

FDNY



LANGUAGE ACCESS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

BILL DE BLASIO

Mayor

DANIEL A. NIGRO

Fire Commissioner

JAMES LEONARD

Chief of Department

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FDNY LANGUAGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

I. Agency Mission and Background

A. Mission:

The Fire Department (FDNY) responds to fires, public safety and medical emergencies, disasters and terrorist acts to protect the lives and property of City residents and visitors. The Department advances fire safety through its fire prevention, investigation and education programs, as well as contributes to the City's homeland security efforts. The Department responds to more than 278,000 fires and non-fire related emergencies and more than 1.3 million medical emergencies each year, and maintains approximately 250 firehouses and ambulances stations.

B. Services provided by FDNY to the general public:

- Fire suppression
- Emergency Medical Service
- Fire Prevention Inspections, Licensing and Certifications
- Fire Safety Education
- Fire Investigation

II. Agency Language Access Goals

The goal of the FDNY Language Access Plan is to enhance communication with the public by offering services in more languages.

Components of this over-arching goal include: fire suppression, emergency medical services, fire safety education, licensing and certification, and customer service centers. The FDNY's commitment to increasing and enhancing language access is widespread throughout the agency. One major milestone will be coordinating this effort among the involved bureaus and units. Finding budget-neutral alternatives is optimal.

III. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Population Assessment

A. Department of Justice Four-Factor Analysis

The Courts have interpreted Title VI provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of national origin to also include discrimination on the basis of English proficiency. Therefore a Presidential Order was enacted to improve access to services for LEP persons. Service providers are required to provide LEP persons with meaningful access to their programs and services, which includes oral and written translation of vital documents.

To assist service providers in determining what steps are necessary to provide meaningful access to the LEP population they serve, the Department of Justice developed a four-factor analysis.

Providers must assess: (1) the LEP demographic to whom services are provided; (2) the frequency of contact with LEP persons; the nature and importance of the services provided; and the resources available to the service provider. Below these four factors are assessed in the context of services provided by the Fire Department.

1. Emergency Medical Service and Fire Suppression:

As an emergency service agency that provides "services to the public that are not programmatic in nature" a Language Access Plan shall be implemented to the degree practicable. The FDNY can only estimate in the broadest sense the number of LEP persons to whom we provide emergency services. One method of determining how many LEP persons we serve might be the following: 23% of the City's population identify themselves as LEP; therefore, we can extrapolate that 23% of our fire and EMS responses are to LEP persons. In addition, general statistics show that some of our services are more frequently provided in the City's minority and economically distressed communities that may have larger LEP populations. We do know that EMS uses the Language Line most frequently for Spanish, Chinese and Russian.

2. Fire Safety Education:

We conduct our fire safety presentations in schools throughout the city and specifically target neighborhoods that have experienced fatal fires. As with our emergency services, we cannot calculate with specificity how many LEP students are at a particular school or attending a public event, unless we specifically devoted resources to either polling the audience or asking for people to volunteer the information. However, before we visit a school, to determine the ethnic and language mix, our fire safety educators: (a) consult a census map, and (b) discuss the student population with school personnel. Based on that, we bring language-appropriate materials. In 2014, Fire Safety Education staff and field personnel conducted 3,233 events in senior center facilities, pre-school, elementary schools, high schools, firehouses, etc. The total audience for their events was 590,298. Of that total, 747 elementary schools and 170,000 children ages 5 to 11 were reached. Applying the 23% analysis of LEP persons in the City means that 135,768 persons to which we made presentations are LEP.

The majority of our fire safety events require some translated materials. Fire safety educators bring English and Spanish materials to all of our events, especially at the larger public events. We inquire about language needs prior to all events, e.g., senior centers mostly require Spanish and Chinese. At fire safety events that we conduct following fatal or serious fires we assess the community needs by speaking to community organizations with whom we are coordinating these events. In schools, we primarily use English. The most frequent languages for which we see a need are Spanish, Russian and Chinese.

3. Fire Prevention Licensing and Certification:

The Bureau of Fire Prevention (BFP) has approximately 400 Fire Protection Inspectors who inspect equipment and component parts of buildings for permitting and licensing. They also witness system tests. In Fiscal 2015, BFP inspectors conducted more than 250,000 inspections. BFP has distinct units responsible for different kinds of inspections. These include, among others, the Explosives

Unit that inspects and issues permits for explosives, fireworks and special effects; the Bulk Fuel Safety Unit inspects motor fuel storage systems at gas stations; the Fire Suppression Unit witnesses tests of sprinkler and standpipe systems; the Fire Alarm Inspection Unit witnesses system tests of new or altered fire alarm systems in commercial buildings; and the Public Safety Unit that inspects high-rises and places of public assembly such as daycare centers, pre-K programs, etc. Attached hereto as Appendix One is a list of our BFP units and their respective inspectional responsibilities. We do not currently have protocols in place to assess the number of LEP persons to whom we offer these services.

