

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH

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Strengthening Emergency Preparedness by Evaluating the Role of Disaster Management Areas

In 1997, a Joint Powers Agreement (“JPA”) between the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the 88 cities divided the county into eight Disaster Management Areas (“DMAs”). The JPA further detailed that each DMA would have a Coordinator (“DMAC”). The role of each DMAC would be to serve as an intermediary between the cities they represent and the County, in alignment with the California State Standardized Emergency Management System (“SEMS”). The DMAC role was intended to act as a coordinator throughout all phases of the emergency management cycle, including mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Furthermore, DMACs would also maintain a seat within the County’s Emergency Operational Center.

However, the COVID epidemic and January 2025 Fires revealed a very wide range of effectiveness among the different DMACs. We need strong, consistent levels of responsibility from all eight DMACs in order to effectively deploy this system during an emergency. Additionally, there needs to be a clear understanding of the roles each DMAC plays in preparedness, response, and recovery including how they work with first

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responders and our LA County Office of Emergency Management to accomplish shared goals and objectives. Furthermore, as the complexity and size of Los Angeles has expanded, we need to ensure that the 1997 JPA that established these DMA's is meeting the increased needs of our impacted cities and residents.

In the County's After-Action Report of Alert Notification Systems and Evacuation Policies for the Eaton and Palisades Fires, the McCrystal Group recommended that "OEM must develop a strategic hiring approach focused on filling essential roles, including a dedicated preparedness team and regional coordinators who are OEM employees to replace the disaster management area coordinators and support collaboration with all 88 cities throughout the Los Angeles County region." As we move to effectively utilize limited resources and look to expand the role of the Office of Emergency Management, we must evaluate the County's role in existing DMAs.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in consultation with key stakeholders, to retain a consultant, under the CEO's delegated authority, with demonstrated expertise in emergency management to conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of the Disaster Management Area (DMA) system, and to report back to the Board within 45 days on the scope of work, consultant selection, identification of key stakeholder participants and initial progress.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the CEO to report back 180 days thereafter, with the consultant's comprehensive review and recommendations, which shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Assessment of Functions and Roles of DMAs and Disaster Management Area Coordinators:

Analyze the current functions, day-to-day roles, responsibilities, and continuity capabilities of the eight Disaster Management Areas (DMAs) in supporting Los Angeles County's emergency preparedness, response, and recovery operations.

2. Governance and Oversight Structure:

Evaluate the existing governance and oversight framework of the DMAs, including Los Angeles County's role and participation in each DMA, and the effectiveness of the 1998 Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) on Inter-Agency cooperation in major disasters.

3. Operational Performance:

Assess the performance of Area A, B, C, D, and H during the January 2025 wildfires, as well as the engagement and coordination of all DMAs with the County during other recent disasters.

4. Recommendations for System Strengthening:

Develop recommendations to strengthen the emergency management system for the Los Angeles County Operational Area, including:

- Enhancing DMA integration with County emergency response operations;
- Reviewing and, as appropriate, updating County and DMA cost-sharing agreements;
- Reviewing and, as appropriate, updating County and DMA participation in preparedness grant programs;
- Evaluating DMA staffing levels and the capacity of Disaster Management Area Coordinators (DMACs) to support Emergency Operations Center activations;

- Assessing preparedness activities across all DMAs; and
- Identifying opportunities to realign responsibilities and funding to improve countywide outreach, training, communications, and operational support during emergencies.

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