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OIG RECOMMENDS CITY LEADERSHIP RECONSIDER REQUEST FOR INCREASED STAFF, SALARIES FOR NEW ORLEANS EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

The New Orleans Office of Inspector General (OIG) today (April 9) released a Public Letter recommending that the new City administration reexamine the feasibility of increasing pay at New Orleans Emergency Medical Services (NOEMS) to increase staff and improve retention rates. Expanding staff would allow NOEMS to improve response times for urgent calls and to direct more service fees to the City rather than private companies.

The OIG issued this recommendation in conjunction with an OIG performance audit focused on NOEMS response time for medical emergencies requiring both patient transportation and Advanced Life Support (ALS). The audit, to be released in full on April 16, revealed that NOEMS did not meet industry response-time standards for calls requiring patient transport and ALS. NOEMS leadership cited understaffing, largely due to non-competitive wages, as a major factor leading to insufficient response times. Understaffing not only affected response times but also forced the City to rely on private EMS providers to adequately handle emergency calls.

In conducting the audit, the OIG noted that a Chief Administrative Office (CAO) Memorandum, issued in October 2025 by the previous administration, recommended approval of a NOEMS budget request to increase salary levels and staff size. The Memorandum concluded that the increases would likely result in net profit for the City as NOEMS could respond to more calls, collecting service fees that would otherwise go to private EMS providers.

However, the October 2025 recommendations were not applied to the 2026 NOEMS budget, because the City became aware of a significant budget deficit at the time of the CAO Memorandum.

The purpose of today's Public Letter is to recommend that the new administration reconsider the feasibility of increasing NOEMS salaries and staff size to a level that will improve emergency response times, as well as the net impact those increases will have on the City's revenues from NOEMS service fees.

Inspector General Ed Michel stated:

“The ability of NOEMS to efficiently and effectively respond to high-priority medical emergencies is of utmost importance to the health and safety of New Orleans residents and visitors. At the same time, given the City’s ongoing budget deficit, it is especially important that personnel and operational changes to improve emergency response time reflect both fiscal responsibility and long-term sustainability. Our office recommends the administration reexamine the feasibility of increasing NOEMS staffing and salaries with an eye on the potential impact of NOEMS service fees.”

To view the report, visit nolaoig.gov.

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