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## MOFD fire marshal increases staff, determined to mitigate community fire hazards

By Nick Marnell



MOFD Fire Marshal Jeff Isaacs Photo Nick Marnell

With the importance of the fire marshal role taking on added significance in the new decade, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District named Jeff Isaacs, an industry veteran with decades of firefighting and administrative experience, to the position in January.

Isaacs spent 20 years with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, where he worked his way up to division chief of the Southern Region in Fresno. Since September Isaacs served as the MOFD fuels mitigation manager, a position that he intends to fill immediately as he beefs up the fire prevention division.

The fire marshal also plans to replace the six part-time code enforcers with three full-time fuels mitigation specialists, who will report to the fuels mitigation manager. "We'll be able to train better and provide more consistent supervision," Isaacs said. That should come as a relief to the district residents who had been subject to arbitrary code enforcement by former part-time employees.

Isaacs laid out his 2020 operational plan to the district governing board Jan. 8. Highlights included the reorganization of his department in the first quarter, public outreach and education of the new fire code requirements in the spring, property inspections and re-inspections all summer, and continuation of the district's

popular chipper service throughout the year.

But Isaacs focused on his two main overall goals for the coming year: Bringing the community up to speed on the requirements of the aggressive new MOFD fire code, and proper community planning to mitigate major fire hazards.

According to Isaacs, the enforcement of the new fire code will limit the number of district structures that would be lost in a major fire event. And though he recognizes the importance of global enforcement, Isaacs stressed that implementing the changes will be done at a sustainable pace, with the emphasis on voluntary compliance.

Code enforcement is only part of the district fire hazard planning, which Isaacs said also includes defensible space guidelines, intelligent land use planning and other fuels mitigation efforts. "How we develop our fire communities to be fire adaptive is the key," Isaacs said. "A fire should be able to tear through a neighborhood and not destroy the neighborhood."

Isaacs conceded that changing the behavior of owners of the 14,000 district parcels will not be easy. "We have a lot to do," he said. "We intend to do everything we can to have this community rise into the upper echelon of fire safety."

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