

# Monthly Message from the Chief

**December 2011**

2011 has been a difficult and challenging year for CAL FIRE. Standing out among many issues, we have faced the potential realignment of our fire protection resources, ongoing budget reductions, inmate realignment and implementation of the State Responsibility Area (SRA) Fee.

It has also been a year of change. Throughout the course of the year we have seen many friends retire. We have also welcomed new appointments to executive leadership and management, including the State Fire Marshal, both region chiefs, both assistant region chiefs, the Deputy Director for Fire Protection, both assistant deputy directors in the Fire Protection Program, the Labor Relations and Human Resources Chief and seven new Unit Chiefs.

It has been a year of accomplishment. The year began with the CAL FIRE Honor Guard participating in the Rose Parade. Southern Region Chief Dale Hutchinson and I had the honor of walking the parade route with them, and it is an experience I will never forget. After many years of hard work by both the Department and CDF Firefighters, we have jointly adopted a Funeral/Memorial Policy which appropriately honors our employees and their families while providing a clear guide of the roles and responsibilities of the Department. Unfortunately, the value of this policy was all too clear, as we said goodbye to a number of active-duty employees and retirees during the year.

CAL FIRE continues to be a national leader in many programs. For example, earlier this year, members of the Department Safety Program presented CAL FIRE's proposed wildland personal protective equipment standards before an international audience at the International Association of Firefighter's Redmond Symposium. As a result of the significant efforts of this Program, many fire departments throughout the nation will be using the standards CAL FIRE has developed.

Following the tragic death of Heavy Fire Equipment Operator (HFEO) Matthew Will in 2007, a very dedicated group of HFEO's, training officers and others worked diligently to establish an apprenticeship program for the HFEO classification. This program was approved by the Joint Apprenticeship Committee Board of Directors, and is pending approval at the Division of Apprenticeship Standards. This will be the first new apprentice occupation in many years, and is a credit to all those who worked so diligently to improve the training and safety of our employees.

In September, I was pleased to attend the homecoming celebration of "Big Jimmy" to Ramona. This event was the culmination of efforts by the CDF Museum to restore a 1939 GMC fire engine for display. This engine model was designed to meet the changing requirements of providing wildland fire protection in the urban interface at that time. What made this event so special was meeting many of the firefighters who served on this particular engine during their careers. My deep gratitude goes to the CDF Museum and all those who have supported it to ensure the Department's history and legacy are not forgotten.



As we look ahead to 2012, budget pressures will continue to be on the forefront. How we get through the budget process over the next several months will be important. Through our long history of professionalism and commitment to public safety and resource protection, CAL FIRE will weather these difficult times and emerge a stronger organization. The most important consideration is the health and wellbeing of our employees. It is the responsibility of each of us to take care of each other as a family does.

I am proud of the work and dedication of the men and women of this Department. As we take time to enjoy our families and friends during this holiday season, please do not forget those that we lost this past year, and those that are facing serious injuries, including Fire Captain Sue Arrouzet and Firefighter Albert Bartal.

Ken Pimlott, Chief  
Acting Director