

Club Deals! - SEE PAGE 47

City Employees Club of Los Angeles | Vol. 12 • No. 6 | June 2013

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Alive!



LAFD Capt. Craig White in front of the department's new Disaster Preparedness motorcycle unit, during training at an LAPD facility in Mission Hills.

LAFD Trail Blazers

LAFD creates a motorcycle firefighting and medical response team, among the first to be trail-ready in the United States.

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Alive! photo by John Hawkins



City Employees Club of Los Angeles
120 West 2nd Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Father's Day Tributes

See page 10

Our Biggest Ever!



LAFD Trail Blazers

Introduced as a trial during Carmageddon 1 in 2011, LAFD's Disaster Preparedness motorcycle response team is now in training to go full-time. It will be one of the first in the country to be ready for trails.

Story information courtesy LAFD; Photos by John Hawkins, Club CEO; John Burnes, Alive! editor; and Chonlathan Panomsaranarintara, LAFD Reservist

Several cities in America and overseas feature fire departments with motorcycle quick-reach capabilities. But few, if any, have trail capabilities. That's the goal of the LAFD's new Disaster Preparedness motorcycle response team, now undergoing training and implementation.

The team is led by LAFD Capt. Craig White, who is a member of the department's Urban Search and Rescue team at Fire Station 88.

Born of Necessity

Carmageddon 1 in 2011, and then Carmageddon II last year provided the need. The LAFD provided the team.

The traffic events, in which the 405 Freeway was closed in both directions for the better part of a weekend each time, caused widespread heavy traffic conditions through the Sepulveda Pass and outlying neighborhoods. This congestion impacted the response of emergency apparatus into those areas and had the potential to cause delays in providing life-saving assistance to residents and passersby.

To improve response times in these areas, two Motorcycle Response Teams were put into operation. The teams provided enhanced service to the affected area by allowing a two member Motor Team to maneuver through traffic in response to an emergency incident. By strategically placing a two-member team on both the East and West sides of the 405 Freeway, response coverage was enhanced. These teams will also maintain a patrol in their assigned areas providing up to the minute intelligence on access and egress issues as well as continuous monitoring of alternate response routes. The Carmageddon experiment worked well for the team, leading

to the department's decision to support the team full-time. The team is now undergoing extensive training by the LAPD's motorcycle trainers and undergoing equipment upgrades.

Communications

Each of the operators is equipped with a helmet-mounted communication system. The system allows each rider to communicate with LAFD Dispatch, other emergency resources and each other. Each operator will also have a cell phone available to support radio capabilities.

Uniform

The operators will wear matching riding gear designed for protection, comfort and durability, meeting all applicable safety standards. The uniforms are designed to easily identify the members as LAFD field personnel.

Equipment

Each Motor Team will be equipped with a cache of basic life support (BLS) equipment, which will include an automated external defibrillator (AED), oxygen, and additional equipment. This equipment will allow the members to handle most incidents until additional assistance arrives. This equipment will be carried in a light and mobile kit attached to the rear rack of the motorcycles. The motorcycles have also been equipped with saddlebags to allow for stowing additional safety equipment.

Each operator will also have a GPS unit attached to the motorcycle, a radio and compact department maps.

Training

While each operator selected for this team has an extensive motorcycle operator background, each rider was required to attend a motorcycle safety course tailored to emergency responders put on by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation in Irvine.

In addition, each operator has had a GPS awareness course followed by a rider orientation with the KLR 650 riding in the designated operational area of the 405-Freeway incident.

Because of the need to travel on fire roads and the sensitive climate towards conservation, each rider was required to complete a US Forest Service endorsed "Tread Lightly" trail conservation course.

Finally, on April 29, the LAFD motorcycle team began pavement and trail training with the LAPD's off-road detail. That training is depicted on these pages.

Response and Responsibility

When arriving first on-scene, operators will take appropriate action in managing the incident and rendering the appropriate basic care. During all medical incidents, care will be continuous until the transfer of care can be made to an LAFD resource. If a fire incident occurs, the Motor Team will assume the role of Field Observer, providing information critical to the management of the incident.

