



North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts



Date: May 13, 2021
To: Meeks Bay Fire Board of Directors
From: Steve Leighton, Fire Chief
Subject: May Board Report

It is with great pleasure that I open my first official report as Fire Chief by sharing the successes of our personnel. Captain Naman Beatie has met the requirements to work out of class as a Battalion Chief and is now working through the task book as guidance in the progression of working in the role while preparing for a promotional exam. Engineer/Paramedic Dave Telfer has accepted a temporary appointment as Captain, and Firefighter/Paramedic Brent Wible has accepted a temporary appointment as Engineer.

It's only May and the United States Drought Monitor has placed the Sierra Nevada Range in Severe Drought, and the California Department of Water Resources marked 2021 the third-driest water year on record. The CALFIRE Amador/EI Dorado unit began requiring burn permits for dooryard burning on May 1st, and by May 10th they suspended burn permits. They did this citing the drought and the nearly 1,800 fires burning over 13,600 acres that have occurred since January 1, 2021. This is in comparison to the 1,800 acres that had burned this same time last year. All forecasts predict a busy fire season for the upper elevations as we enter this cycle of drought. The first Fire Weather Watch of the season was already declared in Mono County on April 13. As the season progresses we will be sending out Red Flag/Critical Fire Weather Warnings via email, social media, media releases and via emergency notifications through the Nextdoor application. We have recently begun to receive requests to speak at annual HOA meetings regarding fire safety. These meetings are a valuable opportunity for us to meet with residents. Due to the pandemic and the dynamics with the guidance from CDC (Center for Disease Control) we are asking groups to please include a virtual component to the meetings to ensure the opportunity for us to participate. PIO Holland will be handling the requests and they can be submitted on line.

Maintaining equipment and facilities is a priority for the district. Staff kicked off the month by preparing Station 55 to be occupied by CALFIRE. The station is ready to go and it will be occupied by a CALFIRE, type 3 engine beginning May 17th. Staff has also secured a new 3-year agreement with them which will run through 2024. In addition, staff recently completed the testing of all the SCBA units (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus) and will be focusing on pump testing and hose testing next.

The chipper was removed from storage and is back at Station 52 and our two new Defensible Space Inspectors began training this month. Our DSI program is set to be in full swing by June 1st and we are hoping to match of nearly 2,500 inspections conducted last year. Our sign trailers are in the process of being strategically deployed throughout the district in highly visible areas to promote fire restrictions. I would like to thank Anna Capello for allowing us to stage a sign trailer in her parking lot on Highway 89 each year.

We are still waiting for word on our SAFER Grant application. Staff has been working on a CALFIRE CCI (California Climate Investments) Grant to target fuels reduction in Alpine Meadows and are researching a California Air Resource Board Carl Moyer Memorial Grant. This grant is a \$60 million grant to create and replace older engines with cleaner engines. The goal is a transformation to zero emission technology and supports projects that reduce pollution. If we are successful, we see it as an opportunity to potentially purchase vehicles for the district.



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Our operations staff continues to stay busy with training, with our crews recently using Dollar Point pool to conduct shore zone training and the Truckee Tahoe Rescue Team has begun swift water rescue training. During the month of April our operations staff responded to 167 calls for service district-wide, with 17 occurring in Meeks Bay Fire Protection District area. A few weeks ago, our crews responded to a structure fire in the Tahoe Vista area. Engine 52 and Medic 52 arrived on scene to find a two-story, lakefront residence with heavy fire and smoke coming from the rear of the structure. Due to the large amount of fire and the vicinity of other houses, E52 Captain requested a 2nd alarm. The 2nd alarm request dispatched units from neighboring agencies to assist in fire control. The crews were quick to deploy defensive firefighting operations and the fire was contained to the building of origin. Due to significant heat and partial collapse the cause is undetermined at this time.

