

Monthly Message from the Chief

The dawning of a new year usually gives one a moment to pause and reflect on the past, present and future. I have done so much more this year than any prior year that I can recall. The past year has been one I will certainly never forget, and I am looking forward to the New Year and the high expectations I have for CAL FIRE in 2010.



The agenda for the last 2009 meeting of our Executive Team was dedicated to collecting our accomplishments and dealings of last year and how we intend to focus our efforts in 2010. The list for 2009 is extensive, and the one for 2010 is taking shape. In no particular order, the following are some of the accomplishments and challenges of last year - some are ongoing:

- Twenty-six managers were appointed. This number was anticipated, but it is still extraordinary.
- Board of Forestry, with a great deal of support from CAL FIRE staff, adopted rules for protection of California's anadromous fish species which had been in a temporary state for nine years. Unprecedented collaboration with the Department of Fish and Game was also a part of this successful process.
- Aviation management brought the first of two C-12 aircraft on line this summer which were procured from the US Army. The C-12 is the military version of the Beechcraft Super King Air. This aircraft was used exclusively for supplemental Air Tactical Group Supervisor training.
- Procured three OV-10D Bronco aircraft and associated spare parts from the military toward the end of the year to bolster our front line air tactical fleet and provide greater lead plane capacity to the VLAT program.
- Increased initial attack efficiency. While many factors contribute to this accomplishment, the ability of four-person engine staffing when conditions warranted was an undeniable boon. There were 2,547 more fires in our Direct Protection Area last year than 2008 and 297,322 fewer acres burned.
- Emergency Fund (E-fund) expenditures for the current fiscal year are approximately a third of what they were in 2008. We still have the spring months to go, but the bulk of the E-fund is spent from July to December.
- CAL FIRE's participation in a study which is being conducted by a San Diego State University professor in an effort to quantify the effectiveness of four-person engine staffing. This is one of many successful collaborative efforts conducted with CDF Firefighters.

- Reached CAL FIRE trademark agreement with CDF Firefighters which will protect the use and quality of the CAL FIRE logo.
- Resumed timber harvesting in Jackson Demonstration State Forest after a hiatus of seven years. This is a result of a great deal of cooperative effort to develop a relevant forest management plan with input from the Jackson Advisory Group and other stakeholders.
- Developed our civil cost collection unit this year with impressive results. The program resolved 16 major cases and processed \$12,363,192 in collections. Prior to formally implementing the program, the average number of major cases resolved over the preceding six year period was 5.6 cases per year, with an average annual recovery of \$2,809,208.
- Revised the California Fire Plan which is near completion. Another unprecedented effort between the department and the Board of Forestry. Representatives from fire protection, resource management and the Office of the State Fire Marshal participated on the steering committee.
- Significant progress was made by the Forest Resource Assessment Program staff toward the completion of the periodic revision of the California Forest and Range Assessment, which provides a systematic overview of the status, trends and challenges to California's forests and rangelands. This is part of a regional and national effort and is essential to determining how we adapt to a changing climate that will affect the health of our forests and rangelands including their susceptibility to wildfire.
- Approved funding for a Medical Director and an analyst to facilitate compliance with new EMT certification and background check requirements. These positions, combined with existing training staff, will further enhance CAL FIRE's EMS program.
- Received Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grant funding to install automated flight following hardware on CAL FIRE aircraft and the decision support tools to track and utilize them more effectively.
- Received DHS grant funding to build a prototype Mobile Communications Center (MCC) in order to begin the replacement of our dated and tired MCCs.
- Coordinated with the newly-established Office of the State Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to maintain the integrity and ability to provide communications and information services support for emergency response. We are currently awaiting a decision from the OCIO to our automated vehicle location feasibility study report which is necessary to increase the safety and effectiveness of our emergency responders. We have also collaborated with our emergency response partners from the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA), California Highway Patrol (CHP), California National Guard (CNG) and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to further ensure our unique needs in this area are considered and protected.
- Conducted a limited objective experiment (LOE) in Southern California in cooperation with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Lincoln Laboratory (MIT/LL). Resources were linked using a variety of

technologies for planning and coordinating purposes. Many of our people contributed to this experiment, which has the potential to aid in the development of the incident command post of the future.

- Offered our services to the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) in order to conduct a serious accident review of the tragedy that occurred when the Station Fire overran their Camp 16, resulting in the death of two LACoFD firefighters. The resulting report has been submitted to Chief Freeman.
- Activated supplemental aircraft during the Station Fire due to several other major fires occurring in the state. For the first time in history there were three very large air tankers (VLAT) deployed - two DC-10's owned and operated by 10 Tanker Air Carrier and Evergreen Aviation's 747.
- Established minimum standard specifications for structural fire fighting personal protective equipment (PPE). The new guidelines exceed current National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. The CAL FIRE Safety Committee and PPE Working Group continue to evaluate standards for wildland PPE, including fabric, design, and effects of multi-layering versus single-layering on heat retention and radiant heat protection.
- Revised the departmental training policy manual (CDF 4300).
- Reestablished the Forester III series.
- Budget cuts for the current fiscal year precluded replacement of aging fire apparatus that are needed to fulfill our fire protection mission, but the most difficult adjustment was a \$3 million cut to Resource Management. It was determined we could suffer no further reduction of our forest practice staff and continue to meet our statutory obligations. Resource Management budget allocations have been reduced by approximately 25% since the turn of the century - our nursery and vegetation management programs suffered significantly. It is unfortunate given the current concerns regarding carbon sequestration and fuel reduction.
- Cooperative fire protection contracts have also been significantly impacted by the current economic crisis. Many local government entities that contract with us have had to make hard decisions regarding levels of service. Employee reductions and brownouts of service have resulted in some areas. Conversely, many opportunities for additional cooperative fire protection agreements have arisen as local governments felt the budget pinch. Inquiries continue to be made regarding the potential to contract for CAL FIRE services up and down the state.
- CAL FIRE management and CDF Firefighters were recognized by the California Fire Fighters Joint Apprenticeship Committee (CFFJAC) for our partnership in ensuring a standard of training for our firefighters.
- CAL FIRE management and CDF Firefighters worked together to resolve many outstanding grievances in order to avoid costly arbitration proceedings. We had over 50 items on the list in the spring, and ended the year with fewer than 20.

