



FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

Date: September 14, 2020

To: Board of Directors

From: Michael S. Schwartz, Fire Chief

Local Fire Restrictions remain in effect for all of Tahoe Basin communities.

Following the lead of local government fire agencies and as the result of the extreme fire behavior and recreation area rescues, California State Parks, Special District local campgrounds, and the U.S. Forest Service all added enhanced fire restrictions that include a prohibition of charcoal BBQs and wood-burning campfires. Universally, within the Tahoe Basin, only natural gas (NG) or propane (LPG) outdoor firepits and barbecues and pellet grills/smokers are allowed year-round, except during Red Flag/critical fire weather conditions when NO open flames are allowed. For reports of hazardous campfires, people should call 9-1-1. Fire crews have been responding regularly to reports of unauthorized/hazardous campfires and barbecues. In addition to the USFS's enhanced fire restrictions, effective September 9, 2020 as a result of unprecedented and historic fire conditions throughout the state, the USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region announced the temporary closure of ten additional forests in California including the Tahoe National Forest and Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

The 2020 fire season has already become one of the worst in California history, and the predictive peak of fire season is still several weeks away. As of September 14, 2020, a total of 7,718 fires have burned 3,451,428 acres (1,396,743 ha), more than 3% of the state's roughly 100 million acres of land, making 2020 the largest wildfire season recorded in California history. Wildfires are a natural part of California's fire ecology landscape. The average length of fire season has increased by roughly 75 days, with wildfire frequency and intensity increasing, too.

While the peak of tourism may be behind us, fire season is certainly NOT! Our long period without precipitation and this week's return of wind and warmer temperatures with low humidity has lengthened our local fire season, as indicated on the graph below. The North Sierra Energy Release Component composite index is a reasonable metric for our fire season.



<https://gacc.nifc.gov/oncc/fuelsfiredanger> USFS Predictive Services

Fire Chief's Board Report

September 14, 2020

Page 2

The Energy Release Component (ERC) is a National Fire Danger Rating System index related to how hot a fire could burn. It is directly related to the potential worst case (BTUs) within the flaming front at the head of a fire. The ERC can serve as a good characterization of fire season as it tracks seasonal fire danger trends well. I have enclosed the last three years of ERC graphs to the end of my report for comparison.

August falls right behind July as one of our busiest months for emergency calls. August 2020 set a new record for the highest number of calls for any August with 297 calls, (9 in Alpine Meadows), 50 in El Dorado County of which 44 of those calls were in the Meeks Bay Fire Protection District. Administration, Fire Prevention, and Operations Divisions have all experienced substantial increases in demands for service despite COVID-19 and the Basin's smoke impacts from valley fires. All Divisions and facets of the District have been firing on all cylinders this month as you will see amplified within their reports, a few highlights include:

- Development of both the North Tahoe Fire and the Meeks Bay Fire final budgets.
- Firefighter Paramedic recruitments, testing, and hiring. The fall recruitment academy is set to begin October 19, 2020.
- Prevention (Fire and Life Safety) succession and promotions.
- SNPLMA Round 18 Forest Fuels Management Grant applications.
- Coordination of numerous mutual aid assignments and staffing for California wildfire responses.
- Staff participation with Lake Tahoe West, PTEIR, and Meeks Bay restoration projects.
- Alpine Meadows and Olympic Valley virtual evacuation drill.
- Multiple Mutual Aid assignment supporting the California fire siege.
- All stations and mutual aid partners have maintained staffing levels locally.
- Cheers and Best Wishes to Curtis Mulkey who has retired and worked his last shift on September 15. "A" Shift will not be the same without him.
- Meetings attended by Division Chief Leighton:
 - El Dorado County Cooperators COVID-19 EOC Meetings
 - Meeks Bay Stakeholder Restoration Project Meeting
- Meetings attended by Division Chief McNamara:
 - 9/9 Meeks Bay Stakeholder
 - 9/9 Bi-State Tahoe Command Center Working Group
 - 9/10 Sacramento Regional Fire Prevention Officers Association
 - 9/16 El Dorado Building Industry Advisory Committee
 - 9/17 California Board of Forestry-Fire Safe Regulations Committee
- Many residents reached out asking us to restrict the sale of wood and charcoal during fire season. Wood must be available for internal fireplace use as the evenings cool down, and managing commerce is not within our mission. PIO Holland reached out to the NLTRA, TCDA and NTBA who were eager to assist, and walked the local businesses, handing out the new flyer with the Basin-wide restrictions. They asked the merchants selling wood and charcoal to pull the items back into storage, or post signage. There are a few merchants where this has been ineffective, and we've been asked to submit a joint letter with these associations in asking for the voluntary removal of these items, or to post signage. This has been a challenge basin-wide, and we continue our efforts with unified messaging about the burn ban.
- SNPLMA 16 – Hazardous Fuels Reduction & Wildfire Prevention Projects
 - Fuels Coordinator Horntvedt has been using available geodatabase sets to identify landowners who are at high risk for catastrophic wildfire and will be looking to engage these landowners for implementation of fuel reduction treatments that would begin as early as 2021. He has met onsite with Tamarack Mutual Water Co. representatives to propose implementing a 700-1000' shaded fuel break along Hwy 89, uphill of the "Ring Roads". The current approach is to engage CTC, Tamarack, Rubicon, and a few other adjoining property owners in order to implement an all-ownership fuel break that would tie in to previously treated USFS lands.

Fire Chief's Board Report

September 14, 2020

Page 3

Current mutual aid assignments:

BC Whisler – DIV-T, Creek Fire

Capt. Stowell – FEMP, North Complex – Fire West Zone

FFPM LeCorps – FEMP, North Complex – Fire West Zone

B54 with Strike Team XTB 4228C, North Complex, 28-days, Demob Monday, Sept 1

B53 with Strike Team XTB 4233C, North Complex Departed Sept 13, 1700

Important Memorandums and Attachments:

- Memorandums:
 - #20-68 New Appointment Ramon Manzano – Inspector
 - #20-69 Conditional Offer Sarah Gley - Seasonal Defensible Space Inspector





North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts



MEMORANDUM

#20 – 68

To: All Personnel

From: Michael Schwartz, Fire Chief

Re: New Appointment – Ramon Manzano

Date: September 2, 2020

All,

Following the departure of Inspector Katie Walker, Defensible Space Inspector Ramon Manzano has accepted a new appointment as full-time Inspector effective Monday, August 31, 2020. Ramon has worked as a Defensible Space Inspector since June 8, 2020. Ramon has done an outstanding job this season as one of our Defensible Space Inspectors, and we are sure he will deliver that same level of customer service and professionalism in his new role.

Please join me in congratulating Ramon on this new opportunity.



North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts



MEMORANDUM

#20 – 69

To: All Personnel

From: Michael Schwartz, Fire Chief

Re: Conditional Offer of Employment – Sarah Gley

Date: September 2, 2020

All,

Following the promotion of Ramon Manzano and subsequent to the District's May 2020 part-time/seasonal Defensible Space Inspector recruitment and testing process, the Fire Chief has made a conditional offer of employment. Sarah Gley has accepted a conditional offer of employment as a part-time/seasonal Defensible Space Inspector. Sarah will have a tentative starting date of September 8, 2020.

Please join me in congratulating Sarah on an outstanding effort and welcoming her to the North Tahoe Fire Protection District.