



From the Fire Chief

Dear OCFA Family:

As indicated on the opening page of our [Organizational Doctrine](#), the OCFA protects some of the most risk-prone geographies in the nation, underscoring the need to be flexible and adaptable in providing our services with speed, accuracy, and consistency.

Our success in achieving that goal in the face of complex, all-hazard emergencies is undeniable, as evidenced by the operational excellence highlighted in this Bulletin — from structure fires to large animal rescues and everything in between.

On top of all that, in recent weeks, we seamlessly pivoted from extreme fire weather upstaffing to heavy rain and debris flow upstaffing. In both cases, those added resources and people made life- and property-saving differences, breathing truth into the above-mentioned Doctrine and its tenets of flexibility, speed, preparation, and operational excellence.

Of course, we didn't do it alone, often working in tandem with our partner agencies, building upon the synergy that only comes with long-standing, trusted mutual aid relationships.

Case in point: the rescue at T-Street in San Clemente highlighted below. As you all know, the chances of surviving a full cardiac arrest while in big surf is minimal, at best. But on Christmas morning, despite showing no signs of a pulse or a heartbeat while getting sunmatted by six-foot waves, a man survived and completely recovered because of everything I shared above: speed, flexibility, preparation, trusted partnerships, and operational excellence.

As if that wasn't heroic enough, the Christmas Day rescue was capped off the way so many of our incidents are — it was celebrated and shared with the world in ways that widen our circle of influence, promote safety, build community, honor our heroes, and spread the much-needed joy that stems from a successful rescue or emergency response.

Indeed, after creating a video highlighting the rescue, we posted it on social media with the blessing of all involved. To date, more than 2.3 million people — from South America and Canada to France and Australia — have viewed the rescue, witnessed our collective excellence, and experienced the depth with which we honor not just the promise of our Organizational Doctrine, but also the aphorism by which we all live and work: "In Service of Others."

To quote one of the hundreds of online comments about us and our partners in this rescue: "We just need a teaspoon of the character of these people to make the world a better place."

Make no mistake, that is precisely what all of you — our firefighters and professional staff — do; you make the world a better place, and despite the responsibility of protecting one of the most risk-prone regions in the country, you also make it a safer place, day in and day out.

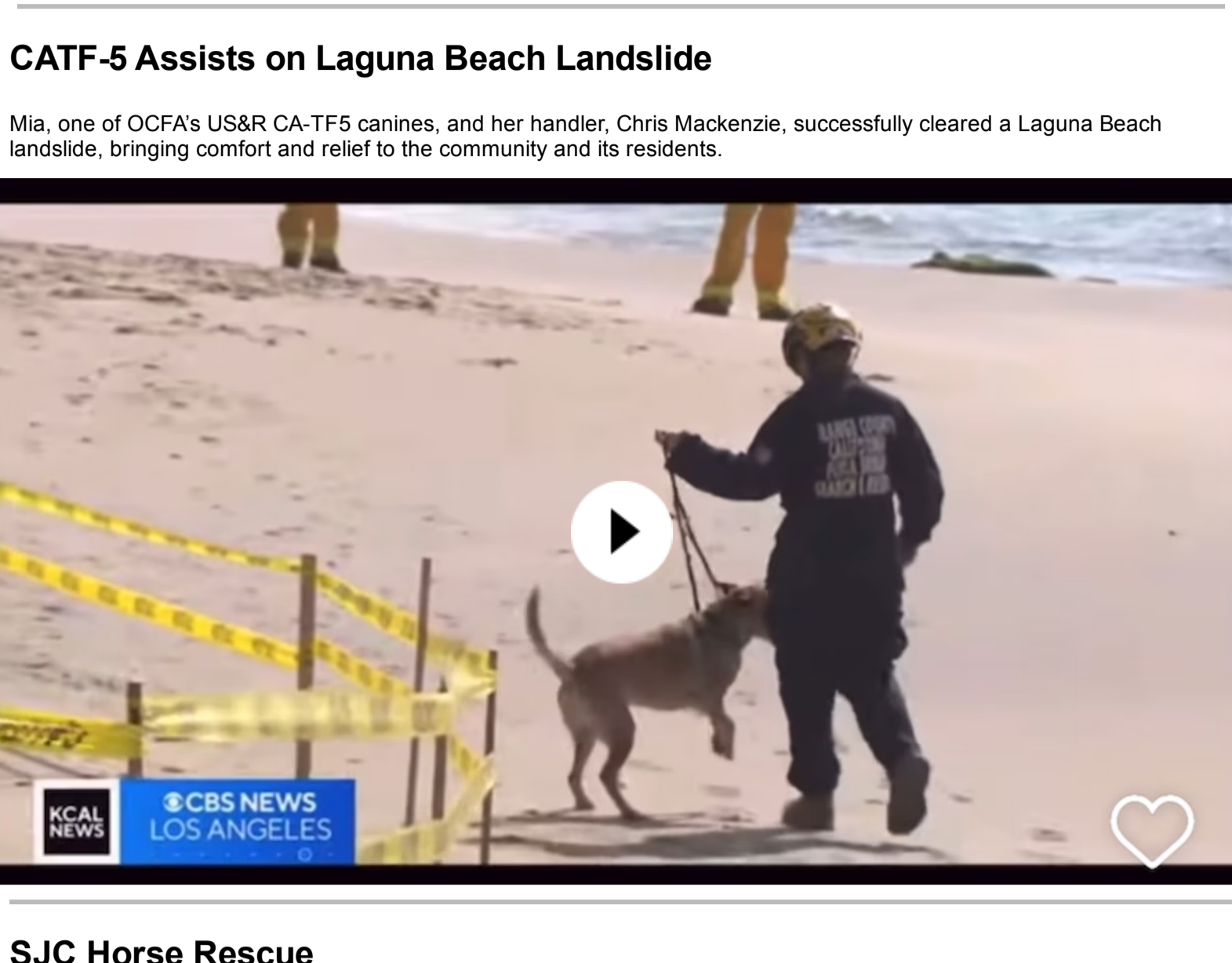
Thank you for being flexible and adaptable in doing that work quickly, accurately, consistently, and, of course, always with the character that makes our communities — and the world — a better place.

