

**United States House of Representatives
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis**

**Hearing on June 11, 2021
“Building Climate Resilient Communities”**

Questions for the Record

**The Honorable Eric Garcetti
Mayor of the City of Los Angeles**

The Honorable Kathy Castor

- 1. Your city faces complex climate impacts including yet another alarming season for dry weather, heat, and wildfires. You testified about the many integrated approaches your city is undertaking to increase efficiency as well as resilience to climate impacts. How can the federal government support local efforts to prepare for wildfire season and make rapid changes that will reduce wildfire risks and address smoke hazards that can affect vast areas of your region?**

LADWP utilizes various system hardening strategies to ensure resiliency and mitigate wildfire risks. In high fire-threat areas, LADWP replaces bare conductors with insulated conductors, installs fiberglass crossarms, and installs alternative material and coated poles such as ductile iron, steel, and concrete, where feasible. In addition, LADWP design standards have been updated to increase conductor spacing and increase pole load calculations to sustain higher wind pressure. Sustained vegetation management practices and inspection and maintenance activities are also crucial to mitigating wildfire risk. In addition to infrastructure hardening, L.A. views having a diverse portfolio of electricity resources as a strength when it comes to providing resilience against emergencies such as wildfire. A portfolio of inside-the-city resources such as distributed solar and storage and out-of-basin wind, solar, and batteries coming from different parts of the western United States all contribute to reliability and resilience.

Strong Federal support for local resiliency efforts can be very influential to communities, ranging from support for diverse clean energy resources, to technology funding, multi-agency exercises, local community preparation, and air-quality mitigation/adaptation partnerships.

New technology has provided local and regional fire agencies with cutting-edge, real-time tools such as the WIFIRE fire-storm modeling program, pioneered by the University of California, San Diego. This program leverages drones, satellites, and other emerging technologies to monitor for and identify early brush fires. New funding for these technologies and emerging technologies would allow local fire suppression and fighting efforts to utilize the most modern and effective tools to protect life and property.

Exercises and drills have proven to be essential in both preparation for and the coordination of major suppression, fire-fighting, and evacuation needs. These multi-agency preparedness and communications coordination – both in-person and virtual - have allowed technology to be tested, communication systems to be improved, and agencies to cross-pollinate and gain familiarity with each other for more seamless cooperation at a given command post or in the field. Federal assistance with these exercises could enhance such multi-agency coordination training.

Local agencies and departments also deploy preparedness programs through community seminars, neighborhood asset/risk mapping, and awareness campaigns. In addition, new and innovative efforts like community resilience hubs, defensible land use seminars, and alternate evacuation designations both inform and protect local communities. More funding and resources for these efforts could increase effectiveness and provide community-scale protection.

In addition, due to the year-round regional air quality challenges that Southern California experiences, a lot of effort has been dedicated to monitoring, mitigating, educating, and adapting to potentially unhealthy air. Partnerships with local universities, health organizations, technology/AQ monitor companies, and local, state and Federal (ie NASA, NOAA, EPA) agencies have enabled the region to begin to better predict, protect and minimize the impacts of our air quality challenges – especially when exacerbated by wildfire. Continued and expanded Federal partnerships in these efforts would not only help the entire region, but would also help focus those efforts on the areas of the region that are disproportionately impacted by heat, air quality, and wildfire challenges.

2. Your testimony noted your City’s development of equity metrics to track, measure, and report how its programs are benefiting customers, particularly those most vulnerable. What are the sorts of metrics that you’ve found to be useful in identifying disparities and prioritizing actions to close gaps? How have you engaged stakeholders along the way and made the metrics and performance tracking accessible to everyone?

In March 2016, LADWP established its Equity Metrics Data Initiative¹ (EMDI) to track, measure, and report on how its programs are provided to all customers and residents of Los Angeles. LADWP began collecting data for its EMDI program in August 2016, and reported on 15 different metrics across four broad categories (Water and Power Investment, Customer Incentive Programs/Services, Procurement, and Employment) on a semi-annual basis to LADWP’s Board of Water and Power Commissioners. These EMDI reports can be publicly accessed on LADWP’s website.

¹ https://www.ladwp.com/ladwp/faces/ladwp/aboutus/a-financesandreports/au-fr-corporateperformance/au-fr-corporateperformance-emdi?_afLoop=1226367680822484&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=15k43mzd93_1#%40%3F_afWindowId%3D15k43mzd93_1%26_afLoop%3D1226367680822484%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D15k43mzd93_17

The EMDI's data-driven framework assesses how well LADWP's programs, services, and resources are distributed and used throughout the city, both geographically and demographically.

In October 2020, the LADWP Board approved an additional resolution to work with internal and external stakeholders to review and expand the current metrics. Furthermore, the resolution required that LADWP utilize data analytics and policy review to ensure that the EMDI goals are clear and that program implementation results in improved outcomes for EMDI stakeholders, particularly vulnerable, low-income communities of color.

In January 2021, LADWP held two stakeholder workshops between LADWP, the LA Mayor's Office, and nonprofit and community organizations. These workshops helped LADWP determine how to better improve the EMDI program through constructive recommendations on new metrics (particularly for residential rebates, customer billing, electric vehicles, human resources which are part of Mayor Garcetti's Back-to-Basics agenda and his Green New Deal Sustainability pLAn), data reporting mechanisms, and tracking linkages between EMDI data findings and programmatic and operational outcomes of LADWP.

Going forward, LADWP will continue to engage with more external stakeholders to ensure these workshop outcomes are met and that LADWP continues to address equity across its departmental role to mitigate climate change, ensure power grid and water resource reliability, customer service needs, and employee safety and fairness in Los Angeles.