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New ConFire assistant chief jumpstarts Fire Prevention Bureau

By Nick Marnell



Fire Marshal Chris Bachman Photo provided

The job of the fire marshal with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District has become so complex that new Fire Marshal Chris Bachman also carries the title of assistant fire chief.

Bachman manages the district Fire Prevention Bureau, which includes five main units: Code Enforcement, Engineering, Public Education, Fire Investigation and Exterior Hazard Control. But the fire marshal sees his No. 1 goal with the district as the exploration and implementation of community risk reduction.

"We evaluate the hazards, identify the problems and create a plan to prevent catastrophes from occurring," Bachman said. "Educating people on compliance is crucial to achieving that goal."

Bachman cited Lafayette as an example. Logic tells him, he said, that most Lafayette residents, considering their enormous property values, have working smoke detectors. "But when was the last time they cleaned out their gutters?" said Bachman, citing the possibility of flying embers from pine needles causing a major vegetation fire. "We need to provide the community this kind of information, and to focus on implementation."

The assistant chief moved to ConFire this year from a fire department in western Indiana, as he sought a larger agency to utilize his recently earned master's degree in emergency and disaster management from Georgetown University. Bachman spent five residencies overseas, including stints in London, NATO and Paris, where he studied how to combat "not just natural hazards but man-made hazards as well," such as terrorism.

"I am fortunate to have stepped into the position I have," Bachman said. "The staff has done a fantastic job and has made my job easy."

Unlike former fire marshals, Bachman will not double as ConFire public information officer, with that job now handled by Steve Hill.

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