

Ventura County Fire Protection District 2008 Annual Report



FIREFIGHTER'S PRAYER

WHEN I AM CALLED TO DUTY, GOD,
WHEREVER FLAMES MAY RAGE
GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO SAVE A LIFE
WHATEVER BE ITS AGE

HELP ME EMBRACE A LITTLE CHILD
BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE
OR SAVE AN OLDER PERSON
FROM THE HORROR OF THAT FATE

ENABLE ME TO BE ALERT
AND HEAR THE WEAKEST SHOUT
AND QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY
TO PUT THE FIRE OUT

I WANT TO FILL MY CALLING
AND TO GIVE THE BEST IN ME
TO GUARD MY EVERY NEIGHBOR
AND PROTECT THEIR PROPS

AND IF, ACCORDING TO YOUR WILL
I HAVE TO LOSE MY LIFE
PLEASE BLESS WITH YOUR PROTECTION
MY LOVING FAMILY FROM STRIFE

AMEN

Message from Chief Roper



Statistics are one way we evaluate the success of the district every year, and the statistics contained in this Annual Report are impressive. But a better assessment of the district's quality and professionalism might be found in the requests we receive to assist other agencies.

In 2008, units from the Ventura County Fire Protection District responded to Louisiana and Texas to assist the victims of hurricanes Gustav and Ike. Our firefighters assisted in the Metrolink train crash in Chatsworth and they spent weeks battling wildfires from one end of the state to the other, including significant fires in Santa Barbara County and Los Angeles County. Our members are so skilled and respected that Incident Commanders at major fires often request them by name.

Respect like this must be earned, and it is. Our Regional Training Center is busy nearly every day providing instruction to our firefighters, and the engine companies conduct frequent training as well. This preparation pays off when it is needed in an emergency situation and, as a result, other agencies are quick to request assistance from Ventura County because they know the level of expertise they will get in return.

Success is measured in other ways, as well. In September, the Fallen Firefighters Memorial was dedicated, the culmination of a four-year effort to permanently recognize the firefighters who have paid the ultimate price in service to the citizens of Ventura County. The Memorial (pictured on the front cover) was made possible through a collaborative effort between the fire agencies, firefighter labor organizations, Rotary clubs, businesses and private citizens of Ventura County. Located on the grounds of the Government Center, the Memorial is a powerful reminder of the risks firefighters willingly accept to serve the public.

The photographs and statistics contained in this report can only provide a glimpse into the work of the fire district. They can't show the depth of commitment, the devotion to duty or the pride and professionalism of the people who comprise the Ventura County Fire Protection District. But they can and do show the scope of our work and our dedication to excellence.

Board of Directors

The Ventura County Fire Protection District is a dependent special district within the county that was created by a special election, held in 1928, to provide fire protection for the unincorporated areas of the county. Over time, the protection was expanded to include six cities in the county – Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Moorpark, Camarillo, Port Hueneme and Ojai.

The County of Ventura Board of Supervisors acts as the fire district's board of directors. One supervisor is elected from each of the five supervisorial districts within the county. These five supervisors appoint the fire chief to provide fire protection services for the district.

Currently, the Ventura County Fire Protection District Board of Directors is comprised of:

District 1 – Supervisor Steve Bennett

He represents the communities of San Buenaventura, Montalvo, Saticoy, Oxnard Shores, Mandalay Bay, northwest Oxnard, north Ventura Avenue, Foster Park, Casitas Springs, Oak View, Miramonte, Meiners Oaks, the City of Ojai, the eastern Ojai Valley and Upper Ojai, and the North Coast.

District 2 – Supervisor Linda Parks

She represents the cities and areas of Thousand Oaks, Newbury Park, Westlake Village, Lynn Ranch, Oak Park, Santa Rosa Valley, Bell Canyon, Hidden Valley, Lake Sherwood, Malibu-Yerba Buena, portions of the Oxnard plain, Naval Base Ventura County Point Mugu and the South Coast.

District 3 – Supervisor Kathy Long

She represents the communities of Camarillo,

California State University-Channel Islands, Port Hueneme, southeast Oxnard, the eastern Oxnard plain, Santa Paula, Fillmore, Piru, Lockwood Valley and the eastern portion of Naval Base Ventura County, Port Hueneme.