Sincerely,
Brian Fennessy
Fire Chief

MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT - EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

Swift Water Rescue in SJC

At 1:42 a.m. on February 14, firefighters rescued an adult female and an adult male from the fast-moving San Juan Creek in San Juan Capistrano after receiving reports that they were trapped in the water, holding onto trees and bushes. This successful rescue operation involved multiple resources — searching from shore, in boats ready to launch on bridges downstream, in the air, and upstuffed swift water rescue personnel positioned specifically for this rain event.



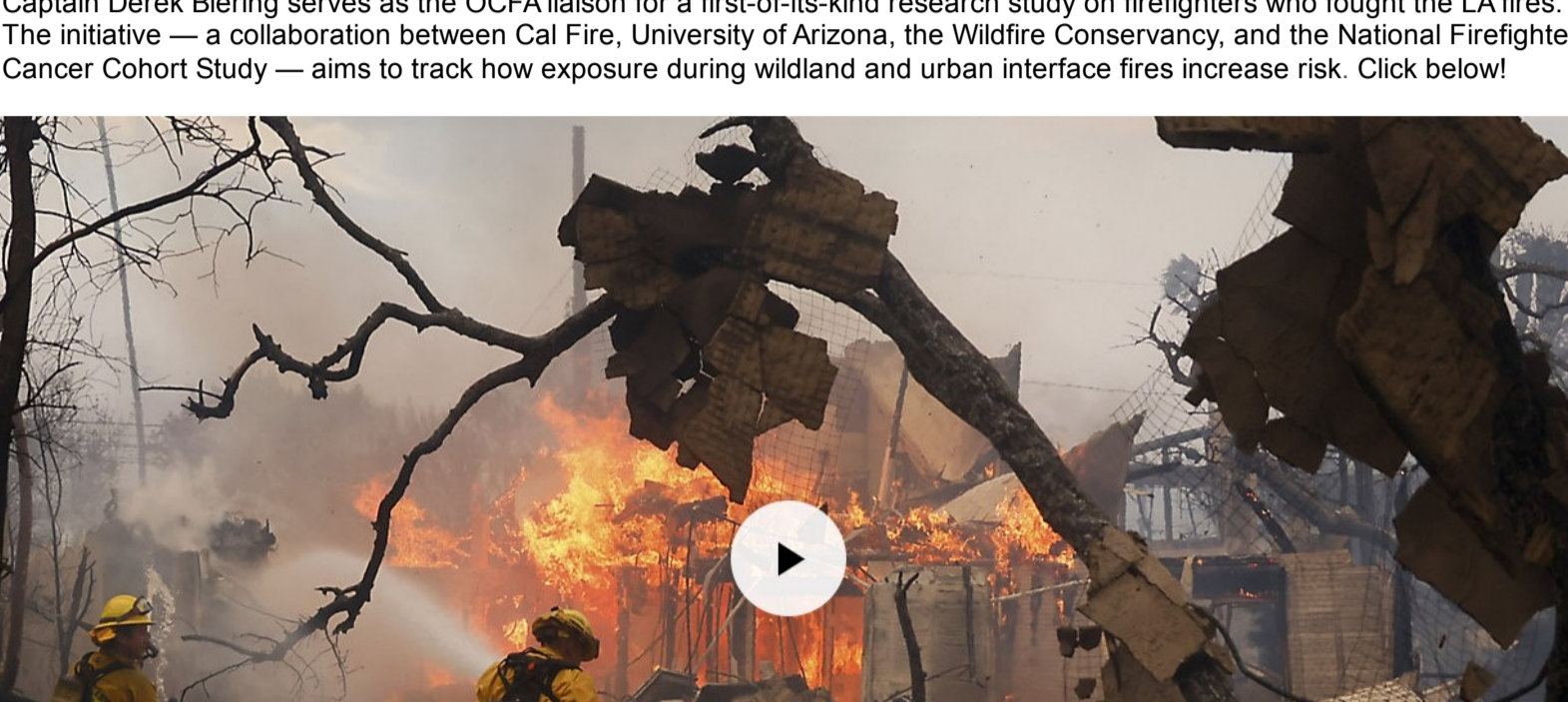
CAT-5 Assists on Laguna Beach Landslide

Mia, one of OCFA's US&R CA-TF-5 canines, and her handler, Chris Mackenzie, successfully cleared a Laguna Beach landslide, bringing comfort and relief to the community and its residents.



