

Daley announces cabinet changes

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 By Stacey Baca

CHICAGO (WLS) -- Mayor Richard M. Daley announced two major changes to his cabinet Thursday.

Both are key to the city's fire department and Office of Emergency Management and Communications.

The question Thursday is this: if Chicago experiences a disaster, who is in charge aside from the mayor? Technically, the mayor hired police Superintendent Jody Weis to fill that job. But Thursday's changes indicate that Raymond Orozco will be the mayor's man at a disaster scene. That means he leaves the fire department, and another long-time fire veteran steps in.

"I pledge to the residents of this great city that the excellence they've come to know will continue within the fire department," said John Brooks, newly appointed fire commissioner.

And with that, John Brooks now leads the Chicago Fire Department. He's the second African American to do so in the department's history.

The 28-year veteran moved up the ranks in the midst of racial tension. One 1990 home video that showed firefighters drinking and making racist comments. In recent years, firefighters have made racial slurs on the radios.

On Thursday, the new commissioner addressed the past and his position.

"We have a zero-tolerance policy. We do not take that very light. That's how we stand on that. We keep a vigilant eye on that and do training on that," Brooks said.

With Brooks in, former Fire Commissioner Raymond Orozco is moving up to lead the Office of Emergency Management and Communications.

"Having almost 29 years of service with the Chicago Fire Department, I know what works at emergency scenes. I also know what work we need to do to keep our emergency preparedness at the highest level," Orozco said.

"Anytime there is a major incident, Ray is in charge," Daley said.

In the past, Cortez Trotter, who also happened to be the first African-American fire commissioner, was the city's chief emergency officer - the man in charge at disasters. He left in 2007, and Mayor Daley used that money to bring Police Superintendent Jody Weis onboard, paying him more than \$300,000 a year to do both jobs.

But with recent violence in the Loop and murders up compared to last year, Weis has to face the police and fire committee next week. And on Thursday, the mayor was asked who would be in charge at a disaster scene.

"OEMC is in charge. OEMC has always been in charge of disaster scenes," Daley said.

The mayor says Weis does have expertise in terrorism and other issues. Weis has not responded to an ABC7 request for an interview this week.

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