# Tuolumne County Fire Department Monthly Activity Report



# September 2020

# **Tuolumne County Fire Department**

Phone: (209) 533-5100

18440 Striker Ct., Sonora, CA 95370

www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/717/Fire-Department



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# **MONTH IN REVIEW**

# September 2020

On September 12<sup>th,</sup> at 1:44 pm, the Emergency Command Center alerted all Tuolumne and Calaveras fire facilities to observe one minute of silence and fly flags at half-staff in honor and memory of our Tuolumne Calaveras CAL FIRE fallen Firefighter Eva Schicke who died in the line of duty on September 12, 2004.

Firefighter Schicke was a member of the elite Columbia Helitack crew. The crew was called to fight the Tuolumne Fire in the Stanislaus National Forest. When the crew arrived, seven members were dropped off, and two members remained with the helicopter to begin water drops. Firefighters established safety

zones and began their decent into a steep canyon.

The fire was moving up the canyon away from them and had displayed mild behavior at this point in the incident. While they were working, a wind shift blew the fire toward the crew. With only moments to react due to the speed of the fire, firefighters were forced to run to their safety zones. Firefighter Schicke and another firefighter attempted to run uphill to the roadside safety zone. The first firefighter made it to safety; the fire overran Firefighter Schicke before she could reach the safety of the road. Firefighter Schicke was the first female CDF (now CAL FIRE) firefighter to be killed in the line of duty.



Our hearts will forever be bruised by the loss of our sister Eva. She remains a constant thought and we will continue to honor her and our other local brothers and sisters lost in the line of duty by performing our duties with the utmost excellence always.

Communities throughout the nation paused on September 11<sup>th</sup> to pay tribute to the victims and heroes of the Nation's worst terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. Throughout the County firefighters remember the 343 FDNY firefighters who died in the line of duty that day and the more than 200 workers from the World Trade Center site who have died from the aftereffects of working on that hallowed ground. May we Never Forget.

Smoke from the many fires of August continued to impact the County and most of California throughout nearly all of September. Red Flag Warnings and hot, windy weather occurred again during the month starting new catastrophic fires around the State. Fortunately, though there were many fires that started around the County, all the fires were quickly contained with few losses.

Fire season continued at an unprecedented pace at the time of this writing with over 4,000,000 acres burned, 8,000+ wildland fires, 31 fatalities and over 8,500 structures damaged or destroyed around the state. It seems like "unprecedented" is a word that is being used every year. It's past time for all residents of Tuolumne County to be vigilant in protecting their property and their neighborhood by doing

the things to make their homes and communities safe, especially during fire season. That includes following California Public Resources Code 4291 and local ordinances to ensure their property has a minimum of 100' of clearance, removing dead and downed material on their unimproved parcels, collaborating with the County's FireSafe Communities efforts, and being constantly aware of their surroundings and ways out in the case of a fast-moving wildfire.

Due to the extreme activity around the state, CAL FIRE Tuolumne Calaveras Unit utilized the Assistance by Hire Agreement and leased fire engines from TCFD that were staffed with CAL FIRE personnel to cover State fire stations in the Unit. These leased engines aid the State by adding fire engines into the emergency response system, and the County is reimbursed at a pre-agreed to rate. These funds go directly back into the fire department funds and are utilized to repair and replace much needed equipment.

TCFD recently received canned emergency drinking water to help provide critical hydration to its responders during this year's wildfire season. On September 3, 2020, Delta Sierra Beverage Company, a local Anheuser-Busch wholesaler partner, dropped off 96 cases to the department to help support its wildfire response needs. Maintaining firefighters' hydration during long incidents or disasters such as wildfires is a major safety concern for many departments.

In response to COVID-19, our 2020 Virtual Fill the Boot campaign, supporting the Muscular Dystrophy Association, took place September 4<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup>. This year, CAL FIRE Tuolumne Calaveras Unit and the TCFD raised at total of \$845. Last year, TCFD and CAL FIRE raised \$12,566 and \$10,349 the year before with a local record in 2013 of \$12,700. The Fill the Boot donations support ground breaking research for treatments and cures, provide care at multidisciplinary Care Centers across the country, and empowers families with services and support such as specialists, free summer camps, support groups, equipment assistance, advocacy and public policy efforts and more.