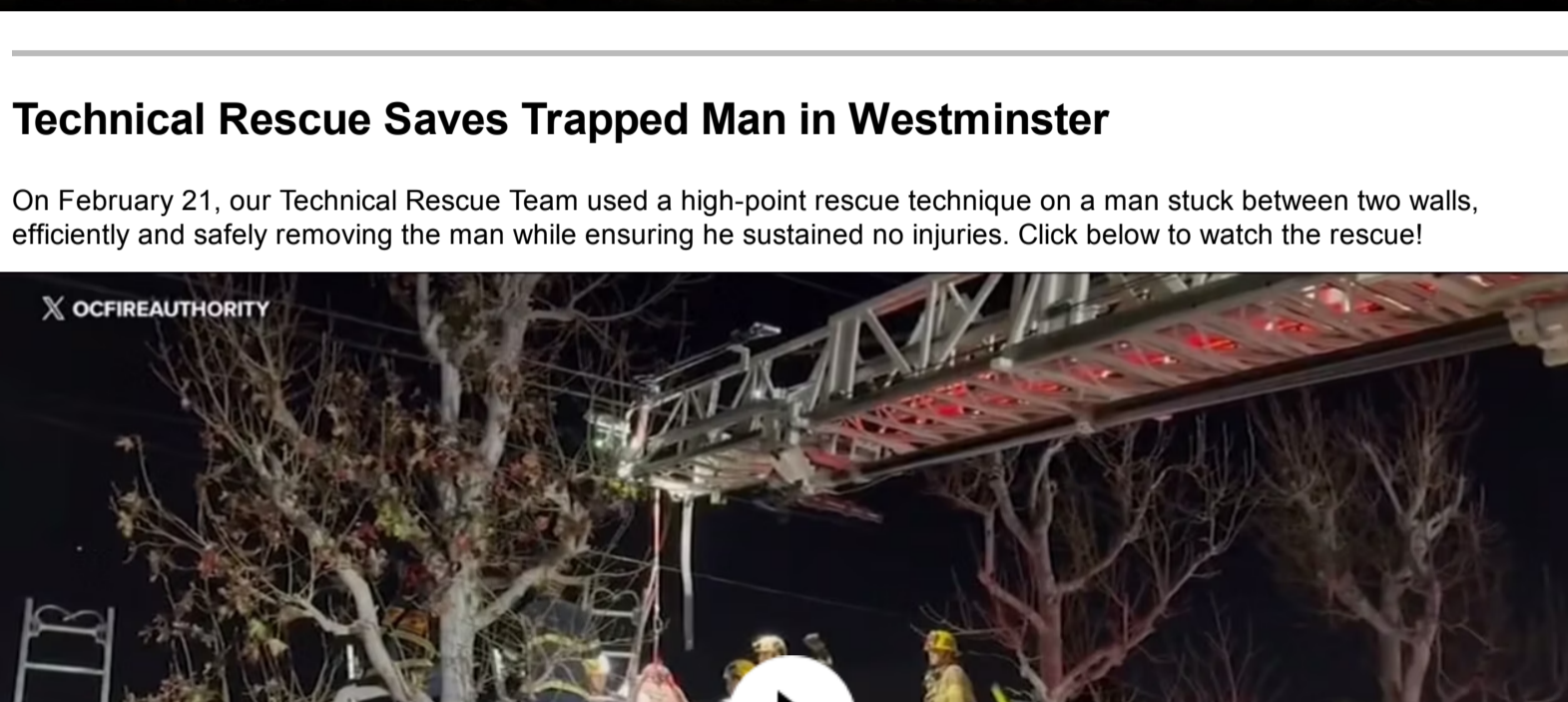
SJC Horse Rescue

When Deuce, a usually sure-footed horse, slipped down an embankment in San Juan Capistrano, he was unable to climb back up the steep slope. Our firefighters created a pathway up the slope to guide the horse out on foot, but Deuce had other ideas: As the sun began to set, firefighters pivoted to plan B, securing Deuce in a specialized harness for an aerial rescue. Safely out of the ditch, but exhausted and unable to stand, our Technical Rescue firefighters delicately hoisted him with a specialized rigging system, prompting a full recovery that the vet described as "nothing short of a miracle."