Apparatus

The motorcycle team uses identical Kawasaki street legal KLR 650 dual-purpose motorcycles loaned to the department by Kawasaki. These KLR 650 motorcycles can maneuver through traffic and have off-road capabilities, which allows them to be used on alternate access routes such as trails and fire roads. The motorcycles have been outfitted with custom graphics, providing clear identification as an LAFD vehicle. They have also been outfitted with saddlebags and GPS systems. These motorcycles will be outfitted with emergency lighting or sirens.

The team is working with Kawasaki to return the current motorcycles and obtain new ones with updated equipment.

Staffing

The motorcycles are staffed with sworn LAFD personnel selected from a cadre of individuals having extensive experience in motor-





Alive! Feature

**LAFD's Disaster Preparedness
Motorcycle Response Team**

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LAFD Trail Blazers



Meet the Team

Here's the initial cadre of members of the LAFD Emergency Preparedness Motorcycle Team.

Capt. I Craig White

Urban Search and Rescue 88

History:

- Received professional motorcycle racing license at 17 and raced for one year as a pro, competing in Supercross, national and international events
- Competed in numerous off road races both nationally and internationally, including three respectable finishes in the Baja 1000
- Owns and operates both street and dual sport motorcycles
- Extensive Formal Motorcycle Training

Other Experience:

- Developed and directed Motorcycle Safety Sweep Rider program for the Hook and Ladder Enduro off-road event supporting more than 600 participants, 2010-13
- Provided chase and safety support for the five-member United States Trophy Team for the International Six Days Motorcycle Enduro in Fortaleza, Brazil, 2004
- Provided chase and safety support for numerous off-road adventure rides with FireForce Racing in Baja California, Mexico, 2000-07
- Provided motorcycle safety and rider orientation to customers purchasing new motorcycles both street and dirt while employed with Suzuki of Glendale 1983-86

Dept. Relevant Training:

- Program Coordinator, LAFD Swift Water Rescue Program
- Instructor, Personal Watercraft Rescue
- Instructor, Inflatable Rescue Boat Operations
- NWCG Operations classes
- NWCG Command and General Staff classes
- S-404 Safety Officer
- I-244 Field Observer
- GPS/Land Navigation

Other Team Members

- Bradley Grossman
Apparatus Operator, FS 48
- Capt. II Mike Reitmayer, FS 74
- Engr. Mike Raden, FS 98
- Capt. I Denise Jones, FS 28
- Capt. I Chris Hart, FS 26
- Engr. Greg Pascollo, FS 80
- Tim Foor
Apparatus Operator, FS 114
- Firefighter Wes Schroeder, FS 88
- Tyrome Baker
Apparatus Operator, FS 88
- Capt. I Ron Klamecki, FS 88
- Capt. I Doug Weber, FS 17

Preparation

The LAFD motorcycle team prepares for a day of training with the LAPD's Valley Traffic off-road unit, which has been in operation for years.



Rubber Meets the Road

Motorcycles can get to emergency events much more quickly than large fire equipment in heavy traffic can. That time savings can be critical in some situations. So the LAFD motorcycle team needs to be solid on pavement. Here, the team undergoes training on pavement at the LAPD's Davis Training Facility in Mission Hills. All training was under the supervision of the LAPD's long-established off-road team.



'Innovation Is... a Core Value'



Alive! Interview
On May 9, Alive! editor John Burnes interviewed Capt. Craig White, program coordinator of the LAFD's Disaster Preparedness Motorcycle Program, 26 years of City service. The interview took place in the conference room of Fire Station 88 in Sherman Oaks; FS 88 is also the home of the LAFD's Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team, of which Capt. White is a member. – Ed.

Alive! Let's start with this:

What is the motorcycle program designed to do?

CAPT. CRAIG WHITE: The motorcycle program is designed to provide an ultimate means of getting responders on scene of any type of incident, whether it be medical or anything where we have to get responders through traffic and get them on scene in a timely man-

ner. That was the basis of the program that was put into place during Carmageddon.

Other things that the motorcycle program can accomplish are putting resources out on high hazard days during brush season to do fire patrols. We're in a disaster-prone area, with earthquakes. When we have infrastructure down, the motorcycles have the ability to traverse the terrain that maybe the fire apparatus can't get through. So it's an alternate means to get resources on scene when we may not be able to get large fire apparatus there.