4. Headquarters Cashier and Other "Street-Level" Services:

On the ground floor at FDNY Headquarters at 9 MetroTech Center, Brooklyn, FDNY employees serve members of the public who come to this location to submit plans and/or paperwork, take exams for certificates of fitness, or request fire reports. To the extent fees are associated with these services, they are paid at the cashier windows at this location. All of these employees are Fire Prevention personnel, except for the cashiers, who are FDNY Revenue Management employees.

The only document that the Cashier provides the public is a receipt from a standard receipt book. The important data on that receipt is name, date and amount paid. Translation would not appear to be necessary. Several Cashier's Office employees speak Spanish, Filipino, Russian, Mandarin and Ukrainian. More than 90% of the customers the Cashiers interact with are paying for a Certificate of Fitness exam or Qualification. The Fire Code requires that Certificate applicants: **"Have a reasonable understanding of the English language and be able to answer satisfactorily such questions as may be asked of such applicant upon his or her examination."** The exams are all multiple choice written, and are only given in English. Therefore, we have not had an issue with language barriers at the Cashier windows. Further, this unit provides two telephone lines at the center to reach the Language Line. Staff has been trained to use the Language Line. Additionally, the location has signs in the following six languages: Spanish, Italian, Creole, Chinese, Russian and Korean that describe the services provided on the 1st floor.

B. LEP Languages

1. **Fire Safety Education:**

The FDNY provides its fire safety education literature in the “top 6 citywide LEP languages” in addition to English, Urdu, Arabic and Yiddish. To-date, decisions about the languages in which we publish our materials are based on our educators' observations during work in the field, and at presentations in communities throughout the five boroughs. Nonetheless, we do think the current literature -especially English, Spanish and Chinese - meets most of our needs.

2. **EMS:**

Our EMS responders and BFP Inspectors utilize the Language Line, an interpreter service that provides 143 languages and dialects. We reviewed our Language Line usage agency-wide and found the following:

- From January through December of 2014 1,700 calls were made from FDNY to Language Line requesting services in the six major languages.
- The most predominant Languages are: Spanish, Russian, Mandarin, Cantonese, Bengal and Haitian Creole.

(See Language Line Report – Appendix Two (Separate Document))

IV. Future Goals & Timeline

A. To identify, improve, assess and implement LEP initiatives

- Survey Bureau Heads regarding language needs. 2016 T/B/D
- Distribute handouts for one of the more frequent violations regarding certificate of fitness in different languages especially Chinese and Spanish. December 2015

- Distribute handouts regarding permit requirements and certificate of fitness requirements. Such documents will be available online and in handout format in different languages. Two guides have already been completed and more will be developed after translation into different languages.

October 2015

- All Fire Prevention staff that interact with the public on daily basis will receive customer service training in the next year.

December 2016 (T/B/D)

- Inspector personnel will be given blackberries or similar devices where they will have the capability to call Language Line from agency telephones.

September 2015

B. To improve how this agency will provides its language services

- Establish a pilot project to educate FDNY members (FF's, paramedics and EMT's) in Mandarin/Cantonese language to better engage/communicate with the NYC Chinese population.

June 2015

- Participate in plain language training.

T/B/D

- Participate in Customer Service Training (2 trainers being hired).

December 2016

- Survey bilingual agency employees to determine employees who are able to assist in providing our services.

- Ensure language services contracts are secured for over-the-phone interpretation, in-person interpretation and translation services.

T/B/D

- Provide annual language access training to front-line staff interacting with the public.

December 2016

- Create a clear internal process and timeframe for resolving language access complaints received by 311.

T/B/D

- Develop an internal emergency preparedness plan for how FDNY will serve LEP customers during a citywide emergency.

- Include language access in training of newly hired staff.
- Explore the use of sign language in appropriate settings at FDNY.

December 2015

January 2016 (to begin)

C. To improve translation service to the public at large

FDNY's Office of Public Information (OPI) will launch translation services on its primary public website allowing users to read our website in 90 languages including: Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Italian, Yiddish and Zulu. OPI has already overseen the addition of translation services to our main educational website.

V. FDNY personnel involved in implementing the plan

- James Booth, Chief of EMS
- Stephen Raynis, Chief of Training
- Ronald Spadafora, Chief of Fire Prevention
- Douglas White, Deputy Commissioner for Administration
- Frank Gribbon, Deputy Commissioner for Public Information
- Donay Queenan, Assistant Commissioner of Human Resources
- Dorecia Phillip, Deputy Director of Labor Relations
- Steve Ertrachter, Director of Licensing
- Cindee Tripodi-Azer, Director of Fire Prevention Training

VI. Monitoring the Language Access Plan

During implementation, the Language Access Plan will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Language Access Committee. The Language Access Committee will meet on a quarterly basis to ensure each department continues to abide by the Language Access guidelines, and that new policies and procedures are adequately addressed.