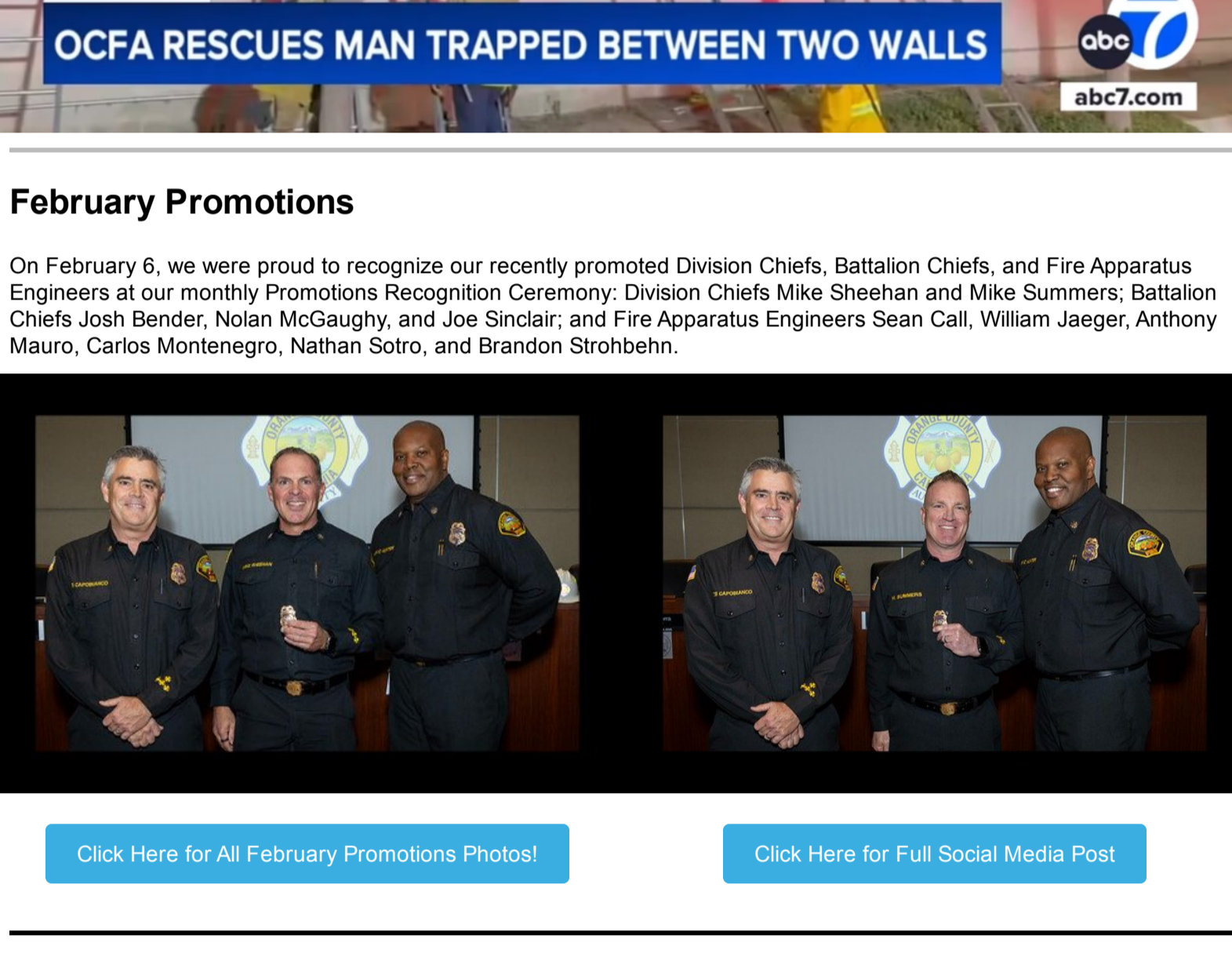
OCFA Plays Role in New Cancer Research

Captain Derek Biering serves as the OCFA liaison for a first-of-its-kind research study on firefighters who fought the LA fires. The initiative — a collaboration between Cal Fire, University of Arizona, the Wildlife Conservancy, and the National Firefighter Cancer Cohort Study — aims to track how exposure during wildfire and urban interface fires increase risk. Click below!



Technical Rescue Saves Trapped Man in Westminster

On February 21, our Technical Rescue Team used a high-point rescue technique on a man stuck between two walls, efficiently and safely removing the man while ensuring he sustained no injuries. Click below to watch the rescue!



February Promotions

On February 6, we were proud to recognize our recently promoted Division Chiefs, Battalion Chiefs, and Fire Apparatus Engineers at our monthly Promotions Recognition Ceremony. Division Chiefs Mike Sheehan and Mike Summers; Battalion Chiefs Josh Bender, Nolan McLaughly, and Joe Sinclair; and Fire Apparatus Engineers Sean Call, William Jaeger, Anthony Mauro, Carlos Montenegro, Nathan Soto, and Brandon Strothbahn.

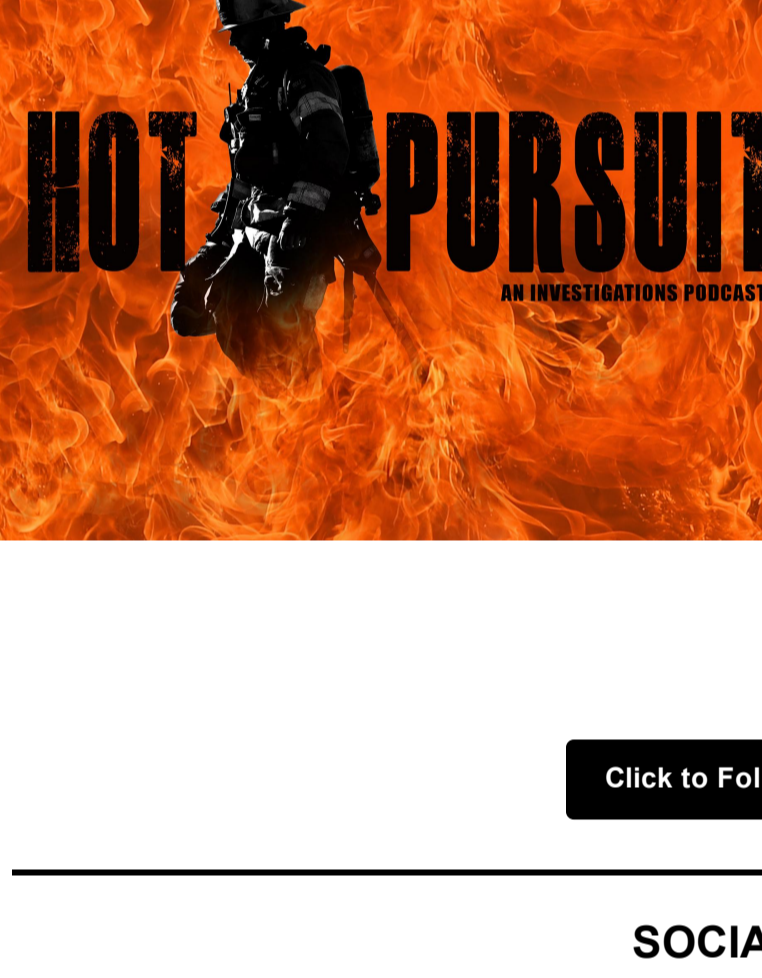


[Click Here for All February Promotions Photos!](#)

