



# Chief's Report

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**To:** Board of Directors  
**From:** Michael S. Schwartz, Fire Chief  
**Date:** December 3, 2019

With the arrival of winter and the Thanksgiving weekend; the western Pacific region entered a winter weather pattern bringing timely snow to the Lake Tahoe Basin. As a result of receiving much needed precipitation, we anticipate that the USFS Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and both CAL FIRE units will lift local burn bans and fire restrictions which essentially signals the end of our local fire season. I anticipate that residential door-yard (debris) burning and campfires should be allowed with [proper permitting](#) after Friday November 29, 2019. Permits are available online and can be obtained by following the links on the [Districts' websites](#). Safety has to be the primary concern when commencing any burning. To find out if it is a permissive burn day in your area, contact your local [Air Pollution Control District](#).

As a result of the Station 53 renovation project, the District has constantly staffed four personnel at the Meeks Bay Fire Station, responding with both a Paramedic engine and ambulance out of one station on the West Shore. This has turned out to be a highly effective model proving both consolidated service delivery and more efficient operations. As Station 53 nears completion, we anticipate returning to staffing both stations; however, this successful staffing experience has caught the attention of our Operations Division.

Our CERT team is celebrating its ten-year anniversary! A great big shout out to our wonderful volunteers who are embedded in our community -- neighbor helping neighbor -- always supporting the District's mission. Engineer Armstrong has been the District's CERT lead and has worked with PCSO Lieutenant Paul Long, coordinators Chris, Steve, Hal, Judy, Bev, and the rest of the team, to make this the best CERT team in the world!

Due to the extended fire season, CAL FIRE has not transitioned into winter staffing patterns and plans to constantly staff NTF Station 55 in Carnelian Bay through December 22, 2019. The District appreciates having Engine 2385 available in the District during the fire season and our busy holiday periods. We will again look forward to their return in the spring of 2020.

You may notice smoke in the air. Regional prescribed fire and forest fuels activity are underway. Information on these forest fuels treatment activities are coordinated by the [Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team](#). Smoke-sensitive individuals are provided advanced notice, and all activities are listed on their daily press releases.

Fall is also grant season. The District was a recipient of a FEMA regional Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG) for a power-driven gurney load system. Chief McNamara was the lead author on this grant. As a Fire District, we constantly strive to bring federal tax dollars back to our local constituents. Successful grant programs are the result of a dedicated team of professionals. I would like to commend all of the personnel who contributed to last year's grant applications. Grant applications are scheduled to open again for 2020 next month, and our team is already in the process of prioritizing operational needs.

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Short Term Home Rentals: Placer County passed an ordinance in support of safety inspections that include a provision for periodic fire safety inspections. As Placer County begins to develop the administrative portions of this program, our Fire and Life Safety Division Chief will be the District's point of contact. We anticipate initiating these inspections in March of 2020.

Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) and Tourism Occupancy Tax (TOT): As you are aware, District staff has expressed concerns over the formation of a new TBID, essentially a point of sale assessment similar to a **sales tax** on all goods and services of a recreational nature. Anticipated to raise the annual revenue from tourism, from \$18 Million dollars to \$21 Million dollars annually. This money primarily pays for tourism advertising, transportation, trails, and impacts to County services. The Fire District impacts have never received TOT funding. As such, the District continues to support tourism's impacts from our general fund, primarily property taxes. This financial burden is expected to reach \$500,000 next year. The District's staff, along with President Baffone and Vice President Ragan, have met with County Staff, County Elected Officials, and the Resort Association's leadership over our concerns and an initiative for impact offset funding. Without an agreement in place, the District should oppose the TBID as adding additional tourism, to what is arguably over-tourism, without providing for fire and life safety impacts, is ill advised.

Marine-Based Pyrotechnical Displays: The District's suspension of these permits until we have adequate resources has spurred community concern and numerous meetings. The District will be hosting a stakeholders' meeting, and Division Chief McNamara provided clarification to Snowfest organizers related to their permit request for a ground-based firework display in March. The District's primary concerns remain ensuring safe passage for our Fire Prevention and Suppression personnel for barge inspections and fire suppression, adherence to the Lake Tahoe Best Practices environment document, and liability indemnification for the District.

The District has begun transitioning into winter operations. Both fleet and facilities are hustling to shift our resources into winter readiness. Training and Safety divisions have also been very busy completing annual training during the now shortened shoulder season. With the arrival of our first winter storms, residential chipping has concluded for the year. However, our Forest Fuels Coordinator Eric Horntvedt has remained busy doing re-inspections, tree marking, and 2020 forest fuels project planning. Finally, on November 22, 2019, we bid farewell to Division Chiefs Conradson and Simons in a well-attended retirement party. We all wish both of them many happy times in their respective retirements. A special thanks to our Administrative Division for bringing this nice event to fruition.

During the past month, the Fire Chief (designee\*) represented the Districts at the following external meetings and events:

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| 11/5 Breakfast Club   | 11/14 Sierra Front WFC, Tahoe One community meeting |
| 11/7 TBID Meeting   | 11/15 County Charter Meeting                        |
| 11/8 Meet with Auditors USFS and CTC Forest Fuels Executive Meeting | 11/19 TBID Meeting w/Board members                  |
| 11/8 Alpine Board Meeting   | 11/21 Lake Tahoe Regional Fire Chiefs Association   |
| 11/12 CHP Facility Dedication                                       | 11/21 Dollar Creek Crossing                         |
| 11/12 Lake Tahoe West Executive Board                               | 11/25 Airport District                              |