

September 2, 2022

The Honorable City Council  
c/o Office of the City Clerk  
Room 395, City Hall  
Mail Stop 160

Honorable Members:

Subject: Request Salary Setting for New Classification Series of Utility Line Clearance  
Tree Trimmer

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) requests salary setting relative to the establishment of salaries for the newly established civil service classification series for Utility Line Clearance Tree Trimmer (ULCTT). The class series will be comprised of ULCTT, Class Code 3105; ULCTT Supervisor, Class Code 3106; and ULCTT Superintendent, Class Code 3107. The ULCTT classification will utilize both Trainee and Journey-level personnel.

The classifications of ULCTT and ULCTT Supervisor are not currently represented by any labor organization, but since these classifications are to replace the current classifications of Tree Surgeon Assistant (TSA), Tree Surgeon (TS), and Tree Surgeon Supervisor (TS Supervisor), LADWP expects the class series to be accreted to the Operating, Maintenance and Service Unit and the Supervisory Blue Collar Unit represented by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Local 18.

Likewise, the classification of ULCTT Superintendent is to replace the current classification of Street Tree Superintendent (STS) and therefore, we expect the classification of ULCTT Superintendent to be accreted to the Management Employees Unit represented by the Management Employees Association (MEA).

In anticipation that both IBEW, Local 18, and MEA will file a petition with the Employee Relations Board (ERB) to accrete the classifications, and in further anticipation that the ERB will approve accretion to IBEW, Local 18, and MEA Units, LADWP has discussed the proposed salaries with IBEW, Local 18, and MEA and they have no objections.

### **Background**

Currently, the tree trimming/line clearance work at LADWP is performed by employees in the Tree Surgeon class series (comprised of TSA, TS, TS Supervisor, and STS). The nature of the work involved with tree trimming/line clearance at LADWP differs greatly from that of City of Los Angeles (City) departments, as it entails working on trees near power lines that are set at a high elevation. The type of tree trimming/line clearance that LADWP TSs perform is specialized due to the targeted trees and/or trimming area not being as accessible as street trees serviced by TSs who work for other City departments. The work of tree trimming/line clearance near power lines is especially crucial to reducing the threat and severity of Southern California Wildfires.

Currently, in order for TSAs to promote to the TS job class, TSAs must pass the corresponding Civil Service examination. At LADWP, this has resulted in many TSAs being fully trained in the corresponding duties that prepare them to promote to TS, but lacking the desire or ability to promote to TS.

Additionally, the retirement eligibility metrics associated with the current TS class series will have a great impact upon LADWP operations:

<b>Classification</b>	<b>TSA</b>	<b>TS</b>	<b>TS Supervisor</b>	<b>ST Superintendent</b>
Total Employees	13	36	21	2
Eligible to Retire	3	4	12	1
Eligible Percentage	23%	11%	57%	50%

### **Utility Line Clearance Tree Trimmer Series**

The new class series of ULCTT consists of ULCTT, ULCTT Supervisor, and ULCTT Superintendent, with ULCTT utilizing both Trainee and Journey-level personnel.

Currently, the TSA, TS, TS Supervisor, and STS are open and promotional examinations. Open candidates qualify to work at LADWP if they possess a Qualified Line Clearance Tree Trimmer certificate issued by a private contractor. The quality of training/experience used to qualify for the certificate can vary significantly. Creation of this class series will ensure that the incumbents receive the quality and quantity of training necessary to safely perform work near power lines.

### **Utility Line Clearance Tree Trimmer – Trainee and Journey-Level**

The ULCTT classification will include two (2) pay levels in order utilize both Trainee and Journey-level personnel. Trainees will go through a 24-month training program, which will feed into the Journey-level position.

The training program will focus on developing future ULCTT Journey-persons. Due to the unique nature of the work at LADWP, the training required is also specific. The training program will ensure training quality and better control in meeting LADWP standards by training entry level ULCTTs to work near power lines and at high elevations. Upon successful completion of the 24-month training program, the Journey-level will receive a Qualified Tree Worker certificate and a Qualified Line Clearance Tree Trimmer certificate from LADWP's Vegetation Management Program.

#### **Utility Line Clearance Tree Trimmer Supervisor**

Currently, the TS Supervisor oversees the Journey and Trainee levels.