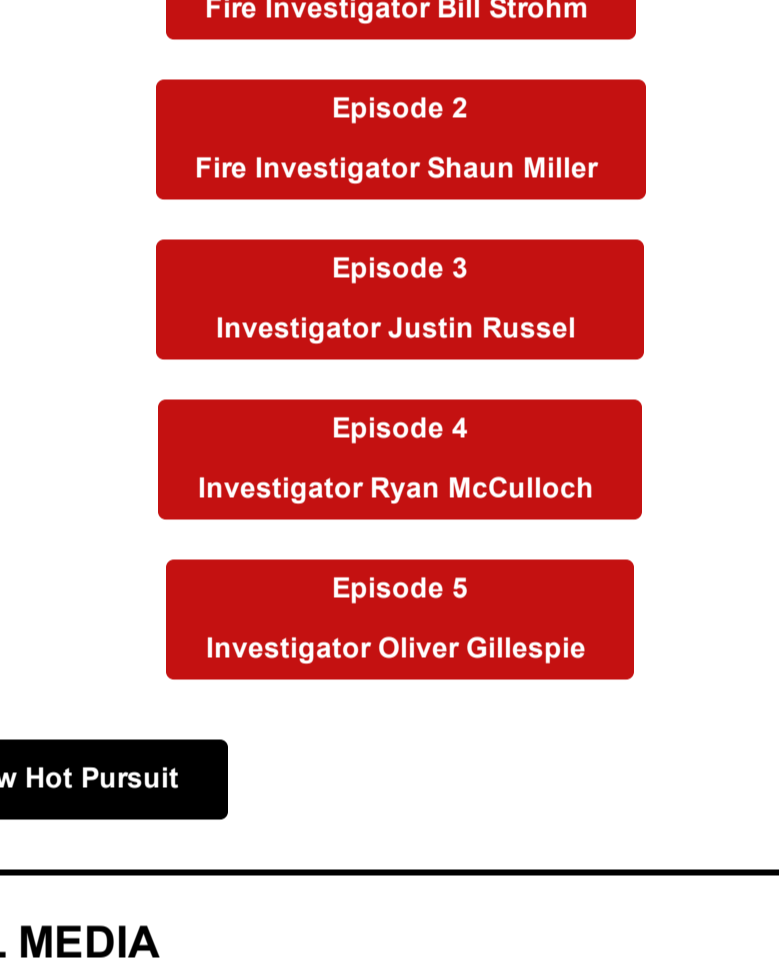
[Click Here for Full Social Media Post](#)

UPCOMING OCFA EVENTS

Chief Lori Smith Retirement



Open House - 30th Anniversary



New Hot Pursuit Episodes

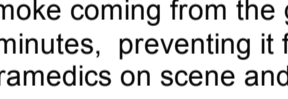
Join hosts OCFA Fire Captain/Investigator Scott Kuhlman and Public Relations Manager Sophia Champieux as they take you behind the scenes of OCFA's most compelling fire investigations. Through interviews with fire investigators, law enforcement, and forensic specialists, *Hot Pursuit* offers an insider's look at how these mysterious and often chilling fires are solved.



- [Episode 1 - Part 1](#)
Fire Investigator Bill Strohm
- [Episode 1 - Part 2](#)
Fire Investigator Bill Strohm
- [Episode 2](#)
Fire Investigator Shaun Miller
- [Episode 3](#)
Investigator Justin Russel
- [Episode 4](#)
Investigator Ryan McCulloch
- [Episode 5](#)
Investigator Oliver Gillespie

[Click to Follow Hot Pursuit](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA TOP POSTS OF THE MONTH

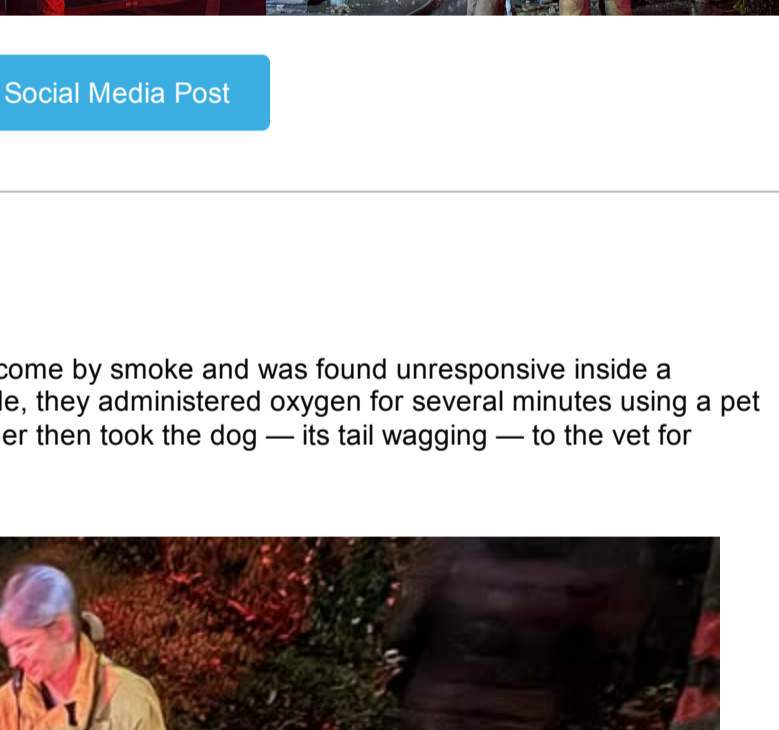
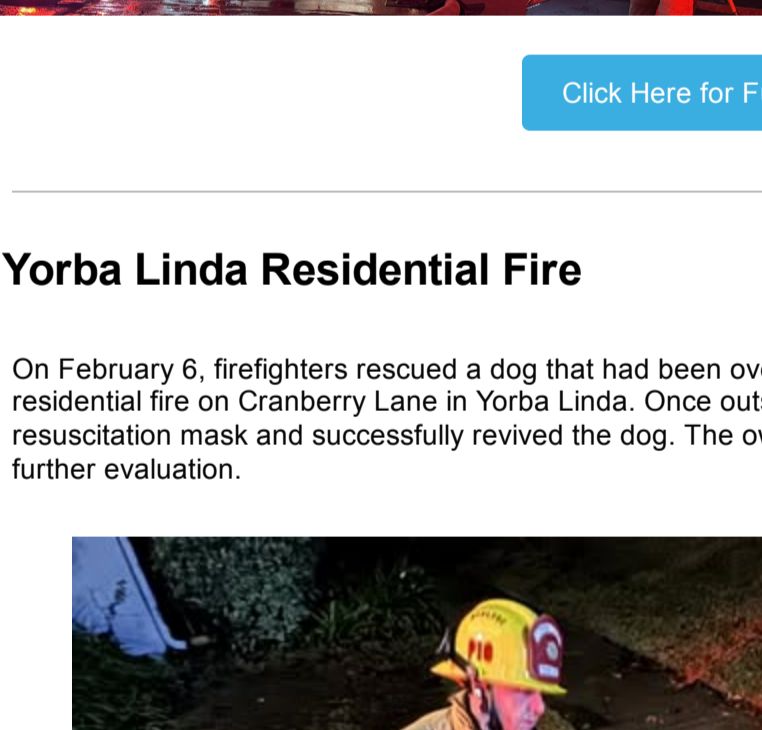


