



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. Our Operations Chief declared May 15 the official start of the season in the District. This means we are now dispatching full responses to vegetation fires, and 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 increasing 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 plan to implement our inspection program soon thereafter.

We have initiated conversations with managers of public access lands such as EBMUD, EBRP, and Contra Costa Water District encouraging these entities to re-evaluate their current management plans as they relate to public access during Red Flag Fire Weather. We are suggesting stricter policies leading to critical fire weather closures of public lands in the wildland urban interface. Historically, closures of these lands are rare. However, with the severity of our fire seasons increasing, we would like to see proactive approaches to mitigating risks to the public.

- **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 situation and remain prepared to adapt to the changing situation, as may become necessary.

Logistically, we either have sufficient stocks of PPE already existing or plans in place to acquire the PPE required for our immediate and expected needs.

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

As we move through the lifecycle of this outbreak, we are aware that a second infection danger point will come near its end, when complacency might lead to a spike in infections. 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 CalFire regarding fire season and other evacuations and sheltering orders 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. 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, have 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 this first crew became operational on May 20, well before the height of this year's fire season. The crew is working out of Fire Station 12 in Martinez and will be available Wednesday through Sunday for weed abatement work and wildfire suppression support. We now anticipate the planned second crew will be implemented in spring 2021.
- REACH Partnership. Preparations for Con Air 1's additional hoist rescue and fire suppression continue with the intention of operationalizing both ahead of the height of fire season later this summer. Con Air 1 continues to operate, along with Con Air 2, in its air ambulance-only role.