



YOUR PUBLIC WORKS EMPLOYEES ARE EVERYDAY HEROES

by Councilman Greig Smith

When we think of everyday heroes, most of us think about firefighters, police officers and paramedics.

These City employees are perhaps nearest and dearest to the hearts of Angelenos because they are our protectors, charged with keeping our communities and families safe.

These are certainly our most visible protectors, inspiring the admiration of school children and their families with their involvement in our neighborhoods, particularly in times of crisis.

Not as visible, but certainly charged with creating and maintaining safe streets

and neighborhoods, are our Public Works employees. You may not know them by name, or recognize their uniforms, but these individuals design our infrastructure, pave and light our streets, and collect our waste. They are the backbone of public health and safety in the City of Los Angeles.

Sadly, our Public Works Bureaus experienced three devastating losses in recent weeks. Rory Shaw was a Senior City Engineer, known by his colleagues and Council members as the “go to” guy in any infrastructure emergency. If your neighborhood was flooded, Rory was on the spot to reduce damage and restore services. It was this dedication to his job, that sadly led to his untimely and tragic death while trying to assess and limit damage caused from the Sun Valley sinkhole resulting from the record rain storms of recent months.

His loss will be profoundly felt, not only by his colleagues in the City, but by many Angelenos who may not have known his name, but who certainly benefited from his expertise over his tenure with the City.

Just days after Mr. Shaw’s demise, two Street Services workers, Supervisor Rene Flores and Maintenance and Construction Helper Ricardo “Rick” Garris were gunned down by a co-worker in a horrible incident at their service yard. While this is a very extreme,



unfortunate incident, truth be known, Public Works employees regularly take safety risks in the course of their jobs. Would you, for example, venture into LA traffic to fix a pothole, or climb into a ditch during a storm to make a sewer repair? Additionally, Public Works employees are responsible for saving taxpayer dollars by discovering and implementing efficiencies in design, construction and maintenance.

These workers are the unsung heroes that provide City services to all neighborhoods and communities. The next time you are “inconvenienced” by a street repair crew, or angered by a barricade adding additional time to your commute, stop for a second to remember that these people work for you and are on the frontline of your protection and wellbeing. Honk in appreciation and wave – you’ll make their day.