San Clemente Vegetation Fire

Quick work by firefighters stopped a brush fire in its tracks near Avenida Fico and Avenida La Plata in San Clemente on January 20. Thanks to resources pre-positioned for the Red Flag event, we strengthened our initial attack and held the fire to less than one acre in under 30 minutes.

San Clemente T-Street Surf Rescue

This Christmas Day rescue in partnership with San Clemente Lifeguards, State Lifeguards, retired and current OCFA firefighters, and professional surfers is the most viewed social media post in OCFA history. Click below to watch!

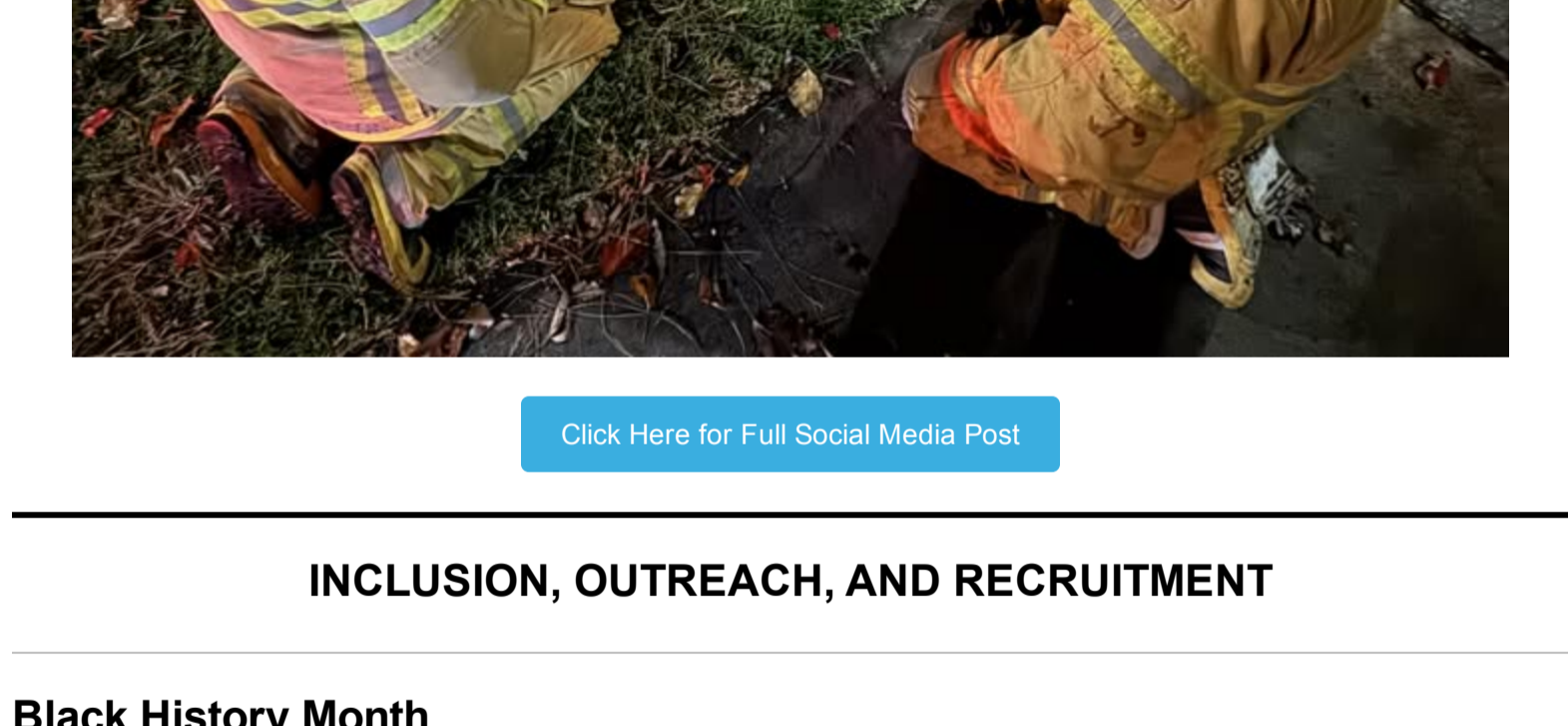


[Click Here for Full Social Media Post](#)

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Rancho Santa Margarita Residential Fire

On January 31 at 1:25 a.m., firefighters from Battalion 7 responded to a fire in a home with one burnt patient. Engine 45 was the first arriving engine and reported heavy smoke coming from the garage. Due to a rapid and coordinated attack, firefighters were able to knock down the fire in 30 minutes, preventing it from extending to the second floor and adjacent units. One adult male was treated by firefighter paramedics on scene and transported to the hospital for further care.

