



Fighting Fires, Saving Lives, and Promoting Safety.

Jeffrey J. Winward
Fire Chief

MEMORANDUM

To: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*

From: Chief Winward, LFD and Superintendent Richardson, LPD

Date: February 14, 2020

Subject: Council Motion Response

10.2 MOTION OF 11/14/19 BY COUNCILOR SAMARAS – REQUEST CITY MANAGER CREATE A TEAM OF FIRST RESPONDERS WHICH INCLUDES FIRE, POLICE, TRINITY AMBULANCE AND LOWELL GENERAL HOSPITAL WHOSE PURPOSE WILL BE TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO ENSURE THAT FIRST RESPONDER VEHICLES WILL BE ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY MOVE DURING PERIODS OF GRID LOCK/CONSTRUCTION IN THE CITY.

The Lowell Fire, Police, Water and Engineering Departments coordinate very closely for all construction work being performed in the City. There is a planned monthly infrastructure meeting, which occurs during construction season that is attended by all the active contractors in City, as well as by representatives of the City Departments. Emergency bridge closures are reported to the LFD and LPD immediately. In addition, the Engineering Department maintains an email distribution list for any street and bridge closures that includes LFD, LPD, Trinity Ambulance, Pridestar EMS, all City Department Heads, the School department, UMass Lowell, Middlesex Community College and the LRTA, which is used to notify all potentially impacted. Note that the unplanned closure of the Pawtucket Street over Pawtucket Canal will not have a significant impact on LFD routes, as that bridge was load restricted and is not typically part of the route fire trucks take to respond to emergencies.

The movement of emergency vehicles is always a consideration during the design and construction of new City infrastructure. Approximately 1/3 of the traffic signals in the City have emergency preemption for LFD vehicles. As the City upgrades and replaces traffic signals, they will be equipped with the Opticom system, which will allow LFD vehicles to move more efficiently around the City. The goal is to install the Opticom system at all traffic signals in the City. All of our fire apparatus have an Opticom Emergency Vehicle Preemption transmitter. When we approach and intersection that has a traffic light with an Opticom system, the light turns green in the direction of travel of the emergency vehicle. This helps us get through intersections a little faster when there is a traffic backup.



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The Lowell Fire Department has a comprehensive plan for emergency responses in the City. We respond to many different types of emergencies. The bigger the emergency, the bigger the response. For medical emergencies, we will send one fire company, for motor vehicle accidents, two companies, and for a structure fire, five companies and a command car. The response for every address in the City is pre-programmed into our Computer Aided Dispatch system at our 911 Center. When an emergency is reported to the 911 Center, the address is entered into the CAD system, and the response comes up on the dispatcher's computer screen. The dispatcher then dispatches the proper companies to the call, and gives a description of the call over our communication system. Because of advances in technology, we have installed iPads in all of our response vehicles. We have an application on our iPads that has a map of the City with an icon that shows the location of the emergency call, the location of the trucks responding to the call, a description of the call, hydrant locations and water main sizes. If there is a road or bridge closure, we can add icons indicating the location of the closure. We also use the Waze Application to look at traffic problems and accident locations on the iPad.

Firefighters and company officers spend much of their time studying the buildings and roads in the City, especially in their respective districts. Most of the time, they respond from their station, and they preplan the best route to take when responding to an emergency in their district, or a nearby district in the City. Apparatus placement is important at a building fire, and each responding apparatus has a pre-planned spot to park their apparatus, and the direction that they approach the building is also preplanned. For example, the ladder truck parks directly in front of the building so that they can have access to the roof or to windows for rescue or ventilation. The first engine company must park near the building, but they must leave the front of the building open for the ladder truck. The second engine parks at the nearest hydrant, and so on.

At cardiac arrest calls, because we have three firefighters on an apparatus, a firefighter will often drive the Lowell General Paramedic truck to the hospital so that the LGH paramedics can work on the patient in the back of the ambulance. Sometimes a firefighter will perform chest compressions in the back of the ambulance on the way to the hospital if needed. We have a great pre-hospital care system in Lowell, and we work very well together with Lowell Police, Trinity Ambulance, and Lowell General Paramedics.

When there is a pre-planned bridge or road closure, the City Engineer or Traffic Engineer contact me to let me know, and we attend planning meetings with contractors, MA DOT personnel, and other public safety partners. When there is an emergency closure, the City Engineer or Traffic Engineer contact the Fire Chief to let him know. When there is a water main break and a road is closed and water is shut off in a neighborhood, a representative from the water department contacts me. I disseminate this information to the firefighters, our public safety partners, and the public. We will alter our plans and send different companies to an address if there is a detour and if it makes sense to send a closer fire company. Communication is key, and we do a very



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good job working together with our partners. If there is a police detail at a roadwork site, the police officer will help to get us through the area when we are responding to an emergency.

If there are road closures due to a pre-planned event, like the Lowell Folk Festival or the Baystate Marathon, we have plans on how to get around the City. For the Folk Festival, when the downtown area is closed to vehicles, we use golf carts to respond to emergencies. We have a golf cart with firefighters that investigate emergency calls in the downtown area, and we only bring in fire apparatus in case of structure fires. We have an ATV that has firefighter/EMTs and a backboard. We transport medical patients on this golf cart to extrication points on the outskirts of the downtown where we transport them to pre-staged ambulances.

Getting around the City can be challenging when there are bridges closed for construction, paving, water main breaks, and other reasons. We work together with our partners in public safety, we have comprehensive plans, and we communicate when there are road closures. Because of the small size of our City, approximately 14.5 square miles, our average response time to an emergency is one of the best in the Commonwealth – 3.5 minutes. Those response times can be a bit longer when there are road closures in the City, but we do the best that we can with the information that we have.

As of January 1, 2020 the Lowell Police Department has an average 2.7 minute response time. Our detail office always instruct officers to facilitate the flow of emergency vehicles through construction zones. LPD will also use roll call and email system to notify officers where the construction jobs are located so officers can navigate and readjust response routes. We can also utilize our GPS system to dispatch our cruisers to locations. This could be used to identify and dispatch the closest patrol unit as opposed to the area assigned unit which could be a greater distance away from the problem/call.

cc: Natasha Vance, PE, Transportation Engineer
John Gleason, Acting City Engineer