

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR DON KNABE

September 23, 2014

When it comes to medical emergencies, the people of Los Angeles County rightly expect immediate and capable response to their 9-1-1 calls. This is especially true when a heart attack, stroke, trauma or other critical emergency requires a paramedic response. In violation of this expectation, a snafu last month in the County's regulation of paramedics at least threatened to disrupt paramedic services. Fire departments in all five Supervisorial districts were affected. We must get to the bottom of this incident and make sure such things never occur again.

Here's what appears to have happened. By letter dated August 13, 2014, the County's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency issued notices of imminent suspension effective August 21, 2014 to 694 paramedics working for approximately 28 fire departments, 16 ambulance companies and the Sheriff's airborne paramedic service. A suspended paramedic cannot legally provide paramedic services. Until such time as the suspensions were lifted, the fire departments and ambulance agencies were

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suddenly faced with trying to somehow cover the shifts of the suspended paramedics and still serve the public with substantially fewer paramedics.

The EMS Agency also failed to advise the Board of Supervisors of this problem through the chain of command. Nor did the Board receive warning from the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Commission, which is charged with independently overseeing the Agency and providing reports and recommendations directly to the Director of Health Services and the Board of Supervisors. It appears—and this needs to be confirmed—that the Agency did not inform the EMS Commission of the problem either. I first became aware of it on September 3<sup>rd</sup> when a city Fire Chief complained to me because the EMS Agency had not responded to his calls.

We still do not know exactly why such a substantial number of paramedics working in Los Angeles County were at imminent risk of removal from practice. But what we do know is that the ultimate responsibility to insure stability in the EMS system is vested with the County, through its EMS Agency. A thorough independent investigation is needed to establish the causes, assess the impact and identify the fixes necessary to prevent future situations like this.

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**I, Therefore Move that the Board** instruct the Auditor-Controller, in conjunction with the EMS Commission, to independently investigate the matter of the Emergency Medical Services suspension of paramedic licenses described above and provide a written report to the Board within 30 days that addresses the following questions:

1. What happened?
2. What impact did it have on paramedic operations with respect to the affected fire departments, ambulance providers and the Sheriff's airborne paramedic unit?
3. How can such negative impacts, if any, be prevented in the future?

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