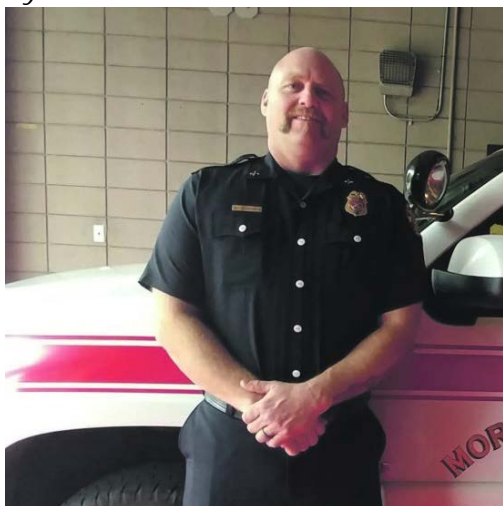


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MOFD and ConFire promote new operations chiefs

By Nick Marnell



Matt Nichols Photo provided

Two veteran firefighters will run the operations divisions of the Lamorinda fire agencies in 2019, both men having been promoted in the fourth quarter of last year.

Matt Nichols took over as battalion chief, operations division, of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District in October. "I never really aspired to be where I am today," said the 12-year district veteran, who appeared quite at ease in the role he never aspired to. "You see how things go, you see a vacancy, you see a chance to put your own stamp on things." Nichols said he is putting his stamp on the district education policy, working to revise it to offer reimbursement for extra classes to all firefighters, whether they seek a promotion or not.

Nichols offered words of support to district residents and encouraged them to join together. "It's great to depend on us, and we'll be there when the major disaster hits. But be there for each other," he said.

"MOFD is excited to have Matt Nichols serving as a battalion chief and I believe he hits the sweet spot of enough experience to know the district well, but new

enough that he is not wedded to just maintaining the status quo. I have great confidence in his ability and high expectations for the work he will do to develop and refine our operational plans," Fire Chief Dave Winnacker said.

After the retirement of Ed Gonzales in July, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District appointed Chuck Stark as interim assistant fire chief - emergency operations division. In December the district removed the interim tag.

"You get to be a part of things at the lower levels, but as a chief officer, you get to set the direction for the district," said Stark, who started at ConFire in 2003. "I will be able to get more accomplished."

Both chiefs are preparing to reopen and staff rebuilt Lamorinda fire stations in the spring: Orinda Fire Station 43 and Lafayette Fire Station 16. "I remember when it closed," Stark said of the 2012 closure of the Lafayette station by the county. "The station will increase our capacity and lower response times." He added that "the station is going to be beautiful."

"Our assistant chief of operations is among the most critical positions in the district, with responsibility for ensuring our life- and property-saving operations are carried out flawlessly, each and every time our firefighters leave their stations," Fire Chief Jeff Carman said in a district statement. "I couldn't be more pleased to announce the promotion of longtime ConFire firefighter Chuck Stark to this position."



Chuck Stark Photo provided

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