



## ***North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts***



Date: April 15, 2021  
To: Meeks Bay Fire Board of Directors  
From: Steve Leighton, Fire Chief  
Subject: Board Report April 2021

With enthusiasm and dedication to service, it is an honor to serve as your Fire Chief for Meeks Bay Fire Protection District.

March didn't bring us the snow we'd hoped for, and as such the National Weather Service Reno is forecasting a busy fire season for the upper elevations as we enter a cycle of drought. The first Fire Weather Watch of the season was already declared in Mono County on April 13<sup>th</sup>, to give you an indication of the severe condition of fuels moisture for this time of year.

As always, I'm proud to share the successes of our personnel. Our crews continue to assist with monitoring vaccination patients at various sites throughout the region. Our newest recruits have moved to TAP 4, giving them complete control of patient care and documentation, and the ability to work independently with any partner agency. The Division of Life Safety side of the house is making great progress as well. Our two newest inspectors have completed their required inspector training and are officially flying solo on their inspections. Forest Fuels is also due their bragging rights, with the completion of the Tahoe Program Timberland Environmental Impact Report (PTEIR), signed and certified by the Director of CAL FIRE. This moment has been over five years in the making. The PTEIR is an innovative forest management planning tool that will allow partners to increase the pace and scale of wildfire fuel reduction and forest resilience projects, while protecting the region's sensitive resources. This really is a first-of-its-kind PTEIR that addresses California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Forest Practice Act requirements across private, local, state and federal lands. Congratulations to Eric Horntvedt, who has served as the project manager on the PTEIR for the last three years. Our Seasonal Defensible Space Inspector job announcement has closed and we will be interviewing for these two positions in the near future. The Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team is working on their Incident Action Plan for 2021 and we are assisting with the Planning Section on that effort. In addition to their regular duties, Horntvedt and Holland have completed the monumental task of completing and submitting North Tahoe's five year update to the Placer County Mitigation Plan and are awaiting feedback.

Staff continues to monitor the insurance crisis, and we continue to track the activities of the California Department of Insurance (CDI). The Pre-notice Public Discussions on Mitigation in Rating Plans and Wildfire Risk Models, which was scheduled for March, was postponed and has yet to be rescheduled. There was a virtual workshop for the insurance industry on Rate Application Regulations on April 6<sup>th</sup>. The CDI also held a Town Hall on Small Business Resources and Emergency Preparedness that was recorded and is available to view on demand. In the meeting Commissioner Lara stated that he is mandating insurance companies return partial premium refunds to businesses that were overcharged during the pandemic, so businesses should be on the lookout for that. The Department of Insurance is holding another Virtual Town Hall Meeting to discuss Emergency Preparedness and Wildfire on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

The takeaway on the Insurance Regulation discussion is somewhat of a two-sided coin right now. They are requiring that insurance companies consider and take into account community-level mitigation efforts, defensible space programs, local fire and building codes, as well as, property-level mitigation efforts such as defensible space work and



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retrofits to homes. All of these mitigation efforts must be recognized and reflected in the rating plans. It's important to note the flip side of the coin is that insurance companies have wildfire risks that they may reference in their rating plans, such as fuel, slope, access, distance to high-risk areas, aspect, structural characteristics, and wind; however, those factors may not result in excessive or unfairly discriminatory rates. What may be the best news is that all criteria must be transparent, appeals must be responded to within 30 days, and CDI will not allow what were formerly "proprietary scoring models." Information used in setting the rate plans are subject to public inspection with the implementation of these regulations, and must be "credibility weighted." Rate plans must include all criteria considered that could reduce, increase or restrict the number of policies written or renewed, or restrict the coverages offered in specific geographic regions, zip codes, counties and regions. The methods and criteria used to examine, cancel, non-renew or re-underwrite a risk must also be included in the insurer's rate plan for consideration.

