

NEWS

Source: San Francisco's OES Disaster Chief 'Demoted'

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I-Team Follow Up



By Dan Noyes

May 23 - KGO (KGO) -- San Francisco's disaster chief got a new boss today. After a scathing management audit last week, Annemarie Conroy is now the second in charge of emergency preparedness. The chief criticism against Conroy was her lack of experience in this area.

A high-level source at City Hall told the ABC7 I-Team late today, "Annemarie Conroy just got demoted." One of the biggest complaints about Conroy is that she had no previous experience in handling disasters. That's not the case with the woman Mayor Newsom picked today to oversee the city's emergency preparedness.

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom announced he's appointed a new executive director at the Emergency Communications Department, to oversee the city's disaster preparedness.

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Mayor Gavin Newsom: "We spent about four months looking across the country in a national search to find someone that would meet the qualifications to take the Emergency Communications Department to the next level and I think we found that person."

Laura Phillips is a funding and project manager from Motorola's Government Relations Division. She has more than 25 years of emergency services experience. She oversaw emergency communications and preparedness for the city of Sunnyvale. She's a former president of the Northern California Association of Public Safety Communications Officials.

In her new job at 1011 Turk Street, Phillips will oversee the city's 911 center and the Office of Emergency Services, headed by Annemarie Conroy.

Phillips' appointment was welcomed today by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

Michela Alioto-Pier, San Francisco Supervisor: "I am very happy to say that we are simply essentially codifying what the mayor has done with the appointment of Ms. Laura Phillips whom we are very excited to see, her new appointment."

Michela Alioto-Pier introduced a charter amendment this afternoon that would require the disaster chief to have at least 10 years experience in an emergency services field, such as firefighting, law enforcement, public health or the military. Phillips meets that test. Conroy does not. The OES Director took a personal day off today, so she was unavailable for comment. But last week, she addressed new calls from the Board of Supervisors for her resignation.

Annemarie Conroy, SF Office of Emergency Services: "I think it's predictable, it's the same thing that went on last time, so? Again, our office has done an outstanding job."

But sources tell the I-Team that a civil grand jury report out next week will be highly critical of Conroy's performance, as was last week's management audit. Now the Newsom administration is trying to blunt some of that criticism by placing a person with so much emergency

management experience over Annemarie Conroy.

Laura Phillips has her work cut out for her.

Mayor Newsom: "The job description sets forth that she would oversee what goes on at OES and oversee all the operations at the Emergency Communications Department."

We spoke with Laura Phillips by phone late today. She says she "really thinks things are going to turn around at OES" and that she's looking forward to working with the media. She'll be touring City Hall tomorrow.

We'll see how Conroy gets along with her new boss. We'll have more on the civil grand jury report when it comes out next week.

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