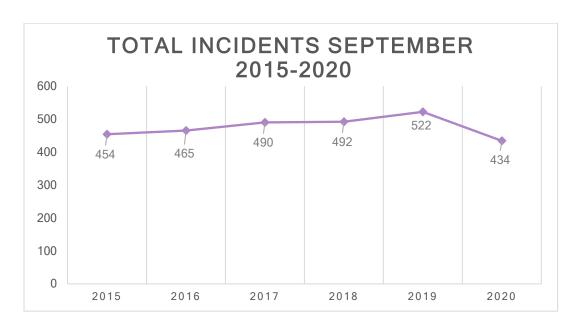
The Public Safety Power Shutoff event started at approximately 11:00 pm on September 7<sup>th</sup> and lasted until approximately 7:00 pm September 8<sup>th</sup>. During this time, TCFD responded to multiple incidents involving carbon monoxide gas inside homes. This also impacts the firefighters working during power outages as no TCFD fire stations have whole house generator backups. This means that garage doors must be opened and closed manually, firefighters can't use station lighting at night, and listening to the station radios and dispatch alerts becomes challenging. All these factors and others may cause delays in firefighters responding to emergencies. Due to extreme budget challenges and lack of grant funds, this continues to be one of the many vital issues that can only be resolved with increased revenue to the Fire Fund.

As we discussed above, wildfire season is in full swing with many small fires occurring throughout the county. All the fuels (timber, brush and grass components) are ready to burn. Please ensure you're doing your part in the fight against wildfire and ensure your properties have defensible space. For more information on how you can do that check out <a href="https://www.readyforwildfire.org">www.readyforwildfire.org</a> and

https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1162/Wildfire-Preparedness. While you're on the County website, make sure you sign up for Everbridge, Tuolumne County's emergency notification program at https://member.everbridge.net/1332612387832200/login.

In September there were a total of 434 incidents in TCFD jurisdiction, a decrease of 88 incidents (-16.9%) from the same time period last year, and an 18% decrease from the 5-year average of 481 incidents. Of the 435 incidents in September 2020, there were 291 medical aids, 50 fires, 15 hazardous materials/fire menace standby, and 76 other incidents in TCFD jurisdiction. Between January 1 and September 30, 2020 there have been 4,122 incidents in TCFD jurisdiction compared to 4,423 during that period in 2019.





# **TCFD Station Responses**

Station 51 Mono Village Fire Station responded to 106 incidents in the month of September which included 53 medical calls, 11 vehicle collisions (with one pin-in), 8 fires, 18 public assists, 6 alarm soundings, and 10 other incidents. 89 incidents were within their primary response area and 17 were not. Volunteers responded to 13 of the 106 incidents and through the Tuolumne County Automatic Aid Agreement, aid was given to one agency eight times and received by four agencies thirteen times.

Station 76 Jamestown Fire Station responded to 143 incidents in September including 77 medical aids, 13 vehicle collisions (with 2 requiring extrication), 14 fires, 23 public assists, 8 smoke checks, 5 alarm sounding and 3 other incidents. Of the 143 incidents 121 were within their primary response area and

22 were not. Volunteers responded to six incidents. Automatic aid was given to two agencies 8 times and received from two agencies 12 times.

## **Tuolumne County Fire Department Station Incident Responses**

Mono Village Station 51 (6 career / 6 volunteers) 121 incidents
Ponderosa Hills Station 53 (1 volunteer) 0 incidents
Long Barn Station 54 (<u>0 volunteers</u>) incidents absorbed by other stations
Pinecrest Station 55 (6 volunteers) 25 incidents
Mono Vista Station 56 (6 volunteers) 57 incidents
Crystal Falls Station 57 (<u>0 Volunteers</u>) Incidents absorbed by other stations
Cedar Ridge Station 58 (12 volunteers) 16 incidents
Chinese Camp Station 61 (1 volunteer) 35 incidents
Smith Station Station 63 (<u>0 Volunteers</u>) Incidents absorbed by other stations
Don Pedro Station 64 (3 volunteers) 16 incidents
Jamestown Station 76 (5 career / 3 volunteers) 147 incidents
Columbia College Station 79 (6 student firefighters) 51 incidents

## **Tuolumne County CAL FIRE Station Incident Response Information**

Blanchard CAL FIRE Station - 40 incidents
Twain Harte CAL FIRE Station - 80 incidents
Groveland CAL FIRE Station - 34 incidents
Sonora CAL FIRE Station - 41 incidents
Standard CAL FIRE Station - 42 incidents
Green Springs CAL FIRE Station - 44 incidents

# **Significant Incidents**

#### September 1, 2020 - Structure Fire, Trace Road

Firefighters assisted the City of Sonora Fire Department with a residential structure fire and contained the fire to the property with no extension to the vegetation.

