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Traffic Safety: Addressing the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department’s

Liability and Risk Related to Traffic Collisions

In the last three years, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) has been involved in 162 traffic collisions (TCs) that resulted in either a judgement or settlement (J/S) totaling to \$22,057,180 in payouts. The factors attributed to these accidents range from distracted, unsafe, and reckless driving to lack of driving experience in response to calls for service or day-to-day driving. Regardless of the factors and causes, unfortunately, behind these numbers and dollar amounts are residents of Los Angeles County (County), some of whom have suffered injuries and long-term trauma related to these collisions.

The consequences of these traffic collisions reach far beyond the monetary cost of settlements. Traffic collisions that occur during calls for service and emergencies not only delay people from receiving the help they need, but also have detrimental

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consequences on the individuals and the deputies involved. A 2018 study¹ from the University of Iowa College of Public Health found that police cars are nearly twice as likely to be involved in a traffic accident when they're in emergency mode than when they are not.

Countywide, the County Board of Supervisors (Board) has taken steps to address traffic safety and collision reduction efforts through its Vision Zero² program, which the Departments of Public Works and Public Health have led with LASD as a collaborative partner. The same focus also needs to be directed to LASD to reduce traffic collisions and keep residents safe as deputies are responding and driving to service calls.

LASD and the County's Risk Management have taken the initial steps to re-train, educate, and brief the Department's rank and file and management on the importance of reducing unnecessary and generally avoidable traffic collisions. For example, LASD has sent reminder emails and provided in-person trainings and briefings in the last six months. LASD recently shared that they are re-examining the Traffic Collision Point System, which hasn't been updated in the last 10 years, that assigns a certain number of points to an LASD's staff record and when it reaches a certain threshold, specific consequences are attached, e.g.: trainings, paid/unpaid leave, desk-duty assignments, etc. The Department also works with Metrolink Bureau to conduct reviews of traffic collisions to develop a plan to prevent TCs where possible and through these plans have indicated that they are seeing a "significant reduction" in preventable TCs.

¹ [Does crash risk increase when emergency vehicles are driving with lights and sirens? - ScienceDirect](#)

² <https://pw.lacounty.gov/visionzero/>

This still leaves room for additional review of existing policies, protocols, and standards as well as looking at other patrol stations, County Departments, jurisdictions, and best practices to reduce traffic collisions. There should also be a review of any available technologies to help reduce distractions and increase safety as deputies are responding to service calls, as well as a review of the implementation of accountability tools, and frequent evaluations of existing and new policies, procedures, and protocols that address traffic collisions.

By further understanding and identifying trends earlier, LASD can mitigate future harms through all available tools, supports, and redirection for its staff. Many of these collisions can be avoided through proper and effective training, better discipline policies, early warning systems, and reminders about being mindful of keeping residents safe during their routine and emergency service call driving.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Request that the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), in consultation with County Counsel and CEO Risk Management, collaboratively develop an implementation plan by the end of Fiscal Year 2024-2025 on how LASD will reduce the number of traffic collisions and settlements by ensuring the plan includes, at minimum:
 - a. An updated, re-developed Traffic Collision Point System that takes into consideration efficacy in the reduction of traffic collisions and the implementation of an evaluation process on efficacy, complete with, at minimum:
 - i. metrics of success;

- ii. review of existing point systems, e.g.: CA DMV point system;
and
 - iii. ensuring point systems are based on harm caused to person(s),
versus property, in conjunction with non-compliance of
policy(ies) and law(s).
 - b. A comprehensive review of existing trainings, recommendations, and
existing policies related to traffic collisions to assess the need for any
updates or creation of new trainings, recommendations, policies, or
new technologies, including new and extended driving courses and
additional mentorship for those who had prior problematic driving
history or a general lack of an extensive driving history.
 - c. A consistent and recurring briefing schedule with LASD staff on the
dangers of traffic collisions and putting residents at risk, and the
differences between due regard and reckless driving;
 - d. An early warning system that will identify problematic driving behavior
to ensure prompt warnings, trainings, and guidance are provided; and
 - e. Review of resources within the Risk Management to ensure there is
appropriate overview, support, and accountability to ensure corrective
action plans and other accountability, transparency, and training tools
are adequate and effective.
2. Request the LA County Sheriff's Department, in collaboration with County
Counsel and CEO Risk Management, to report back in 90 days, in writing,
with a plan and specific timeline on how the elements found in Directive 1, will

be achieved prior to the end of Fiscal Year 2024-2025, and provide quarterly updates, in writing to the Board, until completion of the plan or until further notice.

WE, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

3. Request the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), in consultation with County Counsel and CEO Risk Management, to provide the Board with a confidential written report in 90 days, and every four months thereafter, with data on traffic collisions involving LASD personnel. The report should include, at a minimum, the numbers and types of incidents (non-moving vehicle, call for service, emergency, pedestrian, etc.), date of incident, station/bureau of the driver; reported injuries, status of investigation, points incurred on the driver's record, and if the driver was involved in previous traffic collisions.

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