District 4 – Supervisor Peter C. Foy

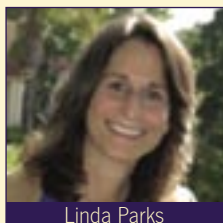
He represents the communities of Simi Valley, Moorpark, Somis, Las Posas Valley, Santa Susana Knolls, Box Canyon, Chatsworth Peak, Home Acres, Sinaloa Lake and the Tierra Rejada Valley.

District 5 – Supervisor John Zaragoza

He represents the areas of Oxnard, Silver Strand, Hollywood Beach, Hollywood-by-the-Sea, Channel Islands Harbor, El Rio, Nyeland Acres, the Del Norte area, Oxnard College, portions of the Oxnard plain and the western portion of Naval Base Ventura County, Port Hueneme.



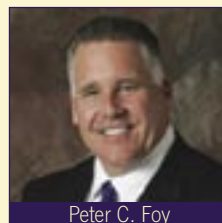
Steve Bennett



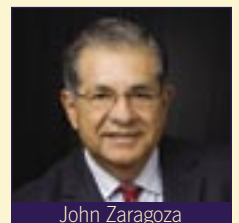
Linda Parks



Kathy Long



Peter C. Foy



John Zaragoza

Ventura County Fire Department

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District Spearheads a New Wildfire Initiative



The Ventura County Fire Protection District is leading the way in adopting a new philosophy on how homeowners prepare for a wildfire. It requires homeowners to first take personal responsibility for preparations in advance of the fire, and then for their actions during the fire.

The program takes the district's award-winning Wildfire Action Plan to a new level, asking residents in wildfire-prone areas to make major preventative preparations to their property in advance of a wildfire, patrol their property for embers in advance of the fire and then to leave early (evacuate) to allow firefighters freedom to operate.

The district wants all property owners to mitigate hazards on their property because studies have shown that the majority of houses lost during recent wildfires were not consumed by the flame front, but by secondary conflagrations started by embers far from the actual flame front of the fire.

With proper preparation, homeowners can evacuate early knowing they have done everything possible to lessen the chance of their home being destroyed. But the district understands that wind-driven fires can send embers out as much as a mile in front of the actual leading edge of the fire. So, homeowners in the "ember zone" ahead of the main body of the fire are being taught how to control small, incipient ember fires on their property, preventing them from becoming house-to-house conflagrations.

The concept represents a fundamental change as the fire service asks citizens to take a certain amount of personal responsibility for their personal safety and the protection of their property. Experience here in Ventura County, and elsewhere, has shown this type of program can be successful at saving lives and reducing property loss.

The Ventura County Fire Protection District is proud to be leading the national effort to expand the Wildfire Action Plan campaign to include comprehensive preventative measures, the "leave early" decision-making process and preparation for controlling ember fires.



Ventura County is a geographical area larger than the state of Rhode Island. The VCFPD response area covers almost half of that area – 848 square miles – and serves a population of more than 480,000 in six cities and the unincorporated areas of the county. During 2008, the department responded to 32,780 calls for service – an average of 90 every day – with an adopted operating budget of \$125.3 million.

Fire Department Profile

Total Personnel: 579 (471 uniform)
Fire Stations: 31
Administration and Support
Facilities: 4

Apparatus

First-Run Fire Engines: 30
First-Run Quint Apparatus: 1
Reserve Fire Engines: 17
Wildland Fire Engines: 11
Ladder Trucks (incl. 1 reserve): 4
Fire Boat and Water Rescue
Craft: 5
Command Vehicles: 14
Paramedic Squad Vehicles: 4
Heavy Equipment
(bulldozers, etc.): 9
Other Emergency Response
Vehicles: 38

In Memoriam – 2008

Adrian Ornelas
John A Campbell III
Danny Gray
Kevin Pryor
Jerry Barlow-Green
Ray Valencia
Don Winkler

Retirements – 2008

Jay Payne Baldwin Fire Engineer
Daniel Wayne Crow Fire Equipment Operator
James Robert Kniss GIS Analyst
Ralph James Lucas Fire Captain
Thomas Ramonette Telecom Network Analyst
John Irving Tucker Fire Captain

<http://fire.countyofventura.org/stations>



2008 Highlights

Trainees in the 46th Training Academy completed their academy instruction in June and ended their work with a demonstration of their skills for family and friends, followed by a graduation ceremony later that evening. The 46th Academy was made up of 11 Ventura County firefighters, five from the city of Ventura Fire Department and five from the Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District.



