

MESSAGE FROM FIRE CHIEF DARYL L. OSBY

May 2016



This month, we gathered as a Department family to pay tribute to our fallen firefighters. We honored two of our own at our annual Firefighters' Memorial, a yearly tribute to our dedicated and brave firefighters we have lost over the years.

We also shifted our focus from El Niño to La Niña, which is projected to hit our region late this summer and last through winter. Brush inspections have been initiated in anticipation of La Niña, which has the potential to aggravate a five-year running drought.

I also had an opportunity to present at the annual Emergency Medical Services Administrators' Association of California (EMSAAC) Conference to report on the Department's state of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) affairs.

HONORING THE FALLEN

At this year's Firefighters' Memorial service on May 21, we paid tribute to Fire Fighter Specialist (FFS) Shawn M. Bayer and Fire Fighter Paramedic (FFPM) John J. Cobos.

FFS Bayer lost his battle against cancer in November 2013. Part of Recruit Class 112, he was assigned to Light Force 8 and was known for his zest

for life, passion for firefighting and selflessness. FFS Bayer's father Ken was a Department fire captain who passed away in September 1997 while overhauling a structure fire.

FFPM Cobos passed away from brain cancer in October 2012. A 31-year member of the Department, he was assigned to Fire Station 193. Remembered as a consummate family man, FFPM Cobos was a quiet and private person who was known for his work ethic and compassion.

The names on the memorial wall represent brave and selfless firefighters who placed their lives on the line without regard for their own safety. They made sacrifices and devoted themselves to the fire service.

Please take a moment to pay tribute to our heroes. Let us not forget them and what they mean to us.

EMSAAC

During the annual EMSAAC Conference in San Diego held earlier this month, I had the privilege to speak on a panel regarding Navigating EMS System Redesign. As part of the panel discussion, I provided an overview of the Department's state of EMS affairs.

The Department worked closely with Citygate consultants over an eight-month period to identify mission-critical emergency medical care that warranted a greater degree of organizational and operational emphasis and oversight.



The final scope of the project revolved around two key themes:

1. Continue with a deep diagnostic technical assessment tied to known EMS best practices.

- Facilitate a data- and information-driven applied Strategic Plan to design and direct a Departmental re-engineering of the provision of EMS.

An applied Strategic Plan was created. The Strategic Plan is a three-phased approach to enhance the operational and organizational effectiveness of the overall Department EMS mission.

Despite challenges faced, the Department is managing and implementing the delivery of successful programs and changes.

Among those achievements, the Department hired a permanent Medical Director, improved relations with the EMS Agency, implemented electronic patient care records, revamped the quality improvement program, completed back-logged EMS report scanning and became the first fire department to go live with the implementation of the Safety Intelligence Risk Management Software tool.

As we move forward in implementing additional recommendations and addressing fiscal challenges, we will continue to focus on service delivery to our communities and operational emphasis and oversight.

FROM EL NIÑO TO LA NIÑA

On May 13, Department of Public Works Chief Deputy Mark Pestrella and I had the opportunity to speak about El Niño/La Niña and emergency preparedness and response at the Contract Cities Association 57th Annual Municipal Seminar.



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Chief Osby speaks at the Contract Cities Association 57th Annual Municipal Seminar on May 13.

While El Niño was not as strong as predicted in Los Angeles County, its counterpart La Niña is projected to be stronger than average. Since El Niño had very little impact on the drought for much of Southern California, La Niña will only aggravate and continue dry conditions for our area. The five-year drought has caused substantial dieback and death in our brush and tree species that will create challenging fuel conditions for years to come.

This spring's devastating Fort McMurray wildfire in Alberta, Canada, is a clear reminder of the threat we face each fire season. Standing dead and dying fuels present a threat even in a moist environment. We must remain mindful of the drought and local water restrictions while maintaining trees and landscaping for enhanced fire safety.

During the fall months, a special set of environmental conditions can develop. These conditions set the stage for an alignment of forces that have the potential to create exponential fire growth. The most significant elements driving these fires are the Santa Ana winds, accompanied by low humidity. Compounding the problem is that, by this time of year, the fuel beds are at critical levels, very dry and combustible.

Santa Ana wind fires present a significant challenge to our Department and pose a great danger to our firefighters and the communities we serve. Each and every member of the Department could be called upon to participate in one way or another to help control these devastating fires.

PARTNERING & PREPARING TOGETHER

In anticipation of an active fire season, fire station personnel initiated brush clearance inspections on May 1. In total, the Department will complete over 40,000 property inspections this year.

Homeowners who do not pass initial inspection will be provided a report detailing deficiencies and given 30 days to meet Fire Code requirements. If a property is not in compliance when the follow-up inspection is completed, penalties and enforcement procedures may follow, which amounts to more than \$1,100.

Preparation and prevention go hand-in-hand, and we encourage the public to protect themselves and their homes from wildfire by learning about fire safety and developing a *Ready! Set! Go!* Wildfire Action Plan. The Plan provides guidance on how to retrofit homes with fire-resistant features, create defensible space and develop a family wildfire preparation and evacuation plan.

If you live in a fire-prone area, please stop by your local fire station, meet your crew and get your copy of the *Ready! Set! Go!* Wildfire Action Plan. You can also find a copy of *Ready! Set! Go!* on our website at fire.lacounty.gov.

Through cooperation, communication and community action, we are ready for whatever challenge may be ahead. Planning and forward-thinking is what keeps the Department trained, skilled and always prepared.

TIME FOR THANKS

The community looks to each of us as leaders with amazing responsibility. Our success will be measured by the way our residents remember how we made them feel and how we treated their loved ones.

May each of us continue to enhance the relationship with our communities and residents as we strive to “enrich lives through effective and caring service.”