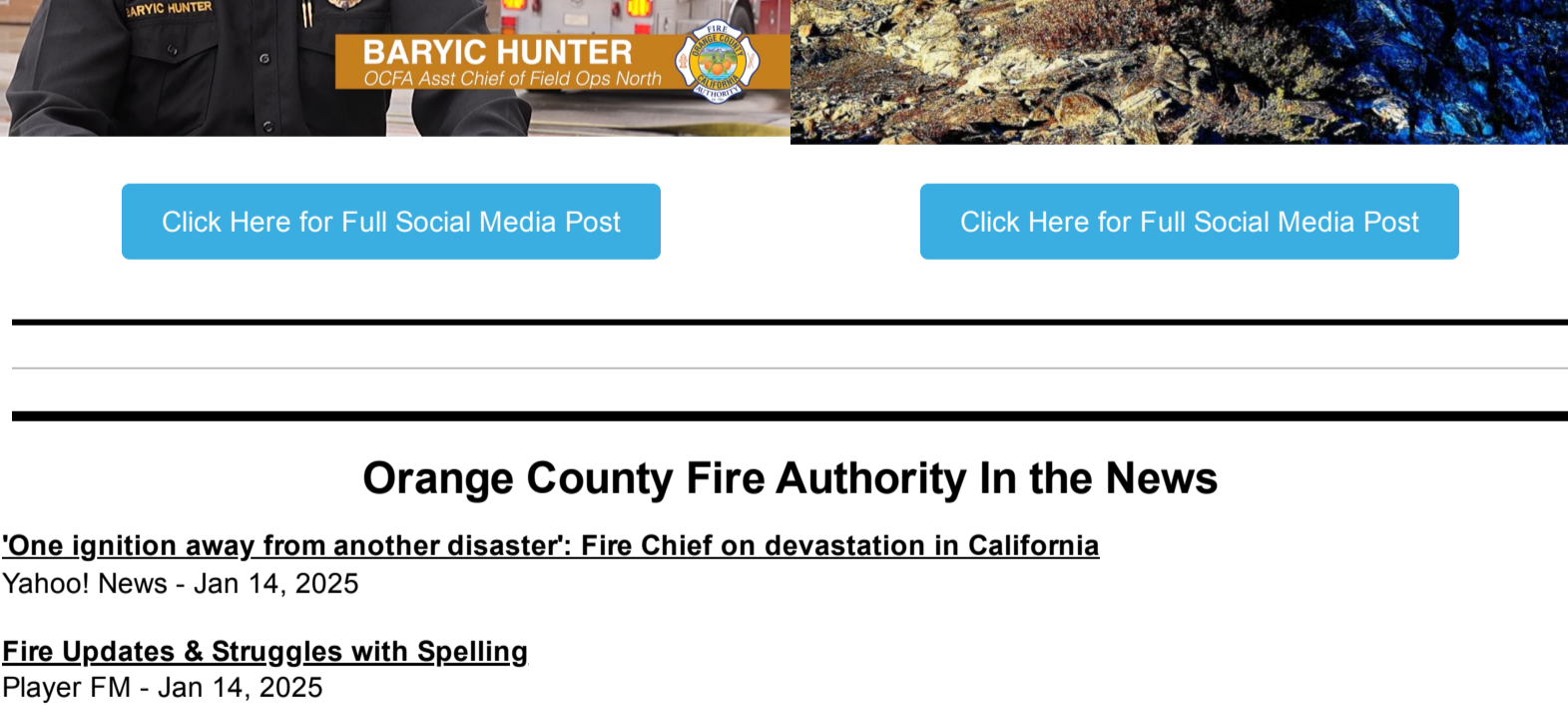


[Click Here for Full Social Media Post](#)

Yorba Linda Residential Fire

On February 6, firefighters rescued a dog that had been overcome by smoke and was found unresponsive inside a residential fire on Cranberry Lane in Yorba Linda. Once outside, they administered oxygen for several minutes using a pet resuscitation mask and successfully revived the dog. The owners then took the dog — its tail wagging — to the vet for further evaluation.

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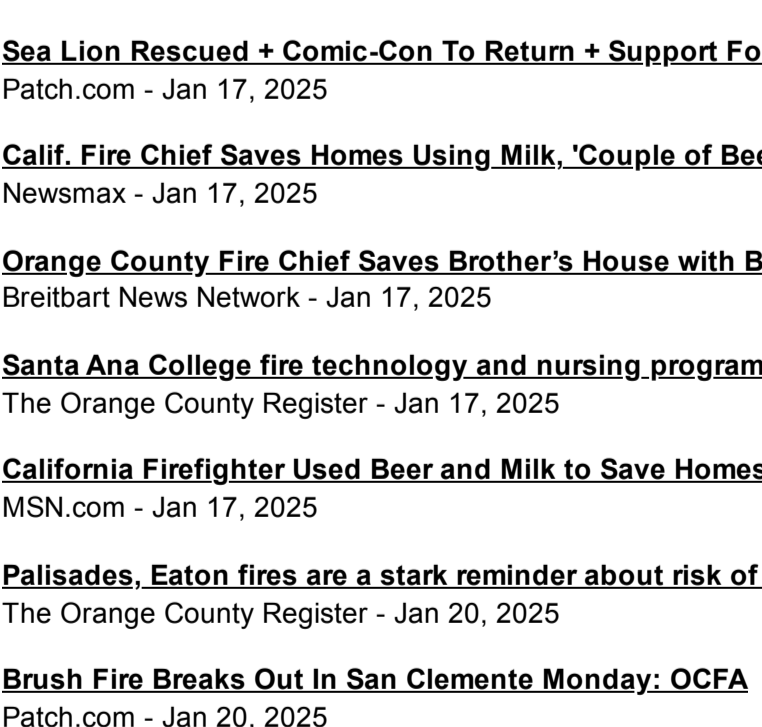
INCLUSION, OUTREACH, AND RECRUITMENT