Was the first reason it was created for pavement or trails?

CRAIG: A little of both. With Carmageddon, we wanted to make sure that we could cover the fire roads, to be able to get from the top of Mulholland down to Sunset or down to the valley side. And some of those access routes are dirt roads, or fire roads. We wanted to make sure we could traverse anything that we encountered.

So you were looking for dirt road capability even in the very beginning.

CRAIG: Correct. We use what are called dual-sport motorcycles. They're made to travel on both dirt and street.

Is there medical equipment on board?

CRAIG: Yes. We looked at what we could face during Carmageddon. And obviously, the most important thing was the medical side. By having a cache of medical items on board, we can get two EMTs on scene and provide basic life support medical care until we could get them transported. The motorcycles run in pairs of two, so each bike has a bag in the back. Split between the two bikes you have oxygen, an automatic external defibrillator, and trauma gear – bandages, wraps, ice packs, that kind of thing. Anything that we would face with an EMT-level ambulance we have the ability to handle until we can get transport capabilities on scene. So, we can handle most anything other than advanced life support. The goal in the future is to incorporate that advanced life support side of it by having an EMT and a paramedic riding together as a team. The ultimate goal is to provide the next level of service and treatment.

And how did the program do during Carmageddon?

CRAIG: It was a success in our eyes. The first time around, everybody either went away or stayed away and we really didn't have very many calls, and we didn't have much traffic. So the event itself and the public information piece was a success in making sure that we didn't have those issues.

But the second time around [Carmageddon II], we had several incidents up in the Mulholland

area, and the motorcycles were able to get on scene and provide the information or patient care they needed prior to the resources getting on scene. It worked out well. We learned a lot; that was the biggest thing. It was a trial program. It hadn't been done before so we tested a lot of different things. We wanted to make sure to go out on to the fire roads and make sure we could traverse the fire roads with no problems. We really put that motorcycle through its test. It really covered everything that we threw at it. It accomplished the missions that we were looking at.

We did some additional things. We wanted to provide information back to the command post, and be basically intelligence out in the field of access routes, any closures, and any high traffic-impacted areas. So, we patrolled through the area and made sure that we had areas covered for communications. We did some other things with them, too, not just that medical aspect. It went well.

I was surprised at the reaction of the public when we were out on the fire roads up off of dirt Mulholland. I was pleased with their reaction.

How did they react?

CRAIG: Out on the trails, when the public saw the graphics on the motorcycles reading "LAFD" and saw that we were firefighters, they thought, wow, what a great concept. We probably made 100 contacts during those weekends out on the trails. And every one of them was positive!

Personnel

Have you moved past the trial phase now?

CRAIG: It was a trial during Carmageddon. It's approved now, and there are some steps that we have to take in trying to get the motorcycles and equipment purchased. We had to assess the training that we were going to do with the LAPD, which is helping out immensely in what

Alive! Feature

Hitting the Trails

Since a unique ability of the LAFD motorcycle unit's capabilities will be off-road, the team hit the dirt April 29 for some hard practicing on the dusty trails of the LAPD's Davis Training Facility in Mission Hills. All training was under the supervision of the LAPD's long-established off-road team.



we're doing. Developing the roster of deployable members is the next step. We have to get a prerequisite course ironed out. [The team members] will take that course and a practical exam, and then get selected on the team.

So, the current members are kind of the trial personnel but you're going to be formalizing the personnel.

CRAIG: Correct. Our current folks are the initial cadre, the ones who are putting the program together. And then applicants will come in and get tested. We're trying to make sure that we get the best candidate for the position because you can't just put anybody on the bike and send them out there. We're trying to come up with a good pathway for them to be successful in the program and provide the service to the citizens.

The majority of the people in the initial cadre have managed some type of an incident from a motorcycle perspective. Some of them are chase riders for motorcycle tours in Mexico. All of them have raced in some type of motor sport, and that's a key component to making sure the program was successful. When you're riding, when you've been in competition, you have a different sense of what's around. You're not focused on, okay, what gear am I in, where's the brake, where's the clutch. All of that has to be second nature. With these folks, that that's all second nature. They're constantly thinking about traffic and what's ahead of them, or what's beside them. That's the kind of rider we're looking for. For this to be successful, obviously, we've got to make sure that we have the safest and strongest riders we can have.