The ULCTT Supervisor class is crucial in ensuring the safety-sensitive work is performed according to the safety rules, working rules, and LADWP policies, by developing comprehensive training programs, procedures, standards, and guidelines, and through coordination and supervision of the tree trimming/line clearing workers.

#### **Utility Line Clearance Tree Trimmer Superintendent**

Currently, the STS oversees and directs the Vegetation Management Program for the Power Transmission and Distribution Division.

The ULCTT Superintendent class is also crucial, since the ST Supervisors who work for City departments do not possess experience trimming trees near power lines, nor supervising individuals who perform these critical and safety-sensitive duties. The adoption of the new class series is imperative in order to provide specific experience, knowledge, and skills to facilitate LADWP's ability to meet the Power System's current and future critical staffing needs relative to tree trimming/line clearance near power lines, and at high elevations.

#### **Salary Proposal**

LADWP is proposing the following salaries for the IBEW, Local 18, classification of ULCTT (trainee pay level) at the top salary step based on the October 1, 2021, cost-of-living adjustments. The proposed salaries remain the same for all classifications as the previous TS series with the exception of the TS Assistant transition to the ULCTT Trainee level, which is an increase of three percent (3%).

Classification	Current (TS Assistant** and TS***)		Proposed (ULCTT Trainee Level** and ULCTT Journey-level***)		New Salary Range
	Monthly Salary*	Annual Salary*	Monthly Salary*	Annual Salary*	
ULCTT Trainee **	\$6,234.42	\$74,813.04	\$7,506.36	\$90,076.32	*See Note Below
ULCTT ***	\$8,339.82	\$100,077.84	\$8,339.82	\$100,077.84	3858

\* Salaries are based on the top salary step (Step 5) of the Operating, Maintenance and Service Unit Memorandum of Understanding using the October 1, 2021 COLA. The ULCTC (Trainee Pay Level) salary is based on the Peterson Formula and benchmarked to the Journey-level class of TS.

Classification	Current (TS Supervisor)		Proposed (ULCTT Supervisor)		New Salary Range
	Monthly Salary*	Annual Salary*	Monthly Salary*	Annual Salary*	
ULCTT Supervisor "A"	\$10,680.12	\$128,161.44	\$10,680.12	\$128,161.44	4941
ULCTT Supervisor "B"	\$10,147.68	\$121,772.16	\$10,147.68	\$121,772.16	4694
ULCTT Supervisor "C"	\$9,660.48	\$115,925.76	\$9,660.48	\$115,925.76	4469

\* Salaries are based on the top salary step (Step 5) of the Supervisory Blue Collar Unit Memorandum of Understanding using the October 1, 2021 COLA.

In addition, LADWP is proposing a salary adjustment of five percent (5%) to reduce compaction caused by loss of longevity.

Classification	Current (TS Superintendent)		Proposed (ULCTT Superintendent)		New Salary Range
	Monthly Salary*	Annual Salary*	Monthly Salary*	Annual Salary*	
ULCTT Superintendent	\$14,739.54	\$176,874.48	\$15,477.30	\$185,727.60	7160

\* Salaries are based on the top salary step (Step 5) of the Management Employees Unit Memorandum of Understanding using the October 1, 2021 COLA.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the City Council approve the above proposed salaries for the ULCTT series. This request is consistent with the recommendation received by the Executive Employee Relations Committee at its meeting on August 2, 2022.

**Fiscal Impact**

The addition of the new class series is imperative in order to provide specific experience, knowledge, and skills to facilitate LADWP's ability to meet the Power System's current and future critical staffing needs relative to tree trimming/line clearance near power lines, and at high elevations.

There is no fiscal impact to the City's General Fund, as all funds are budgeted under LADWP. LADWP already has budgeted funds to cover the current TS series in the LADWP labor costs for the 2021-2022 fiscal year budget.

There are currently 16 Tree Surgeon Assistants in the class series. The annual fiscal impact is \$244,212.48. There are currently three (3) Street Tree Superintendents with an annual fiscal impact of \$41,906.16 for a total fiscal impact for all the salary changes of \$286,118.64 annually.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Ms. Deitra O. Fernandes, Director of Labor Relations, at (213) 367-1373.

Sincerely,



Martin L. Adams  
General Manager and Chief Engineer

DOF/HY

c: Mr. Matthew W. Szabo, City Administrative Officer  
Mr. Paul A. Girard, Employee Relations Chief  
Ms. Deitra O. Fernandes