

Directors Message

DECEMBER 2015

As 2015 comes to a close, I want to take the opportunity to share how proud I am of CAL FIRE and all of you who work so hard every day serving the public. CAL FIRE has always been looked to as a leader in emergency response, fire prevention, and resource management. Over the last few years, I have had an opportunity to attend meetings across the country and participate on a variety of national committees. It is very clear that CAL FIRE is a household name and respected not only in California, but across the country.



Once again in 2015, you were a shining example of this leadership. We experienced one of the most devastating fire seasons in the State's history, responding to over 6,297 wildfires since January 1. That is 1,769 more than the average. The Valley and Butte Fires destroyed 2,776 structures, severely injured four firefighters and took six lives, ranking them as the 3rd and 7th most destructive fires ever in California. Despite explosive fire conditions, as well as the significant increase in number of fires and losses, you were still able to keep 95% of them at 10 acres or less. That is a direct result of your professionalism, training, work ethic, and competence.

The recent rain and snow is welcome; however, four years of drought have left California's forests parched and subject to epidemic levels of bark beetles and other insects and diseases. As a result, millions of trees are dead and millions more are dying, creating an unprecedented public safety hazard and forest health impact across the State. Through an Emergency Proclamation, Governor Brown has directed CAL FIRE to lead the effort to coordinate a response with our Federal, State, and local government partners, along with many other organizations. Together with these valued partners, we will be increasing our commitment to fuels treatment, land use planning, prescribed fire, and overall forest management.

2015 has also seen numerous retirements and leadership changes at the Unit, Region, and Program levels. While the loss of experience and changing faces can be unsettling, I am very encouraged and excited by all who are stepping forward to fill these large shoes and embrace the challenges ahead. My confidence in our mission, the organization and all of you who comprise it, is higher than it has ever been.

I look to 2016 with great promise as a result of CAL FIRE's demonstrated leadership and resolve. Leadership does not come without challenge; however, our history of integrity, professionalism, and true public service will carry us forward. I wish all of you a happy holiday season with your families, and I thank you for what you do every day.

Chief Ken Pimlott
Director