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## ConFire powers up to head off dangerous fire season ahead

By Nick Marnell



ConFire bulldozer to work expanded schedule for fire season Courtesy ConFire

A comment from Steve Hill, public information officer for the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, sums up what lies ahead this summer for much of Northern California - especially Lamorinda.

"We are anticipating fire behaviors that are at least as extreme and unpredictable as we have seen in the past two years in neighboring counties and across the state. There is every possibility - given the fuels situation and fire weather forecasts - they will be more extreme and unpredictable than in recent years," Hill said.

The district has beefed up staffing to handle the potential wildfire onslaught in Lafayette with the scheduled August reopening of Fire Station 16 and having placed Engine Company 16 into service in April, working temporarily out of Fire Station 15 on Mt. Diablo Boulevard. The reopened Fire Station 19 in Briones heights protection against a wildfire raging over the hills into Lamorinda.

ConFire also added two new Type 3 wildland engines to its apparatus fleet and beginning July 1, Fire Dozer 220 will commence daily service. Many recall that the ConFire bulldozer was a key player in the containment of the July vegetation fire near Buckingham Drive in Moraga, helping prevent the fire from rolling over the hill and causing extensive property damage. The district plans to put a second fire bulldozer into service later in the season.

In addition, working in conjunction with other fire jurisdictions across the state, ConFire will pre-position firefighting resources in high risk areas ahead of predicted fire weather.

The firefighters also refocus their own efforts for fire season. "Do not become complacent with our historical local fire problems. Tactics employed in the past may no longer be applicable to the problems faced today," Assistant Fire Chief Chuck Stark said via internal correspondence to his suppression personnel. "Anticipate the potential for extreme fire behavior throughout this fire season, and base decisions on the current conditions."

Stark's advice applies to the public as well, as ConFire reminds all property owners to take nothing for granted this fire season and to do their part to protect their homes and businesses. "The most important person protecting a home or business is not the firefighter that arrives on scene during the wildfire, but instead the owner who takes necessary actions well before the fire season even starts," Hill said.

Two key mitigating actions for property owners include the creation of defensible space around their properties and the removal of unruly vegetation by the weed abatement deadline. For Lafayette, that deadline is June 16.

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