

## **Monthly Message from the Chief**

We are often asked by the media, legislature, Governor's Office and others for statistics regarding our department, so I wanted to have the number of people employed by CAL FIRE at peak staffing this year readily available. On June 29 the number of CAL FIRE employees on record was 7,936! In addition, there are approximately 5,600 volunteer and paid-call firefighters and 200 local government employees integral to our cooperative fire protection (Schedule A) contracts, 4,300 ward and inmate firefighters we train and lead, and 2,600 Volunteers in Prevention. Combined, that's well over 20,000 people.



That number represents our total force.

The term total force is borrowed from the military and is descriptive of how we operate. The total force concept embodies the philosophy that all members of an organization are vital to its success, committed to its success and will contribute to its success in concert. That is what I expect, and that is, indeed, what we do.

Our efforts to this end have not gone unnoticed. Governor Schwarzenegger has recognized the need for CAL FIRE to be at peak emergency response preparedness during the months we historically experience the most intense wildfire conditions. Recognition of our role in emergency response hasn't come to be by accident, either. The Governor and those in his office value public safety and are appreciative of the service we perform. It's an inherent philosophy of this administration, yet CAL FIRE has been recognized as having a mission and duty that is unparalleled in state government.

Your executive management has been diligent in bringing to the attention of those that make decisions regarding wages, hours and benefits the uniqueness of CAL FIRE and how recent measures taken to address the state's fiscal crisis impact our operations.

The leadership of CDF Firefighters deserves a great deal of credit as well. Not only has their board voted to support keeping our department intact, but their leadership has articulated to the Governor's Office and the Department

of Personnel Administration the need for maintaining our total force capability. I am extraordinarily pleased with the relationship forged between the Department and Local 2881, and although I can't speak for them, I am confident Bob Wolf would echo that sentiment.

It's too soon to determine how our department will fare in the ongoing negotiations between the Governor's Office and the legislature regarding our budget, but we should count ourselves thankful to be in the position we are. We have the tools and staffing necessary to serve and safeguard the people and protect the property and natural resources of California. In doing so, we should also be very sensitive to all of our cooperators in state government and elsewhere who provide valuable services while not enjoying the exemptions we have been granted.

I urge you to quietly enjoy our good fortune and respect the contributions of our partners.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Del Walters", with a horizontal line drawn through the middle of the signature.

Del Walters, Chief  
Director