Black History Month

Thanks to President Ford, Reagan, and U.S. Congress were instrumental in building upon Dr. Carter G. Woodson's creation of what is now Black History Month. We're proud to observe this federally recognized time by highlighting some OCFA leaders:

Assistant Chief Baryic Hunter

El Toro Handcrew Superintendent Brandon Davis



[Click Here for Full Social Media Post](#)

[Click Here for Full Social Media Post](#)

Orange County Fire Authority in the News

- ['One ignition away from another disaster': Fire Chief on devastation in California](#)
Yahoo! News - Jan 14, 2025
- [Fire Updates & Struggles with Snelling](#)
Fisher FM - Jan 14, 2025
- [Firefighters from across California help LA](#)
Live!NOW from FOX - Jan 14, 2025
- [US: East Response Stops Another Fire in California During Red Flag Warning](#)
MSN International Edition - Jan 14, 2025
- [San Clemente addresses wildfire responsiveness after devastating L.A. blazes](#)
Los Angeles Times - Jan 15, 2025
- [Orange County Fire Chief Brian Fennessy: What Needs To Change After These Historic California Fires](#)
Substack - Jan 15, 2025
- ['Passionate' OC Firefighter Named Mission Viejo Employee Of The Year](#)
Patch.com - Jan 16, 2025
- [House Fire Breaks Out In OC Thursday: OCFA](#)
Patch.com - Jan 16, 2025
- ['Literally off the charts': LA's critically dry conditions stun scientists](#)
LAist - Jan 16, 2025
- [Evening Edition: Winds Ease But California Fire Fighters Still Battle](#)
Fox News Channel - Jan 16, 2025
- [Fire Chief Uses Milk and a 'Couple Beers' He Found in a Refrigerator While Saving Homes from L.A. Fires](#)
Yahoo! News - Jan 17, 2025
- [Quick-thinking fire chief uses milk and beer to save two homes caught in LA wildfires](#)
The Mirror US - Jan 17, 2025
- [Sea Lion Rescued + Comic-Con To Return + Support For Wildfire Victims: Saturday Smiles](#)
Patch.com - Jan 17, 2025
- [Calif. Fire Chief Saves Homes Using Milk 'Couple of Beers'](#)
Newsmax - Jan 17, 2025
- [Orange County Fire Chief Saves Brother's House with Beer, Milk After Running Out of Water](#)
Breitbart News Network - Jan 17, 2025
- [Santa Ana College fire technology and nursing programs offer value, affordability](#)
The Orange County Register - Jan 17, 2025
- [California firefighter used Bear and Milk to Save Homes without Water in LA Fire: 'It Was All I Could Do'](#)
MSN.com - Jan 17, 2025
- [Palisades, Eaton fires are a stark reminder about risk of wildfires in OC's communities](#)
The Orange County Register - Jan 20, 2025
- [Beach Fire Breaks Out in San Clemente Monday: OCFA](#)
Patch.com - Jan 20, 2025
- [As more wild winds are forecast in Southern California, firefighters gear up by the thousands](#)
MSN.com - Jan 20, 2025
- [How helicopter pilots prepare for Southern California wildfires](#)
CBS News - Jan 23, 2025
- [Seal Beach fire causes 405 freeway closures near 805 interchange](#)
Yahoo! News - Jan 23, 2025
- [Early Morning Crash in Irvine Claims Life of Aliso Viejo Woman, Police Investigate Cause](#)
Hoodline - Jan 26, 2025
- [There's a lot of resources responding to southern California wildfires, says Orange County fire chief](#)
MSN.com - Jan 27, 2025
- [1 Dead In 2-Alarm Apartment Fire Thursday Night: OCFA](#)
Patch.com - Jan 31, 2025
- [Man Injured In RSM Garage Fire: OCFA](#)
Patch.com - Jan 31, 2025
- [Deadly Fire in Lake Forest Apartment Claims One Life, Under Investigation by Orange County Authorities](#)
Hoodline - Jan 31, 2025

Promotions

- Ruben Gomez, Fire Prevention Analyst

PROMOTIONS



- Brian Abney, Fire Captain/PM
- Joshua Bender, Fire Battalion Chief
- Kyle Can, Fire Captain
- Brett Cowdell, Fire Captain
- Jason Fleenor, Fire Captain/PM
- Mark Grant, Fire Apparatus Engineer
- Jonathan Keese, Fire Apparatus Engineer
- Corey Larson, Fire Captain
- Mike Mallett, Fire Captain/PM
- Douglas Mann, Fire Captain
- John Mudds, Fire Apparatus Engineer
- Justin Neville, Fire Battalion Chief
- Scott Proud, Fire Captain/PM
- Marcel Rindler, Fire Apparatus Engineer/PM
- Shane Sherwood, Assistant Chief
- Michael Yeun, Fire Battalion Chief

35 YEARS OF SERVICE



- Veronica Gastelum, Office Services Specialist

RETIREMENTS



- Shawn Fraley, Fire Prevention Specialist
- Steve Dohman, Division Chief