



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

May 26, 2020

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Lewis T. Broschard III, Fire Chief

RE: Fire Chief's Report

- **Fire Season Planning.** As the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be plateauing for the time being, we have turned our attention to what promises to be another challenging fire season. We declared May 15 the official start of the season in the District. This means we are now dispatching full responses of 4 fire engines to vegetation fires, of which we have already had quite a few for this early in the season.

Beginning May 1, we increased our awareness efforts around weed abatement and defensible space creation, sending weed abatement notices, revamping our website messages, and upping our social media presence to include a new livestreamed Fire Prevention Fridays regular feature. One of the messages we are stressing is that weed abatement work performed by arborists, landscapers, and similar service professionals is in compliance with County Health Orders related to COVID-19. The deadline for weed abatement work across the County is June 1 and we are planning on implementing our inspection program soon thereafter.

- **COVID-19 Crisis Management.** Our employee protection protocols continue to perform well, helping us hold the line on infections while serving to protect our patients. We are hopeful to continue this positive record of accomplishment but are maintaining contingency plans should an eventual increase in infections occur. We continue to monitor the current situation and are prepared to adapt to changes, as may become necessary.

Logistically, we currently have sufficient stocks of most PPE and plans in place to acquire additional supplies, if needed. Gowns are the one item of PPE that is in short supply.

Based on recommendations from County Health, we are exploring options for regular monthly testing of asymptomatic personnel.

As we move through the lifecycle of this outbreak, we are aware that a second infection wave could come later this year. For this reason, we continue to maintain and emphasize our effective protection protocols with all employees.

We have initiated conversations with Red Cross, Contra Costa County OES and CAL Fire regarding fire season evacuations and sheltering issues while we remain

under COVID-19 conditions and precautions. We have identified some solutions to the unique challenges presented and will continue to collaborate with our partners.

- Academy 55 Update. Academy 55 continues to make progress toward graduation in mid-July when we expect to add five experienced Firefighter-Paramedics to the District's ranks.
- Engineer Academies. Teaching our people how to drive and operate fire apparatus safely and competently is a major training and safety objective of our organization. The Training Division developed and implemented a series of Engineer Academies as professional development for recently promoted engineers, and to prepare non-probationary firefighters and firefighter/paramedics to compete for promotion. Each of the all-day academies focused on increasing engine driver/operator knowledge and aptitudes. A total of three academies, one per shift, has been held throughout the month of May with more than 50 firefighters participating.
- Fire Control Worker Program. Training kicked off in early May for the initial crew of 12 employees. Training was completed and our first crew became operational on May 20, well before the height of this year's fire season. It is working out of Fire Station 12 in Martinez, with two experienced fire captain supervisors, and will be available Wednesday through Sunday for weed abatement work and wildfire suppression support.
- REACH Partnership. Preparations for Con Air 1's additional hoist rescue and fire suppression capabilities continue with the intention of operationalizing both ahead of the height of fire season later this summer. Con Air 2 is currently unstaffed due to reduced call volume. It continues to be stationed at Buchanan Field where it can be staffed on short notice when needed. We are meeting with REACH every two weeks to evaluate call volume and necessary helicopter capacity.
- Emergency Call Volume. Overall 911 incoming call volume to our communications center, total emergency responses, and total ambulance transports has started to increase slightly from recently sustained low levels.
- Assistance to Firefighters Grant for PPE. We applied for a \$100,000 grant to support additional PPE for current and potential needs related to pandemic response. We anticipate hearing back from FEMA within the next 30 days on the outcome of the grant application.
- New Wildland Fire Apparatus. Two new Type 6 wildland fire engines will be placed in service at Fire Station 88 (Antioch) and Fire Station 85 (Pittsburg). A new 2000-gallon water tender is in service at Fire Station 5 (Pleasant Hill). Another water tender is in the final stages of preparation and should be delivered within the next 2 months.