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March 8, 2010

Honorable Greig Smith  
Los Angeles City Council  
200 N. Spring Street, Room 405  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Councilman Smith:

The Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council (PRNC) is writing you because of our grave concern about ambulance service in Porter Ranch and the whole Northwest San Fernando Valley. The report from the City Administrative Officer dated February 25, 2010 by the Fire and Police Working Group chaired by you, made several recommendations that could save the General Fund \$53 million over the next two fiscal years. After we read the whole proposal, members of the PRNC Public Safety Committee met over the weekend to better understand the potential impact to our community.

We agree that all of the cuts to the city budget are painful, and that there just isn't enough money to avoid a reduction in many vital community services. While all city departments are important, fire service in the Northwest Valley is absolutely critical. The current situation is already bad, and the proposed elimination of 2 Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances in our area will immediately cause a domino effect for the whole valley. The men and women on those ambulances not only transport patients, but they are skilled firefighters that are vital to fire prevention and suppression in our high fire hazard community. The City and the Fire Department really need to consider what is in the best interest of the Citizens of Los Angeles.

Currently there are BLS ambulances at Fire Stations 8, 18 and 28 in this remote corner of the valley. There are no Advanced Life Support (ALS/Paramedic) ambulances in Porter Ranch. Unfortunately, on most days *right now* the Firefighter/EMTs for rescue 828 are actually at Fire Station 88 in Sherman Oaks. They are really bulldozer specialists and their equipment is at Fire Station 88. The firefighters are in Sherman Oaks during the day and commute across the valley twice a day during rush hour between Sherman Oaks and Porter Ranch. They spend the nighttime hours in Porter Ranch. If the bulldozers are needed at night they go back to Sherman Oaks and Rescue 828 is pulled out of service, while they are gone.

For many reasons lately, Rescue 808 has also been out of service, leaving Porter Ranch with no ambulance at all. It appears that fire stations previously exempt from a Modified Coverage Plan because they only had a single engine or light force, will be "brownd out" as early as this week. This includes Fire Stations 8 and 28 and their BLS ambulances.

Permanent elimination of Rescues 808 and 818 will put our citizens' lives even more at risk. With the ambulances removed from Porter Ranch, the LAFD will be highly challenged to meet its stated goal of responding to calls requiring that resources be on scene within 5 minutes 90% of the time at a fire and within 8 minutes 90% of the time for a medical emergency.

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Page 2

Every area of the city has unique needs. Our area has many neighborhoods with street names that are only found in Porter Ranch. Most of the residential streets in Porter Ranch are winding lanes. Many are in gated communities. Canyons separate areas that look millimeters apart on the map. Access to Porter Ranch from the south is via a few bridges across the Ronald Reagan Freeway. Eliminating fire and ambulance services in Porter Ranch will mean greatly delayed response times from stations farther away with firefighters delayed further due to our unique topography and unfamiliar streets.

There are no hospitals in Porter Ranch. Wait times for beds at the nearest hospitals continue to increase keeping our ambulances out of service longer, and tremendously increasing the response time of the next nearest resource.

We know that Porter Ranch is not immune from the "shared sacrifice" we all must make until the economy turns around. Lives are at stake because of many of the cuts the City must make. We do believe, though, that cutting ambulance staffing in much of the Northwest Valley is the wrong answer.

At the City Council meeting on Thursday, March 4, 2010, Councilmember Hahn asked Fire Chief Peaks about Staff Assistants. Each of the 19 Chief Officers has a Staff Assistant that drives the chief to fires and other events. Staff Assistants also perform administrative tasks for the chiefs. This position/assignment is very rare in fire departments around the United States. In most other fire departments the chiefs drive themselves. In good economic times the Staff Assistant can play an important role for fire chiefs, but during this crisis those 19 positions every shift could staff every BLS ambulance slated for elimination. We believe more civilian and firefighter lives will be saved by staffing ambulances during this crisis.

The firefighters in Porter Ranch tend to be senior members of the department. They are hard working and dedicated to the mission of the Los Angeles Fire Department. Many have worked in administrative roles during their careers. They have some good ideas about how to reduce the department's budget with less impact on their primary mission which is the protection of our homes and property. We hope our city leaders work with them to solve our longer term needs. In the short run the city needs to look at other ways to keep fire stations open and ambulance crews on duty. We all need your influence to find a way to staff our ambulances.

Sincerely,

Mel Mitchell  
President  
Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council

C.c. Becky Leveque, Chris Cooper, Pat Pope, Wendy Moore  
Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council Public Safety Committee

## Porter Ranch Fact Sheet

1. The Fire Departments' "Response Time Goal" is for LAFD Resources to arrive on scene at all emergencies within 5 minutes 90% of the time, and for a Paramedic resource to arrive on scene of Advanced Life Support (ALS) medical emergencies within 8 minutes 90% of the time. Currently, the Department achieves its "Response Time Goal" 86% of the time for structure fires and 89% of the time for ALS incidents. Closure of RA 808 and RA 818 will challenge the Departments' ability to maintain these admirable "Response Time Goals".
2. The next closest Rescue Ambulances to Fire Station 8 are Fire Station 107 at 2.6 miles away, Fire Station 70 at 3.1 miles away, and Fire Station 87 at 5.0 miles away, Fire Station 103 at 5.2 miles away respectively. Closure of Rescue 808 and Rescue 818 will increase the response time of the nearest ambulances by the above stated distances and times.

| Fire Station                  | Distance to Fire Station 8 from each Fire Station | Additional Response Time in Minutes to Fire Station 8 |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Fire Station 107 Northridge   | 2.6 miles   | <b>3.7 minutes</b>                                    |
| Fire Station 70 Northridge    | 3.1 miles   | <b>4.7 minutes</b>                                    |
| Fire Station 87 Granada Hills | 5.0 miles   | <b>7.2 minutes</b>                                    |
| Fire Station 103 Northridge   | 5.2 miles   | <b>7.4 minutes</b>                                    |

Although Engine 8 is a Paramedic resource and would, under normal circumstances, arrive within 5 minutes; the necessity to transport critical patients presenting with stroke or heart attack require ambulance transport as soon as possible. The Fire Engine or Fire Truck is normally unable to provide transport capability.

3. Closure of Rescue 808 will limit the Station Commander's ability to staff the Brush Patrol during an immediate need brush response. The Commander would be provided the choice of responding with the brush patrol and either staffing the Fire Engine or the Brush Patrol, but not both.
4. The Fire Department ascertains that one of the 10 ways to reduce response times is to increase the number of resources at fire stations. Removal of a Rescue Ambulance or other resource decreases the number of resources at a fire station which would in effect increase response time.
5. Closure of RA 808 will leave Porter Ranch with no staffed ambulance for either 12 hours or 24 hours. Firefighters assigned to Fire Station 28 to staff Rescue 828, are routinely reassigned to the Heavy Equipment Unit as Heavy Equipment Operators. Their vital tasks include fire road maintenance, debris basin support, and heavy apparatus/equipment towing. These tasks are critical to City operations. However, utilizing the staff that normally is assigned to the remaining Rescue Ambulance in Porter Ranch leaves the community at risk for increased response time to all types of emergency incidents both fire and medical.



# San Fernando Valley Fire Stations With Reduced Paramedic Resources



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