The week of July 7 was a bad week for pilots. There were three light plane crashes during the week. One pilot attempted an emergency landing in a field near Lapeyre Road in Simi Valley. The plane ended up on its top. The next day, a plane towing an advertising banner lost power at 2,000 feet and tried to land in a field near Camino Ruiz in Camarillo. This plane also ended up on its roof and, finally, a plane landing at Camarillo Airport had its nose gear collapse. Fortunately, there were only minor injuries in the first crash, and none in the other two.



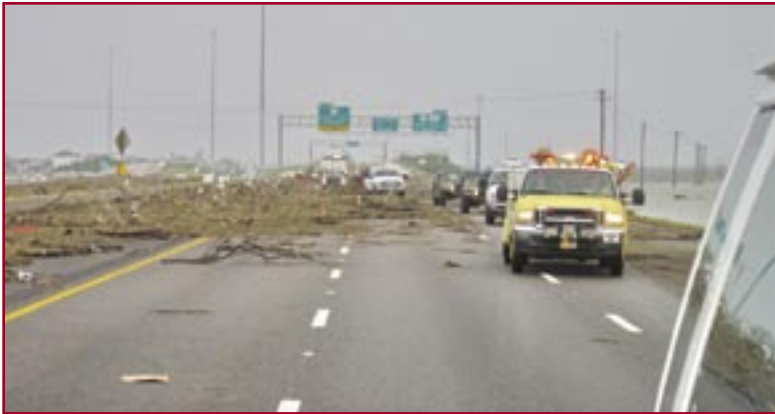
From June through November, department members responded throughout California to assist in one of the worst wildfire seasons in history. From lightning fires in Northern California to the Tea Fire in Santa Barbara County, and the Sesnon and Sayre fires in Los Angeles County, and numerous smaller fires in Ventura County, firefighters fought back the flames throughout the tinder-dry summer and fall.



In early August, a naturally occurring "thermal anomaly" became a concern on an oilfield just north of Fillmore. Gas and heat were emerging from a vent in a landslide area and there was a concern that the heat could ignite surrounding brush. Temperatures just 12 inches into the ground were registering 977 degrees Fahrenheit.



2008 Highlights



The Swift Water Rescue Team was dispatched to Louisiana on August 31 to assist people affected by Hurricane Gustav and then to the Galveston, Texas area following Hurricane Ike. The destruction was particularly bad in Texas and the team searched thousands of homes and made numerous rescues.



On Friday, September 12, tragedy struck Ventura County when a Metrolink train filled with county residents struck a Union Pacific locomotive head-on in Chatsworth. After receiving a request for Urban Search and Rescue mutual aid from the Los Angeles Fire Department, USAR 54, Squad 31, Squad 41 and the USAR Officer responded along with a division chief and two battalion chiefs. USAR 54 was assigned to assist LAFD USAR 88 with interior operations in the lead Metrolink car.



On the morning of Saturday, September 27, 2008, the Ventura County Fallen Firefighters Memorial was dedicated on the grounds of the Ventura County Government Center. The ceremony included the unveiling of the statue that stands on a pedestal inscribed with the names of 39 fallen firefighters. An audience of more than 800 witnessed the proceedings.



In September, the remodeling of Station 28 in Piru was celebrated with a community open house. And in December, firefighters moved into the newly built Station 56 in Malibu. The new station faces Pacific Coast Highway and features two engine bays, living quarters, a shop, exercise room and offices.



**The fire district is divided into six functional bureaus.
Each bureau performs specific tasks either to directly serve the public,
or to support the district's mission of public service.**

The **Emergency Services Bureau** fulfills the core function of the fire department. The bureau is responsible for all fire suppression activities, the delivery of emergency medical care, regional dispatching, response to hazardous materials incidents (HazMat), urban search and rescue (USAR) and water rescues.

The fire district maintains 31 stations across the county, staffed 24-hours a day, for responding to emergencies. The fire apparatus at these stations are equipped to handle fires, provide emergency medical care and perform rescue operations. As a regional dispatch center, public safety dispatchers at the Fire Communications Center direct responses from the Ventura County Fire Department and most of the other fire agencies and all of the ambulance services in the county.

The **Support Services Bureau** consists of the Fleet Maintenance unit, the Wildland/Aviation unit and the Supply unit. Fleet Maintenance is responsible for keeping the district's fleet of vehicles in service and available for response. The Wildland/Aviation unit responds to wildfires with handcrews and dozers to create firebreaks, conduct backfiring operations and assist in firefighting operations, and coordinates the use of the Ventura County Sheriff's Department fleet of helicopters for fire district missions. The Supply division receives and distributes all goods and material for the fire district.

