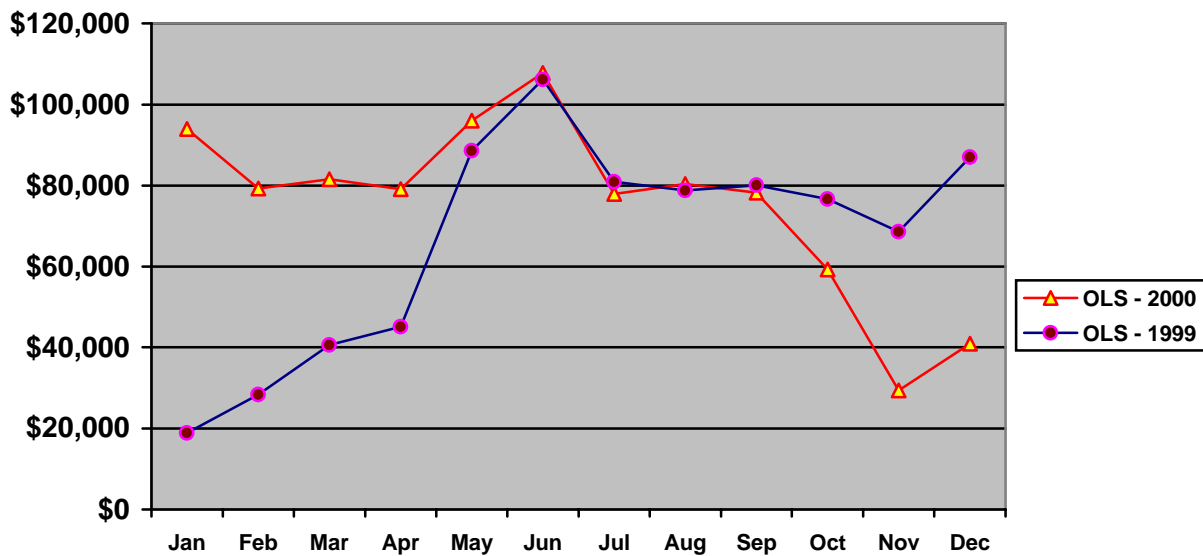


Chart 2

According to the Department, a current B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialist promotional list from which to hire new employees was not available. During Fiscal Year 1999-00, the Department was working on four critical examinations. Among others, the certification lists for Battalion Chief, Fire Captain, Fire Fighter Specialist, and B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialist were all in need of replacement. All of the fire series positions have greater impact to the Department and hold a higher priority than the B-

item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists. A current B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialist promotional list became available in September 2000.

As a result, the Department had approximately the same number of Ocean Lifeguard Specialists working the peak summer months for the last two years. Chart 3 lists the staffing levels for A-item and B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists for the last two years.

Month	Calendar 1999		Calendar 2000	
	2924A	2924B	2924A	2924B
July	77	17	77	16
August	77	17	77	16
September	77	17	77	16
October	76	18	77	16

Chart 3

Beginning November 2000, the number of B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists increased when compared to staffing levels during the same period in 1999 (See Chart 4). The additional B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists were assigned to work shifts previously covered by A-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists working overtime. As a result, overtime hours worked by Ocean Lifeguard Specialists in November and December 2000 were reduced 60% compared to the same period in 1999.

Month	Calendar 1999		Calendar 2000	
	2924A	2924B	2924A	2924B
November	76	6	77	11
December	76	6	77	12

Chart 4

**Recommendation 2:** The Fire Department establish rules on the amount of hours that can be worked within certain time frames.

**Department Response:** The Department agreed to develop and implement rules limiting the amount of overtime shifts lifeguard staff could work and procedures for allocating overtime to staff.

**Current Status:** The Department revised its guidelines regarding overtime. The new guidelines limited the number of overtime shifts that a lifeguard could work to three shifts per week. The overtime limit is not a significant limitation since a lifeguard could continue to work seven days a week, ten hours a day. We noted that one lifeguard worked three consecutive weeks without a day off.

The Department needs to reevaluate its new lifeguard overtime guidelines to limit the amount of overtime that lifeguards can work

**Recommendation**

- 1. The Department reevaluate its new lifeguard overtime guidelines to limit the amount of overtime lifeguards can work.**

**Recommendation 3:** The Fire Department implement monitoring procedures to ensure the rules are complied with.

**Department Response:** The Department agreed to monitor the use of overtime to ensure the Department complies with the issues raised in the February 2000 review.

**Current Status:** We reviewed the timekeeping records at three lifeguard facilities used to monitor the number of overtime shifts worked by lifeguards assigned to the facilities. We noted that each lifeguard had a timekeeping record and that no lifeguard exceeded the “three overtime shifts per week” limit.

**Additional Comments**

From January 2000 through March 2000, Ocean Lifeguard Specialist staff worked an average of 1,250 more overtime hours per month than during the same period in 1999. In addition, as noted in Chart 5, staffing levels for A-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialist positions were relatively the same as in 1999. The staffing level for B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists actually increased.

Month	Calendar 1999		Calendar 2000	
	2924A	2924B	2924A	2924B
January	77	0	76	8
February	75	2	76	4
March	75	2	76	5

Chart 5

The change in the amount of overtime worked by Ocean Lifeguard Specialists was attributed to an increase in Ocean Lifeguard Specialist training and absenteeism of lifeguard staff (vacation, sick, holiday, and long term disability), an increase in demand for search and rescue services, and participation in the Department’s 24-hour work shift pilot project.

**Conclusion**

Although the Department hired additional B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists in April, the total number of Ocean Lifeguard Specialists available to cover scheduled work shifts during the peak summer months did not change from the prior year. As a result, the amount of overtime worked by Ocean Lifeguard Specialists did not decrease. However, beginning in November 2000, the additional B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists were

available and the amount of overtime hours worked was reduced 60% from the overtime hours worked during the same period in 1999.

In addition, the Department's current policy to restrict the amount of overtime worked by lifeguard staff to three shifts per week does not resolve the concerns stated in our previous audit report. Individual lifeguards can continue to work 60 to 70 hours per week indefinitely and still comply with the Department's overtime restriction. The Department needs to reevaluate its lifeguard overtime policy to limit the amount of overtime lifeguards can work.





J. Tyler McCauley, Auditor-Controller

March 28, 2001

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Departments response:

The Department concurs with the Auditor's finding and now has a current certification list in place from which to draw replacement B-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists appointments. Three additional A-item Ocean Lifeguard Specialists positions were approved in the Fiscal Year 2000-2001 budget. The Department believes that with the new positions, and the current certification list, staffing levels can be maintained in order to minimize ocean lifeguard specialist overtime.

The Department will continue to track and evaluate ocean lifeguard specialist overtime and report back to the Auditor-Controller at six-month intervals through December 1, 2002.

**Limiting the Number of Overtime Shifts**

Auditor-Controller Recommendation 1:

The Department reevaluate its new lifeguard overtime guidelines to limit the amount of overtime lifeguards can work.

Department Response:

The Department has evaluated its overtime guidelines and cannot find any evidence of a detrimental effect. However, we will implement a new overtime policy that provides for Ocean Lifeguard Specialists to work no more than six consecutive days within any given scheduled workweek and not to exceed 20 overtime hours within that same workweek. The Department must retain the flexibility to exceed these limits, when necessary, due to emergency operations or unsafe beach conditions.

If you have any questions, please contact Acting Deputy Fire Chief Gary M. Lockhart, Special Operations Bureau, at (323) 881-2370.

PMF:at