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## All in the Family

*By Nick Marnell*

Between emergency calls and non-traditional work schedules, flexibility is a must when setting up an interview with a firefighter. With Lou Manzo, the interview was scheduled around a personal event that there was no chance he would miss.

"It's my kids' last day of school," said the father of three.

Manzo, recently promoted to battalion chief of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, jumped into his firefighting career after a nudge from a family member.

"I got a call from one of my closest cousins, in Denver," said Manzo. The cousin suggested that Manzo should give the fire service a try. The suggestion clicked; Manzo trained partly in his home town of Alameda and he was hired by ConFire in May 1990.

His new assignment, Battalion 1 Shift A, covers the city of Lafayette. Manzo described how he intends to carry out the heightened public outreach mission of ConFire chief Jeff Carman. "I plan on attending city council meetings with an engine company from Lafayette," he said, stressing that he will strive to maintain open and consistent communication.

He began with a message to Lafayette residents. "Keep and maintain the required distance of defensible space around your homes," said the new battalion chief. "It is extremely important for homeowners whose residences back up to the open space. With the current drought conditions and severely dry vegetation, this is going to be one of our busiest wildland seasons."

Manzo was formally pinned at the June 9 ConFire award ceremony. "I am impressed with his work as a battalion chief so far. I am already impressed with his family ethic by the large gathering that was at the meeting to support him," said Carman.

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