

June 12, 2005

Honorable Board of Fire Commissioners Los Angeles Fire Department
200 N. Main St.
Los Angeles, Ca. 90012

It is with immense outrage that I'm writing to you over a Department policy that was recently reinforced (June 6,2005) in an F-225 addressed to All Officers. The subject is the NIOSH investigation into the LINE OF DUTY DEATH of JAMIE FOSTER and the outrageous policy of continuing to place our members on the tailboard of fire apparatus while backing up using a safety strap.

I'm requesting the Honorable Board of Fire Commissioners to take **immediate** action and rescind this ludicrous decision by taking our members off tailboards while apparatus are moving.

How arrogant is this Department to totally ignore and blatantly institute a policy that flies in the face of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) report and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1500 Standard on Occupational Health and Safety of Firefighters.

As a former LAFD Department Safety Officer, current member of the NFPA 1500 Technical Committee, 2nd Vice- President of United Firefighters of Los Angeles and a Fire Captain II in the field, I know I have a stake in this policy. It is inappropriate as the policy implies, to hold company officers strictly accountable for the overall safety of members of their commands when in fact this practice is PROHIBITED by NIOSH and NFPA 1500, the leading Health and Safety document in the fire service.

The Department is asking us to enforce a policy that is inherently dangerous to begin with; How many more serious injuries or deaths do we have to accumulate before we learn our lesson on this issue? I personally know of one (near death) serious injury and the unfortunate fatality of Jamie Foster; I'm sure there are others.

Putting members on the tailboards of moving apparatus and using them as guides for the Engineers while backing up is unsafe. Safety experts prohibit it. **This policy implies that the Department cares more about the Metal than it does about the Flesh. SHAME ON THEM!** Can you imagine that on today's' LAFD fire engines, there are signs on the rear of the apparatus (see photo) which state, "DANGER- DO NOT RIDE ON REAR STEP WHILE VEHICLE IS IN MOTION- DEATH OR SERIOUS INJURY MAY RESULT."

We do a disservice to the memory of Jamie Foster and all of our members continuing this insane and unsafe practice. STOP THIS NOW!

Thank you for your consideration to this important issue

Sincerely,

Steve Norris, Second Vice President

Cc: Fire Chief, William R. Bamattre