#### September 2, 2020 – Public Assist, Jacksonville Road

Firefighters responded to assist a resident with a rattlesnake on the back porch. The snake was removed, and the homeowner and their animals were very grateful.

#### September 3, 2020 - Vehicle Collision, Chicken Ranch Road

Firefighters responded to a two-vehicle accident and found one patient self-extricated from their vehicle with minor injuries. Crews removed an additional patient from their vehicle who had major injuries. The patient with major injuries was flown to a valley trauma center and the minor patient was transported to Adventist Health Sonora.

#### September 8, 2020 - Structure Fire, Sawmill Flat Road

Firefighters responded to an extinguished structure fire on Sawmill Flat Road in the town of Columbia. The fire was started by generator exhaust being too close to a structure and igniting the home's siding. There was minimal extension or damage to the home. Firefighters educated the homeowner on

<sup>\*</sup>Incident numbers above may not match actual engine responses. These numbers above indicate calls that were in the station's first due.

generator safety to help keep the power on in their home during the Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS).

September 8, 2020 – Hazardous Gas, Longeway Road Firefighters were dispatched to a report of possible carbon monoxide in a residence. Carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas that can kill. Upon arrival, the occupants had already vacated the building which had a generator in use to provide supplemental power. A 4-gas monitor was used and subsequently discovered 56 parts per million (ppm) found inside the children's bedroom. 35 ppm requires use of Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus. Firefighters horizontally ventilated the residence until the residence was safe for the occupants to re-enter.

#### September 8, 2020 – Structure Fire, Smokey River Dr. Upon arrival firefighters discovered a detached shed 50% involved with fire. Firefighters contained the fire quickly before it could spread to adjacent buildings or vegetation.



#### September 8, 2020 – Hazardous Gas, Paseo De Los Portales

Continuing a very busy day, firefighters were dispatched to reports of carbon monoxide in a residence. Occupants had been using a generator to provide supplemental power during the PSPS. Personnel utilized the 4-gas monitor and discovered 159 ppm in the lower level of the residence and provided horizontal ventilation until it was safe for the occupants to re-enter.

#### September 10, 2020 - Vegetation Fire, Bonds Flat Road

Firefighters responded to a vegetation fire off Bonds Flat Rd. The fire was contained by air and ground resources to 4.6 acres.

#### September 12, 2020 – Vehicle Collision with Fire, Highway 120 x Perricone

Crews responded to a vehicle collision with power lines down. While the patient from the collision was being treated, fire crews simultaneously attacked the fire. The fire was quickly contained by air and ground resources to just less than one acre.

#### September 13, 2020 – Vehicle Collision, Highway 108 x Sims Road

Firefighters arrived to two vehicles involved in a serious collision. Two patients with moderate injuries were transported to an area hospital.

#### September 18, 2020 – Vehicle Fire, Mono Way

Firefighters responded to the Junction Shopping Center to find an extinguished vehicle fire. The fire was extinguished by good Samaritans in its beginning stages while the driver and occupants were away from the vehicle shopping. The fire was confirmed to be fully extinguished with a Thermal Imaging Camera which reads heat signatures and can identify fire or heat from smoldering objects in enclosed spaces or behind hard to access areas.

#### September 26, 2020 - Public Assist, 4th Avenue

Firefighters were in quarters when a local resident requested assistance regarding an infant locked in a car. Crews safely got the child out of the vehicle without causing damage to the vehicle. A good example of crews having the right tools for the job. Without the specialty tools this incident would have only been resolved by causing costly damage to the vehicle.

#### September 26, 2020 - Boat Collision with Rescue, Don Pedro Reservoir

Crews responded to a boating accident at Lake Don Pedro. One immediate patient was brought back to the Moccasin Point Boat Launch where patient care was transferred to paramedics and transported to the Chinese Camp LZ where an air ambulance transported the patient to a Modesto trauma center.