The Language Access Committee will look for:

- Effectiveness of existing language assistance to LEP persons.
- Changes in a program's LEP population.
- Changes in the frequency of encounters with LEP language groups
- Changes in the relevance of programs to LEP language groups.
- Correspondence from NYC residents regarding language access i.e., *Have there been compliments? Complaints?*

VII. Record Keeping and Evaluation

The agency Language Access Committee in coordination with Operations and Legal staff will maintain all records and ensure compliance.

APPENDIX ONE

FDNY BUREAU OF FIRE PREVENTION (BFP) OPERATIONS

District Offices

The BFP District Offices conduct annual inspections citywide relating to the manufacture sale, storage and use of flammable/combustible liquids and compressed gases. Its inspections include the review of flammable paint-spraying operations, motor fuel and fuel oil storage systems, large-capacity refrigeration systems and commercial cooking equipment.

Fire Suppression Unit

Sprinkler and Standpipe Inspections:

BFP witnesses the five-year tests of sprinkler and standpipe systems, including the five-year flow tests of residential sprinkler systems and performance testing on alternate agent fire suppression systems. They perform facility inspections of companies requesting FDNY certificates to inspect and service portable fire extinguishers.

Range-hood Inspections:

The range-hood unit performs systems tests on commercial cooking equipment in establishments that have upgraded their systems or made changes to the fire extinguishing system. Range-hoods are usually located in occupancies such as restaurants, hospitals and hotels.

Hazard Control Unit

The Hazard Control Unit is responsible for Bulk Fuel, Lab & Hazardous Cargo.

Blasting/Special Effects Inspections:

The BFP Blasting unit performs inspections of, and issues permits for, fireworks displays and entertainment-industry special effects. It also performs inspections and issues permits for explosives used in the construction industry.

Hazardous Cargo Vehicle Inspections:

BFP inspects all vehicles transporting or using hazardous, combustible, or flammable products, and issues permits for these vehicles for the transportation and delivery of hazardous materials within the City. The Unit also provides authorization and escorts for the transportation of otherwise prohibited cargo within the City, and provides escorts for and special routing of explosives through the City.

Bulk Fuel Safety Inspections:

BFP performs inspections of installations at motor vehicle fuel storage systems at service stations and private fill stations, including compressed natural gas stations. It also issues permits for the storage and use of bulk petroleum products and liquid natural gas, and for methane recovery facilities.

Laboratory/Pipeline Inspections:

The Laboratory unit performs inspections of and issues permits for medical gas systems and chemical labs in hospitals, research centers, schools and private industry. It also issues permits for bulk (tank) chemical storage and inspects interstate and intrastate petroleum pipelines delivering fuel to bulk oil terminals and airports.

Central Station Inspection Unit

This Unit performs annual inspections of all fire alarm central stations—where all the data from the various smoke alarm or sprinklers sensors are compiled. The Unit provides Operations with information regarding "Class 3" fire alarm assignments in commercial buildings and hotels via the Bureau of Fire Communications.

Fire Alarm Inspection Unit

The Fire Alarm Inspection Unit inspects installations of fire alarm, smoke detection and emergency voice communications systems in office buildings, hotels, hospitals, schools, nursing homes, bulk fuel storage facilities, methane recovery facilities and piers.

Public Safety Inspection Unit

High-Rise Inspections:

The High-Rise unit annually inspects and enforces fire prevention and life safety requirements in high-rise office buildings and hotels, and is responsible for enforcing Local Law #5 (covering high-rise office buildings). The Unit schedules and conducts on-site examinations for Fire Safety/Emergency Action Directors.

Places of Public Assembly Inspections:

The Public Assembly unit conducts annual inspections and enforcement of fire prevention life safety requirements in places of public assembly (i.e., occupancies that accommodate 75 or more persons). Places of Public Assembly include movie theaters, cabarets, restaurants and catering establishments.

Public Buildings Inspections:

The Public Buildings unit does inspections regarding fire and life safety conditions in facilities such as city-owned hospitals, nursing homes, public schools, day care centers, day camps, group homes, shelters, and pre-K programs.

Construction, Demolition and Abatement Unit:

This unit conducts inspections every 30 days on construction sites that are going to be greater than 75 feet in height. Further, the unit is responsible for inspecting general fire safety provisions and the standpipe system. Additionally, the unit issues construction site permits for hazardous material storage at any construction site.

Technology Management Unit Plan Examiner

The Plan Examiner reviews the fire protection plan for completeness and accuracy as per the City's Building Code. It is responsible for reviewing blueprints, specifically as they relate to communications, sprinkler, standpipe, HVAC-Range-hood systems and smoke detector systems and elevator recall. It also reviews construction sites to determine conformity to the fire protection plan and reviews LPG variances that would impact firefighting operations.

Public Certification Unit

The Public Certification Unit issues certificate of fitness and qualification by administering a test and which qualifies the person to either supervise a facility; conduct or supervise an operation; supervise the storage, handling and or use of a material; or conduct or supervise emergency planning and preparedness activities.