



# County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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WILLIAM T FUJIOKA  
Chief Executive Officer

August 27, 2012

To: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: William T Fujioka  
Chief Executive Officer

Board of Supervisors  
GLORIA MOLINA  
First District

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS  
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY  
Third District

DON KNABE  
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH  
Fifth District

## **FILM PERMITS AND INCREASED FILM PERMIT FEES (ITEM NO. 5, AGENDA OF JUNE 25, 2012)**

On July 24, 2012, your Board adopted a motion directing the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to report back on the impact, if any, on the increase in the film permit fees instituted by the Consolidated Fire Protection District of Los Angeles County (District) in August, 2010 to the film industry. Specifically, your Board was interested in knowing what service enhancements/program improvements have been made to the permit approval process as a result of the fee increase and whether said increase has led to a decrease in permit applications.

This report is in response to the aforementioned motion.

### **Background**

On August 24, 2010, your Board adopted an ordinance by the District amending the County Fire Code to implement a new permit requirement and permit fees for multiple location filming and commercial still photography productions, as well as to increase current permit fees related to motion picture, television, commercials, and related productions. The purpose of this ordinance was to establish new and increased fees to be charged by the District to reflect the operating costs incurred for the reviewing, inspections and processing of permits related to motion picture and television industry productions by the District's Public Safety and Film Unit (PSFU). The PSFU currently has a staff of seven and is comprised of: a Senior Typist Clerk, a Student Worker, four Fire Inspectors and a Fire Captain whose salaries are funded through the collection of the permit fees.

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### **Program Enhancements**

Since the adoption of the new and increased fees, the District has been able to implement program enhancements that have resulted in the streamlining of the permit approval process from 24 hours to same-day service for all but the most complex of film permit requests. The most notable of these enhancements has been the creation of the Field Inspection Program (FIP) and providing customers with the ability to pay the applicable fees at multiple locations or online.

The FIP provides a cost-effective alternative to the film industry when maintaining fire safety awareness at low-hazard film productions. Participation in the FIP allows film companies the option to self-manage their safety risk without the need for a PSFU Film Safety Advisor (FSA). Through the FIP, productions with a minimal degree of risk to the public and/or the environment are allowed to have a producer or location manager maintain compliance with applicable fire safety codes during shooting. This compliance is periodically monitored by PSFU fire inspectors as they provide fire safety inspections at given locations. By providing the option of using a self-inspection program on designated productions instead of an FSA - whose rate is \$40.00 per hour for a four hour minimum and increases to time and a half after eight hours and to double time after twelve hours - the District estimates an annual savings to the film industry in the amount \$185,120 by way of a 17.5 percent reduction in FSA assignments.

A second program improvement resulting from the new and increased fees is the establishment of multiple locations for the payment of the film fees. The film industry now has the added convenience of paying the applicable fees at one of the five locations: the District's Financial Management Division located in Commerce, the PSFU headquarters in Sylmar, the Santa Clarita Film Office, the Film LA headquarters in Los Angeles, and the Malibu Film Office. Prior to the fee increase, the Commerce office was the only location where fees could be paid. Furthermore, on June 1, 2011, the PSFU began accepting online credit card payments. To date, over 700 individuals have utilized this option.

In addition to the aforementioned program enhancements, the District is also in the process of developing a database tracking system that will allow for the more efficient processing of permit requests originating from various cities. The system will also allow management to create statistical reports in order to better manage workload issues. The tracking system is expected to become operational during the fall of 2012.

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### **Fire Permit Fees Issued**

According to the District, the number of permits issued has steadily increased since the implementation of the new permit fees in August 2010. In calendar year 2010, there were 4,084 permits issued. In 2011, there were a total of 4,470 permits issued. In 2012, there have been 2,389 permits issued thus far with an estimated total of 4,778 to be issued by year's end. While there may be a variety of factors behind the increasing number of permits issued, it appears that the program enhancements described above may be affecting this emerging trend. Furthermore, the fees have created the desired objectives of providing revenue offset for the District and improved service delivery for the public.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me or your staff may contact Ms. Georgia Mattera, Public Safety, at (213) 893-2374.

WTF:GM:SW  
DC:cc

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors  
County Counsel  
Fire