



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

October 13, 2020

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Lewis T. Broschard III, Fire Chief

RE: Fire Chief's Report

- Fire Season Update. This has already been an exceptionally busy fire season with nearly 42% more vegetation and exterior fires occurring within the District, year-over-year, through September. At the end of September last year, we had responded to a total of 913 vegetation and exterior fires. This year, that total is 1,296.

Following on the heels of the lightning caused fires of mid-August, high fire danger weather, including several days of Red Flag Warning, continued to keep us busy planning for and staffing pre-positioned resources. Additionally, we deployed several engine companies, our dozer, and several individual overhead resources to various fires locally and throughout the state. Our support of the statewide mutual aid system has been almost non-stop since mid-August.

The challenge of this year's fire season continues across the region and the entire western United States. As we move into the traditional height of the season, through the remainder of October and into November, we expect fire frequency and danger to remain high.

Recent long-range weather forecast models continue to suggest a late start for any consistent rains with the possibility of this fire season extending into November.

- Fire Prevention Bureau Update. Our Community Risk Reduction Unit executed a public education campaign for the first week of Fire Prevention Month based on the theme, "Serving Up Fire Safety in the Kitchen." The campaign included a variety of information and resources, including videos and games for kids, focused on prevention of cooking fires and related injuries. Fire safety messaging will continue throughout the remainder of the month and will culminate with a pandemic-compliant virtual Fire Prevention Open House.

The Fire Prevention Bureau began work this month with City of Lafayette partners to implement a Firewise community there which will further contribute to wildfire preparation.

- COVID-19 Crisis Management. We continue to closely monitor protection measures for crews and support personnel. These measures and employee monitoring are overseen by our Medical Director and implemented by a dedicated Covid-19 tracking officer who monitors and assists employees related to testing and management of symptoms and any positive test results. Since March 13, the District has monitored 124 employees for a variety of symptoms and/or potential exposures. Of these, a total of eight positive tests resulted. The remaining 116 either had negative results returned or did not require testing.
- REACH Partnership. Con Air 1 and its fuel tender completed the Cal Fire approval process for its new aerial firefighting mission in September. Once pilots receive Cal Fire approval, expected in mid-October, Con Air 1 will be fully approved for deployment to State Responsibility Area fires within our county. The aircraft is available for other fires and, on September 27, was dispatched to a grass fire on Twitchell Island in Sacramento County. There, for the first time, it made some 22 bucket drops on that fire. At the time, Con Air 1 was part of CalOES funded pre-positioned resources for the weekend's Red Flag weather.

Con Air 1 is expected to be available for aerial firefighting through the end of fire season and will undergo scheduled maintenance at the end of November. Hoist training is now tentatively scheduled for late December through February with the expectation it will be certified and ready for this important new rescue mission by spring.

- Ambulance Transport Program. We continue to monitor 911 emergency ambulance transport volume in relation to our deployed unit hours. As mentioned last month, based on this monitoring, we have now returned staffing to pre-Covid-19 levels as call and transport volumes continue to trend closer, though neither is fully back, to pre-pandemic levels.

In late September, Con Fire dispatched a full strike team of five Alliance ambulances to the Glass Fire in Napa County. There, they assisted in evacuations of both St. Helena Hospital and nearby senior nursing facilities and were also standing by to assist in evacuations of Calistoga.

- Diablo Fire Safe Council Grants. The Diablo Fire Safe Council (DFSC) administers a local grant program where residents, in coordination and cooperation with a small group of at least five of their neighbors, can obtain up to \$5,000 for defensible space and exterior hazard control projects. For the 2019/2020 funding period, the DFSC has been able to secure funding for 47 local grants in our District totaling just under \$220,000. This grant program continues to be a successful partnership between the District and the DFSC in helping groups of residents secure funds for important wildfire mitigation projects. Additional information on the grant program is available here: http://www.diablofiresafe.org/pdf/Cost-share_2020_application.pdf