September 28, 2020 – Structure Fire, Jamestown Road Firefighters responded to a fully involved trailer fire on Jamestown Road in the town of Jamestown. The crews were able to get quick knock down on the trailer and a small area of vegetation that had caught fire.

#### **Fleet**

With the approval of the final budget by the Board of Supervisors, TCFD was approved to purchase a much-needed breathing support to replace the current out of service vehicle. This vehicle provides on scene filling of self-contained breathing apparatus for long duration incidents as well as ensuring the SCBA air bottles on fire engines are filled prior to leaving the scene so they're ready to respond to the next incident. The SCBA's are



used in environments that are immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) such as structure fires, vehicle fires, hazardous materials incidents, etc. The breathing support vehicle is also used to respond to medical aids and rescue incidents. We're currently in the process of designing a build and getting quotes to move forward with the purchase prior to the end of November. It will take nearly 12 months to build the new vehicle and will be used on incidents throughout the all jurisdictions in the county for the next 10-15 years.

Our Heavy Equipment Mechanic continues to keep busy with a fleet of over 50 vehicles. This month while checking the equipment he found the following: Engine 511 head light high beams not working: upgraded to LED head lights for less amp draw; Multiple preventative 90-day service's on engines which includes lube, oil, and filter changes as well as safety checks and other small repairs.

Additionally, in mid-August he was assigned to various fires and when the lightning ignited fires across the state, he was dispatched to the Santa Clara Unit Lightning Complex and remained there through approximately the 10<sup>th</sup> of September. One of the benefits of the cooperative agreement with CAL FIRE is that while our HEM is assigned out of the area on fires or off shift or on vacation, CAL FIRE HEM's from TCU fill the gaps at no cost to the County.

#### **Prevention/Education**

Fire Investigators/Inspectors were able to conduct 26 site inspections during the month and 54 plans reviews.

On September 13<sup>th</sup>, Water Tender 518, staffed with TCFD volunteers, Engine 761 and one CAL FIRE engine attended Jessica's 13<sup>th</sup> birthday drive-by event in Jamestown to help brighten her special day. Jessica is a great supporter of all first responders in the county. Happy 13<sup>th</sup> birthday Jessica.

Social media continues to provide a great opportunity to spread the fire prevention/education message and keep the community informed on events occurring within County Fire's jurisdiction. If you haven't already, follow us:





# **Training**

A Tuolumne County Fire Department Volunteer spent a 24-hour shift at Station 51. Station 51 staff mentored, educated and trained him in advanced skills increasing his capabilities as a Volunteer Firefighter and Driver/Operator. The opportunity is available for all of our Volunteer Firefighters.

Volunteers took part in training at Station 51 where they covered and completed fire engine pumping operations, including drafting from a portable tank, and reviewed additional options and considerations fire department personnel have to utilize, obtain and supply water to engines in the Wildland Urban Interface. They also received the opportunity to try the new SCOTT Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus and compare it to the MSA systems currently in use. Face mask fit testing for the MSA's was also completed and are up to date.

TCFD staff routinely perform frequent trainings to maintain and acquire new skills, knowledge, and capabilities demanded by the variable types of incident responses that may occur. Topics include: incident command, fire ground operations (residential and commercial structure, wildland, passenger and commercial vehicle, etc...), hazardous materials, technical rescue (rope rescue, trench rescue, confined space rescue, urban search and rescue, swift water rescue, etc...) equipment and appliance malfunction, medical emergencies, vehicle accidents and auto extrication, severe weather and natural disasters, and aircraft emergencies to name a few.

The TCFD Muster Association is a benevolent non-profit organization that receives donations to support the firefighters of the TCFD in need and supports firefighters in obtaining additional training. The TCFD Muster Association is proud to offer "We Support TCFD" t-shirts in children's and adult sizes and Tuolumne Co. FD Richardson snapback hats for a donation. Children's shirts have been reduced to \$10 and adult sizes are \$15. Hats are \$20 and both items are pictured below and can be ordered from <a href="mailto:TCFDMuster@gmail.com">TCFDMuster@gmail.com</a> or by calling 209-533-5118.