On the legislative front, staff is closely following the California Fire Chiefs Association (CFCA) and Fire Districts Association of California Joint Legislative Task Force for bills affecting the fire service. I will be attending the Special District Legislative Days Conference next week and will be able to get a more detailed look at bills that could potentially effect district operations. Below is a list of a few bills that have moved out of their first committee and have been sent to the Appropriations Committee:

1. Assembly Bill 418 (Valladares) among other things, would provide for \$30 million in grants to special districts, on a competitive basis, to improve the energy resiliency of critical infrastructures operated by the special district.
2. Assembly Bill 1104 (Grayson) would extend the sunset date on the Emergency Medical Air Transportation Act penalty until December 31, 2022 and require air ambulance rates in fee-for-service and managed care Medi-Cal to be reimbursed at 80% of Medicare rates, effective on January 1, 2023.
3. Senate Bill 277 (Archuleta) would establish a program managed by the State Fire Marshal of seized illegal fireworks and allow for commercially viable and federally approved fireworks or safe and sane fireworks to be repositioned for sale by licensed fireworks companies and collect an additional fee on permits from these licensees.

Two bills passed out of the Assembly Appropriations Committee and now await action on the Assembly Floor and one was passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee and was sent to the Senate Floor.

1. Assembly Bill 536 (Rodriguez) which would require Cal OES to conduct gap analysis studies of the state's Mutual Aid System.
2. Assembly Bill 580 (Rodriguez) would require Cal OES to consult with representatives of the access and functional needs community when reviewing a county's emergency plan.
3. Senate Bill 332 (Dodd) would have provided immunity from damages for burn bosses and private landowners for prescribed burns unless the burn was conducted in a grossly negligent manner. The bill was amended to providing immunity for damages caused by negligent prescribed burns to fire suppression, rescue or emergency services and fire investigators. As amended the opposition of the trial lawyers and insurance industry was removed.



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In closing, as I continue to learn the duties and responsibilities of being the Fire Chief, in the next 60-90 days, I will be conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis with each member of the organization. This will provide all members an opportunity to meet with me personally to communicate my “Leader’s Intent” and to hear what the members expect of me.

Meetings and Assignments:

- North Tahoe, Meeks Bay, and Alpine Meadows Board Meetings
- Eastern Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Chiefs Meeting
- Lake Tahoe Regional Chiefs Association
- Sierra Front Wildfire Cooperators
- Executive and Command staff Meetings
- Fleet Services Update Meetings
- National Weather Service conference calls
- Meeks Bay Stakeholder Restoration Project Meeting
- Tahoe Basin (XTB) Operational Area Coordinator Meetings and Duty Chief
- Labor Management L3729 Meeting
- Bi-State Dispatch Meeting
- El Dorado and Placer County Public Health COVID Update Meeting
- Fire District Association of California Board Member Meeting
- Placer County Breakfast Club Meeting
- Grant Meeting w/Staff
- South Shore Dual Response Zone Meeting
- Special District Legislative Days Conference
- Northern Nevada/California Peer Support Network Conference
- TCPUD General Manager Meeting
- Congressman McClintock USFS Defensible Space Meeting

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



Amador-El Dorado Unit

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RELEASE
DATE: May 8, 2021

CAL FIRE Suspends Burn Permits in Alpine, Amador, El Dorado, Eastern Sacramento and North-Eastern San Joaquin Counties

Camino –The increasing fire danger posed by dead grass, dry brush and live vegetation combined with hotter, drier conditions in the region is prompting CAL FIRE to suspend all burn permits for outdoor residential burning within the State Responsibility Areas of Alpine, Amador, El Dorado, Sacramento and San Joaquin Counties. This suspension takes effect at 12:00 AM on Monday, May 10th, 2021 and bans all residential outdoor burning of landscape debris such as branches and leaves.

Since January 1, 2021, CAL FIRE and firefighters across the State have already responded to over 1,788 wildfires burning over 13,604 acres.

AEU Chief Mike Blankenheim says, "We are experiencing drought conditions and extreme fire weather much earlier than usual for this time of year. Although debris burning is useful to reduce flammable vegetation, the conditions in the Amador-El Dorado Unit have reached the point where debris burning poses an unacceptable risk of starting a wildfire."

Here are some tips to help prepare homes and property:

- Clear all dead and or dying vegetation 100 feet from around all structures.
- Landscape with fire resistant plants and non-flammable ground cover.
- Find alternative ways to dispose of landscape debris like chipping or hauling it to a biomass energy or green waste facility

For additional information on how to create Defensible Space, on how to be prepared for wildfires, as well as tips to prevent wildfires, visit www.ReadyForWildfire.org.

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