



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

December 8, 2020

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Lewis T. Broschard III, Fire Chief

RE: Fire Chief's Report

- Rescue Typing. Our rescue program achieved another milestone in November by receiving Type 2 certification from the Governor's Office of Emergency Services for both Rescue 10 in Concord and Rescue 82 in Antioch. Previously, our rescues were not typed according to state standards. In order to achieve a Type certification, an agency must demonstrate it possesses the appropriate equipment and apparatus, proper training facilities, and a certain number of trained and certified firefighters available to respond to incidents related to urban search and rescue. This effort has taken years for us to achieve and is a testament to our investment in equipment, capital, and training and the dedication and professionalism of all our members who are part of the rescue program. It is consistent training and the availability of proper equipment and apparatus that enable the District to successfully mitigate complex technical rescue incidents such as the Walnut Creek window washer rescues in mid-October.
- Fire Season Update. The 2020 fire season proved to be a challenging one here in Contra Costa County and across the western U.S. While we fared better than many of our neighbors, we did respond to more than 400 grass and vegetation fires county-wide, managing to hold all but a handful of them to less than 10 acres. This was a considerable feat, given the weather and fuel conditions, and came as a result of significant planning and preparedness.

In recognition of the changing nature of our fire seasons, we are no longer declaring an official end to the season as we have done in past years. As it currently stands across the District, there are considerable dead annual grasses, dry brush, and vegetation that all have very low fuel moisture and thereby represent an ongoing wildfire risk. In spite of lower temperatures and some rain, the danger of wildfires still remains a threat.

However, with the seasonal adjustment in responses, we have been able to demobilize Crew 12 and our Dozer Program for the coming months. Both Crew 12 and our dozers proved invaluable during the height of the 2020 fire season and played important roles in keeping our communities safe. We are examining lessons learned from this season for each of these programs and will be making adjustments to staffing for 2021 to maximize the value of both programs.

- Fire District Consolidation Study. Phase I of this initiative, a financial feasibility study of East Contra Costa Fire Protection District, was completed last month. Based on Phase I study results, we plan to move forward into the planned Phase II of the study which will examine the two potential annexations in great detail. We expect results of Phase II to be available for decision making in mid-2021.
- REACH Partnership. In late October, our Con Air crews were able to take advantage of the presence of Cal Fire aircraft and crews to coordinate operational and airspace issues directly between air crews. This will contribute to better and more cohesive joint firefighting efforts.

Con Air 1 begins hoist training this month. When completed in spring 2021, this important new capability will be available to support our communities and the surrounding region.

- USCG Housing in Concord. Our efforts to obtain better security for this nuisance property that has resulted in firefighter injuries due to multiple homeless-caused structure fires and wildland fires have not borne fruit. Multiple inquiries with the U.S. Coast Guard have been met with “we are doing all we can” and “it's out of our control.” The office of Congressman Mark DeSaulnier has been engaged to support our requests. However, the property is now up for auction, and when a sale goes through and the property is subject to local regulation, we will immediately pursue implementation of adequate security with the new owner. Actual close of escrow could drag into spring or summer of 2021.
- COVID-19 Update. In late November, noting upticks in both exposures and infections, we redoubled our efforts to educate personnel and enforce protection policies. We continue to closely monitor pandemic developments locally, nationwide, and around the world. It is clear there is need for continued vigilance in order to adjust protection and operational measures based on any changes. In the meantime, we have reviewed contingency plans to ensure we are prepared should the current surge in local cases impact our operations.
- 5150 Coordination Effort. Last month, we participated with County Public Health in their Value Stream Mapping project to assess the current situation with and address the frequency of law enforcement requests for EMS assistance with individuals experiencing mental health emergencies. The focus of the initiative is to determine best practices for managing these incidents. Participating agencies included Concord and San Pablo police departments; the Con Fire Alliance; and a number of agencies representing mental health workers who operate the 211 hotline, respond to mental health crises, and/or see patients in their clinics.

The goal was to bring key stakeholders together to collaborate and reinvent the way we respond to mental health crises in our county, i.e., a de-emphasis of law enforcement response when safe and appropriate and a renewed emphasis on connecting those in crisis directly with a mental health specialist as quickly as possible.

- Support Services. The first twenty Con Fire-owned ambulances, which will replace the current AMR-provided vehicles early next year, have been delivered. We will be placing an order for another twenty to be delivered in 2021.

In January, we are expecting delivery of two engines and one ladder truck. The ladder truck will go to Fire Station 70 in San Pablo later in 2021; and the two engines will allow us to rotate older frontline units to reserve status as part of our ongoing fleet management program.

- Arson Arrest. Con Fire investigators, working with the San Pablo Police Department, arrested 30-year-old Jeremy Ong, a San Pablo resident who is a suspect in a series of five fires set in and around San Pablo on November 6, 2020. Ong was charged with Arson of a Structure or Forest Land (PC § 451(c)). The first fire involved a homeless encampment behind Espanillo Court. Soon after arrival on scene, two additional fires were reported. Upon investigation, the third fire was determined to have been set by Ong who was later arrested in nearby John Herbert Davis Park. One shed and one out building were damaged; but all other nearby structures were protected by fire crews. No firefighters or civilians were injured.
- EMS. Call volume remains below historical levels; and we have not yet, as of late November, experienced the typical flu-season uptick in calls.

The EMS Division implemented a series of District-wide flu immunization clinics in November to maximize availability and protection for all employees. This clinic structure may serve as a model for possible COVID-19 vaccine distribution to District personnel.

- Training. The Training Division leveraged the District's Google-based "Tailboard" intranet site last month to move its extensive training management processes to the digital environment. The move promises greater levels of efficiency and effectiveness making modernized tools and processes – including our master training calendar, a new online workflow approval process, a policy and procedure library with improved access and search features, and new daily operational snapshot dashboards – available to all employees on any device.

We are hosting a "Mastering the Unified Command" course for first responder agencies across the region. The course was taught in a newly modified hybrid in-person/remote classroom designed and constructed to safely conduct training in the pandemic environment. It allows sharing of training simultaneously in multiple classrooms and online to accommodate distancing requirements.

A new state-of-the-art forcible entry training prop was installed at Fire Station 84 last month making it possible for crews to conduct this important and recurring training without leaving the very busy Pittsburg/Antioch area.

- Fire Prevention. Colder weather has prompted many businesses across the County to seek approval to use heaters to make outdoor spaces commercially viable. To

help facilitate these approvals with a minimum of confusion, Con Fire's Fire Prevention Bureau coordinated an initiative of Contra Costa County Fire Marshals to develop a common set of standards for temporary tent applications for businesses seeking to expand outdoor operations. The resulting standard provides a unified approach to ensure consistency across all fire agencies in the county. Additionally, we are working with County Health to provide businesses accurate and coordinated information related to compliance with health orders based on the current tier system.

Two District inspectors were promoted to Fire Inspector II in November – Teresa Castle and Jim Phelan. The Fire Prevention Bureau also conducted interviews for the remaining Fire Inspector I and Fire Inspector II vacancies.

- Communications Chief Recruitment. We are continuing the recruitment process to fill this vacancy having interviewed six highly qualified candidates from a field of eighteen. Final interviews were scheduled for the week of November 30 and we hope to make an announcement around the first of the year.