



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

December 10, 2019

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Lewis T. Broschard III, Fire Chief

RE: Fire Chief's Report

- **2019 Fire Season.** With heavy rains arriving on November 26, followed by several days of sustained rain, the District returned to a normal response plan early this month. As we have noted in recent years, our fire seasons continue to evolve and this was a long one, spanning 29 weeks. In that time, we fought 290 vegetation fires across the District, a nearly 15% increase over the previous season. Until the fire siege of October 26-27, only two of those fires burned to more than 10 acres. On October 27, eight major fires broke out across the County with two exceeding 10 acres in the District.
- **Winter Season Hazards.** As we transition from fall to winter, we expect to see an increase in traditional winter weather risks, including vehicle accidents, due to wet weather and both cooking- and heating-related structure fires. With this shift, the District is transitioning to winter season public education messaging which will replace the fire season messaging that was built around our highly successful Residents Guide to Wildfire Preparation and Evacuation.
- **Pine Street High-Rise Training Drills.** Beginning last month and running through mid-December, we are taking advantage of the vacant north wing as well as the elevators and vacant floors of the main administration building in an effort to hone every company's skills in fighting high-rise fires. The sessions include workshops and hands-on training with real world high-rise alarm and fire suppression systems. Although we have multiple high-rise structures in the County, such fires, thankfully, occur very infrequently. These low frequency incidents are also very high risk, and this training is helping to better prepare our crews in the event they are called on to respond to a high-rise fire.
- **NuStar Response and Investigation.** Our Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) continues to lead the joint team that is working on this complex investigation. Onsite work was completed on November 22, and the team is now working offsite to collect and analyze data. Additionally, our Training and Safety Division supported an after action review of the incident conducted by Crockett-Carquinez Fire on November 14. The event was attended by numerous Con Fire members, as well as other agencies and jurisdictions contributing to Crockett-Carquinez Fire's response.
- **October 27 Fire Weather Event.** We continue to analyze this unprecedented series of weather-related events and our responses to the events. While many things went right in that 18-hour period, there is always room for improvement. Facing the reality of ever-evolving fire seasons, we are acting deliberately to build on our successes. To this end, we conducted a formal after action review on December 4 and will publish the findings in a report to be shared with the county's fire jurisdictions and across the region and state.

- **PSPS Review.** With our first season of new Public Safety Power Shutoffs under our belt, we are conducting a comprehensive review of our initial planning for and reactions to these events with an eye toward improvement. To allow us greater flexibility in our responses, one of the things we will be examining is the creation of tiered approaches based on the predicted severity of shutoffs. We will have more to report on this review later this winter.
- **REACH Partnership.** Our second Con Fire helicopter has arrived in state. Con Air 1 is now at Mather Field in Sacramento where it is being prepared for final certification and outfitted for operations. We anticipate Con Air 1 going into service sometime in late January or early February after pilot training has been completed at Mather Field. In conjunction with the arrival of Con Air 1, we will plan a media event to communicate the many positive attributes of this unique partnership.
- **Academy 54 Update.** Academy 54 has just completed week nine, the halfway mark of the 18-week academy. The 23 Recruits are focused and progressing well. This month, they will participate in their first structural live-fire training exercise. Academy 54 is scheduled to graduate on February 13, 2020.
- **Academy 55 Recruitment.** The District is currently interviewing candidates for a relatively small and abbreviated Academy which will be comprised of lateral firefighter-paramedics. These individuals will complete an abridged eight-week academy scheduled to begin in mid-April.
- **US&R Search Dog.** The District is considering adding a canine handler from our existing ranks of FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Task Force 4 personnel. This would provide a fully trained search dog and handler to the District. All expenses for care and training of the search dog would be reimbursed by FEMA. The District would provide the kennel and up to \$500 annually for dog food reimbursement to our employee. In addition to wider support of our commitment to Task Force 4, the benefit to the District would be the immediate additional response capacity of a search dog while the handler is on duty and upon recall when requested. In the past, the District has requested search dogs for local responses in the event of building or structural collapse.