And I wanted to make sure I had trainers on the team. The initial cadre all has something additional to bring to this program, and that was key to making sure the program was successful.

Is the motorcycle program part of the Urban Search and Rescue Team, the USAR team?

CRAIG: It's not a part of USAR. I'm assigned to Urban Search and Rescue 88. That's my day-to-day assignment. This is an extra component. The members who do it are in different spots. It's an ancillary mission for us, not a part of our day-to-day job.

The motorcycle program falls under Disaster Preparedness. I'm the program coordinator. And then I report to the Disaster Preparedness section chief. And then that falls under Special Operations and then ultimately to the Emergency Services Bureau.

So the federal government wouldn't be calling you like they would call you for Urban Search and Rescue?

CRAIG: No. And it's not tied to FEMA. It's not tied to our L.A. City Search and Rescue, although it can be used as a tool for that. We can be deployed for things like wide-area searches for lost or missing hikers, etc.

Origins

How did it get started?

CRAIG: It got started during the planning phase for Carmageddon. We had an incident management team put together for that, and I was the logistics section chief. And during the planning phase, the CHP, LAPD and Caltrans were discussing the traffic issues. They were going to saturate the areas with their motor units because they didn't feel they would be able to get their cars through. It kind of sparked an idea in my head. I've always been a motorcycle enthusiast. It just kind of clicked that, hey, we need to look at our access issues and we need to come up with a better way.

The Incident Commander listened to the plan that we put together and said, 'Let's see what we can do.' We put together a partnership with Kawasaki and got the bikes donated. Within a few weeks we had a program up and running. Everything kind of came together.

Are you available for deployment now?

CRAIG: The initial group is available now. We still have the bikes here. We still have the ability to put the resource in place. We want to make sure we have that training in place before we bring more folks into the mix. Right now we're trying to push it in the special events area, marathons, parades, those kinds of things. Our bicycle medic program has been in place for several years. They're activated quite often in different special events. So this would be a tool to augment those.

How far away are you from deployment of the full team?

CRAIG: I would say probably in the fall or early winter. We have to have a certain amount of time for the folks to get the prerequisite courses. We're putting that together now. We are working through budgetary issues.

Trail Blazers

I think there are other departments in the States and maybe even in the world that have pavement motorcycle programs, but maybe not so many on dirt roads, trails or fire roads. Is that true?

CRAIG: Yes, I've talked to several agencies out there. And for the most part they're focused mainly on the street side. They're using street bikes. But their areas of response don't have the same kind of things that we do. In Southern California and in the City of Los Angeles, I don't think people realize how much open space there is and how many open trails there are. So, by having the ability to take these bikes off road and rescue lost hikers or mountain bikers down, or equestrian issues at Hanson Dam, that kind of thing, to be able to get out on the trail

with that resource and provide the care needed – it becomes a multi-mission platform. We can really cover every part of the City with that piece of equipment. So it's very versatile.

You've been riding bikes your whole life.

CRAIG: Yes.

Did you ever think that this would be another way you could serve the City?

CRAIG: It had always been in the back of my head. We've talked about it for a long time. They put horses into play for high-hazard days with the mounted fire patrol. So, we thought we could have motorcycles doing the same thing. The opportunity came up and the timing was right. Honestly, I didn't think we would ever see it. But we put together a very usable, very needed option for providing service. Our goal is to make it a model, and we hope other agencies look at it and say, 'This is something we should look at.'

The program as a whole just goes to show what our department is able to do and the type of people we have. When we are faced with an issue or a hurdle, the ability of the L.A. Fire Dept. to come up with a plan to meet the needs of whatever it is, is strong. We put to use the diversity of the Fire Dept., not just in culture and gender, but the diversity of the background and knowledge of the people we have on this job. And the administration is proactive and lets the innovations come through. Innovation is one of our core values. I think we excel in that. We see something, and we get over that hurdle. We're going to find a way. That's one of the strong suits of this Fire Dept. – we're going to get it done.

Thanks for your time.

CRAIG: Thank you for the opportunity. ■