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ConFire Engine Company returns from Glass Fire with a message

By Nick Marnell



ConFire Engine Company 16, at Glass Fire. From left, engineer Keld Laustsen, Capt. Casey Lyons and firefighter-paramedic James Myres. Photo provided

unlike in Lafayette, where they pull 48-hour shifts, they worked 24 hours on, 24 hours off. The task force remained in the North Bay for one week.

The Glass Fire, named after its proximity to Glass Mountain Road, eventually burned 67,000 acres and destroyed or damaged 1,800 structures, including numerous wineries and restaurants.

Despite the enormity of the situation, amidst the firestorm and all of the chaos, the firefighters on scene persevere against the odds. "You just do your own assignment. I focus on my own task and try not to think of the big picture," Lyons said. "My orders were to pick a house you can defend and try to defend it."

The fire headed downhill along Spring Mountain toward the Stony Hill Winery, a 60-year-old North Bay institution. That fire attack gave the crew an opportunity to experience a positive outcome in an occupation often bereft of positive outcomes.

"We saved the winery and the vines," Lyons said. "The owner brought us food the next day and invited us to have dinner at his restaurant." But the crew had no time to enjoy a meal at a winery restaurant.

Lyons returned home with a plea to Lamorinda residents. "If you get a warning to evacuate, please heed that warning. Be prepared to leave in a hurry. I understand people lose a lot of things, but you do not want to lose your life," he said.

The captain also urged residents to surround their homes with defensible space, which he called the difference between returning to a house intact and a house burned down.

As Lyons looked out his Lafayette Station 16 window, he saw a suburban landscape dominated by oak trees and private residences.

"There is potential here for a horrific wildfire," he said.

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