The **Fire Prevention Bureau** is made up of six functional units that are both interrelated and mutually supportive. They are: Planning and New Construction, Code Enforcement and License Care, Engineering and Fire Protection Systems, Fire

Hazard Reduction and Filming, Community Education and Public Information. Through its processes and programs, the bureau works to make Ventura County safer by educating and informing the public on how to prevent fires and prepare for disasters.

The **Planning and Technology Bureau** consists of the Information Technology, Planning, Investigations and Training units. Information Technology provides the fire district with the radio, computing and telephone services it requires to deliver its services to the public and operate its non-emergency business functions.

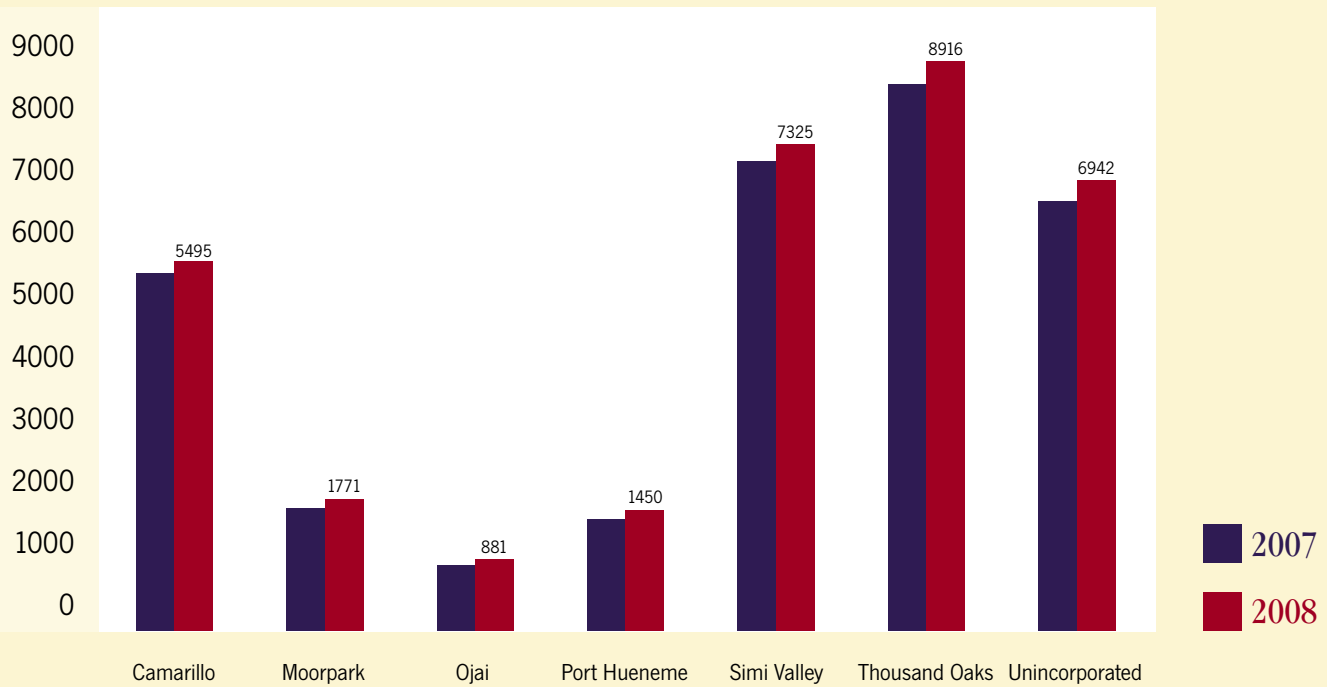
The Regional Training Center is responsible for fire, rescue and emergency medical training for the district's members and the Pre-Emergency Planning and Arson/Fire Investigation unit aids the district by preparing plans for department actions in the event of a major emergency or disaster, investigating the cause of fires and training Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members.

The **Risk Management, Human Resources and Labor Relations Bureau** handles the recruitment, hiring and administration of the district's employees. It staffs the fire stations, coordinates insurance and other benefits, conducts testing for promotional opportunities and performs risk assessment for the department. Industrial accidents and injuries are also under the supervision of Human Resources.

The **Administrative and Fiscal Services Bureau** is responsible for the financial management of the fire district. Its functions include payroll, accounts payable, purchasing, budgets, financial analysis and facilities management.

Calls for Service by Community

2007 vs. 2008



Calls for Service by Type of Call

2007 vs. 2008

