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ConFire expands Lafayette protection as fire season under way

By Nick Marnell



Station 16 crew stands ready to protect western Lafayette. From left, engineer Rusty Perkins, firefighter Griffin Sims and Capt. Nick Barnes
Photo Nick Marnell

Broschard said.

To its apparatus fleet, ConFire added a second bulldozer. Moraga residents may recall in 2018 that a ConFire bulldozer helped prevent a catastrophe, plowing through vegetation to stop a major fire from reaching homes on Buckingham Drive.

Other district apparatus additions include two wildland engines, two water tenders and a second helicopter, which will offer aerial fire suppression in addition to patient transport.

Rebuilt and ready for fire season is Fire Station 16 in western Lafayette. Since the station reopened its doors in September, response times in the area dropped more than one minute, according to district records.

"This is an important and significant response time reduction for the residents of Lafayette because a house fire can double in size every minute before fire crews arrive on scene, while cardiac arrest victims' odds of survival increase 10% for every minute saved in delivering emergency medical services," Assistant Fire Chief Chuck Stark said.

The district further refined its evacuation plan for the city. "Having a preset plan in place improves communication and allows agencies to instantly be aware of the area and the affected impact," Broschard said.

The chief explained that district geographic polygons are instantly available to first responders for quick and easy reference, providing data on which homes would be evacuated in recommended evacuation areas. These zones have been incorporated into the Lafayette Emergency Response Plan.

"An important role of the district is prevention of fires before they occur, a mission for which our Fire Prevention Bureau is largely responsible," Broschard said. Since June 1, the bureau inspected 124 parcels in Lafayette for abatement violations, with 25 failing. Seven properties had work orders for contract abatement issued.

New to the district is its Fire Control Worker Program, consisting of a 12-person hand crew that does fire prevention work throughout the region. "Crew 12" is now available to conduct weed abatement activities ahead of and in the early months of the season and to provide firefighting support throughout," Broschard said.

ConFire commended the city for its level of engagement with the Contra Costa County Community Warning System, a program that delivers potentially lifesaving alerts to registered members. "Lafayette's registration numbers are excellent," said Heather Tiernan, CWS manager, as the city boasts more than 8,100 registrants, far higher than the 25% average of overall county registrations.

"I am incredibly pleased with the advancements the district has made ahead of fire season," said Lafayette Council Member Cam Burks, chair of the city council Public Safety Committee. "I have complete confidence

After it put out two potentially devastating fires in Lafayette during last year's fire season, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District beefed up segments of its operation to prepare for whatever the 2020 fire season has in store for the city.

The Pleasant fire of Oct. 27 straddled Highway 24 in Lafayette, and while the blaze destroyed the Lafayette Tennis Club, Fire Chief Lewis Broschard said that the nine-alarm fire response prevented tens of millions of dollars in structure loss in the city. (See Page A1 Lamorinda Weekly article in Nov. 13, 2019 archive.)

During the October fire siege, prepositioning - the ability to place firefighting resources up front to attack wildfires where they are most likely to occur - assisted the district in the containment of numerous county fires. The program is funded by the governor through the State Office of Emergency Services. "We expect to take full advantage of this program to better protect residents of Lafayette and the county during the 2020 fire season,"

in ConFire, especially in the way they handled the fires last October, keeping the city and our residents safe."

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[back](#)

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