- US District Court ruled in favor of the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and CAL FIRE regarding the state's interest in the management of National Forests within its boundaries.
- Involved with our partners in the California fire service in rolling out the Ready! Set! Go! program. This program is intended to educate those living in fire-prone areas looking at preparation for evacuation and the need to leave when necessary.
- Analyzed and tracked 356 of the 2,418 bills produced by the California legislature. Our legislative office increased their focus on educating and coordinating with those in our programs who review legislation. More time was also committed to communicating with our lawmakers. This resulted in saving time overall.
- Office of Program Accountability (OPA) finalized three audits (Volcan Incident, Wildland Fire Investigation Training and Equipment Fund, and Indirect Cost PCA 99200), completed three others (Harris Incident, Poomacha Incident, and ICA/ICT) that will be finalized early in 2010, and began three new audits (ECC, Cash Receipts, and Budget Cycle).
- Completed the semiannual Financial Integrity of State Managers Act (FISMA) report certifying that CAL FIRE possesses an adequate system of internal controls to ensure that State assets are protected, laws and regulations are followed, financial and management information is reliable, and the organization and programs are operating effectively and efficiently.
- Information Security Office intensified its efforts to disseminate information on the timely reporting of security incidents, revamped its intranet pages, and began work on new employee security training to be rolled out in 2010.
- Governor formalized the Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) by executive order. We are primary participants on the task force. A significant focus of the BRTF is to establish reliable funding for California's emergency response needs.
- Our commitment to the total force concept was recognized in a substantive way this year. In another collaborative effort with labor, we were in large part exempted from furloughs and a change in the Government Code affecting the calculation of overtime, enabling us to quickly respond to emergencies of all magnitudes without delay.
- A State Personnel Board (SPB) decision affecting our examination processes required immediate action by those in Human Resources to ensure we would be able to maintain viable lists in order to fill positions.
- State Fire Training was successful in continuing to move forward with Blueprint 2020, the California Fire Service Training & Education Strategic Plan. The State Training and Education Committee meets on a regular schedule and provides recommendations to the SFM that will assist in continuing to move California fire service training into the next decade.
- Pipeline Division continues to work with set partners and has once again gained an outstanding rating by the federal government.

- Fire Engineering continues to build strong relationships with the industry we regulate as well as partner with local government to assist fraud investigations concerning the inspections of fire suppression equipment.
- OSFM worked with local jurisdictions in retrieving illegal fireworks and disposing of them.
- Adoption, without opposition, of the Building Standards (fire and building codes) by the California Building Standards Commission on January 12, 2010. Tremendous efforts have gone into the development and adoption of these codes which, once again, places California as a leader in the fire prevention arena.
- CAL FIRE personnel participated in a variety of non-traditional media productions including: Hell's Kitchen, MTV, Discovery Channel, National Geographic, the BBC, and numerous documentaries and single episode programs. In 2010 we are already underway on a statewide docu-drama project that is being done with the support of labor. This program will showcase CAL FIRE personnel, facilities, emergency incidents, overall diversity, and our "all risk" commitment and response to public safety.
- Dramatically increased our social networking profile this year utilizing YouTube®, Facebook® and Twitter®. In fact, CAL FIRE has more Facebook® followers than any other state agency. Only Lottery comes close, and they give away money.

It is best to talk about the things you've done than what you are going to do, but the following are some of the areas which demand our attention in 2010:

- Explore every opportunity to increase our initial attack effectiveness, while maintaining our focus on safety.
- Enhance our overall fire prevention program by increased integration of fire marshal services with those traditionally performed at the unit level.
- Seek opportunities to bolster those activities that will reduce levels of greenhouse gasses, such as overall forest health, seedling production, vegetation management and urban forestry.
- Maintain awareness of the evolving political landscape. The CAL FIRE executive management team will continue to support and assist the Governor's Office and our lawmakers.
- Complete the 5-year State Responsibility Area review.
- Complete the California Forest Assessment and contribute to a larger assessment of the western United States.
- Revise our strategic plan.
- Resurrect and/or create policy development bodies that allow policy changes to be introduced by those at all levels of the department, vet them broadly.
- Revise the year end budget process in an effort to refine the process and minimize travel requirements.

- Pursue new technologies that will make us more effective operationally and administratively.
- Participate in national efforts such as the development of a National Intergovernmental Wildland Fire Management Framework
- Provide rank and file employees with an incentive to promote to supervisory positions.

All this won't be accomplished in 2010, but I like to aim high. If 2009 was a yardstick, it indicates how much can be accomplished even in trying times.



Del Walters, Chief
Director