Our operations staff continues to stay busy with training, as we begin to prepare for the upcoming wildland fire season. During the month of March our operations staff responded to 260 calls for service district-wide including 18 in the Meeks Bay Fire Protection District area. The 260 calls in March were over 100 more than this time last year and our busiest March in the last five years. A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to observe our crews perform a difficult patient rescue and carry from the top of Eagle Rock. The crews performed their duties in a professional and proficient manner.

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. Below is a list of a few that have been supported by this task force and passed their committees of origin:

1. AB 480 (Carrillo) would expand reporting requirements to Certified Unified Program Agencies (CUPA) and OES of hazardous releases and would provide clearer access routes for local fire agencies to hazardous sites.
2. AB 973 (Rodriguez) would require OES to provide an annual report on funding priorities and expenditures of California Disaster Assistance Act funds.
3. AB 1071 (Rodriguez) would require OES to conduct tabletop exercises of the state's catastrophic response plans on a biennial basis with representatives of the whole community and lifeline operators.
4. AB 1104 (Grayson) would remove the 2024 sunset date thereby allowing the \$4 assessment added to traffic penalties for the purpose of funding the Emergency Medical Air Transportation and Children's Coverage Fund to extend indefinitely.
5. AB 1229 (Rodriguez) would require the Director of Cal EMSA to establish a task force to address ambulance patient offload delays.
6. AB 1569 (Comm. On Emergency Management) would require OES to provide an annual report on the funding and expenditures of the federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.
7. SB 72 (Rubio) would require the Department of Insurance to develop biennial reports on recommendations for vegetation management projects based on non-renewals and would require the California Fair Access to Insurance Requirements (FAIR) Plan to contract for a study on community fire mitigation risks.
8. SB 341 (McGuire) would upgrade notification from telecommunication companies of service outages to the CPUC and the public.
9. SB 450 (Hertzberg) would require the State Board of Fire Services (SBFS) to convene a working group to administer and disburse funds to the Special Districts Fire Response Fund created last November by the passage of Proposition 19.



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In addition, Governor Newsome and the legislative leadership announced agreement on a \$536 million funding plan to improve the State's resilience to wildfire. The plan includes forest health projects, defensible space improvements, home hardening against fire, fire prevention grants and training programs. Specifically, \$125 million of the funds will come from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) with the remainder coming from the General Fund. An ongoing effort is being made to secure federal disaster prevention grants to match the state investment in home hardening. The funding package has been amended into two trailer bills, Senate Bill 85 and Assembly Bill 79.

In closing, I'm pleased to report that we are still in the process of updating the Meeks Bay Fire Station Alerting System. This is a budgeted improvement project that has been implemented at other fire stations in the Tahoe region. Some of the work had previously been done by installing new antennas. We will continue to work with the Placer Information Technology Division to purchase and install the remaining equipment needed to complete this project.

### Meetings and Assignments:

- North Tahoe, Meeks Bay, and Alpine Meadows Boards
- Eastern JPA Chiefs
- Lake Tahoe Regional Fire Chiefs Association
- Sierra Front Wildfire Cooperators
- Executive and Command Staff
- Fleet Services Update
- National Weather Service conference calls
- Meeks Bay Stakeholder Restoration Project
- XTB Operational Area Coordinator and Duty Chief
- Labor Management L3729
- Bi-State Dispatch
- Placer County Search and Rescue and Mutual Aid
- El Dorado and Placer County Public Health COVID Vaccine
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
- Fire District Association of California Board Member Meeting and Annual Conference
- El Dorado LAFCO
- Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue
- Placer County Breakfast Club
- Placer County Area Managers
- El Dorado County Fire Chiefs
- Grant Meeting w/Staff
- Northstar Biomass and Eastern Regional Landfill
- Captain Staff
- U.S. Forest Service Tahoe Management Unit (TMU)
- Cal Fire Amador/El Dorado Unit (AEU) Annual Operating Plan