



# SFM Report

July 2007

## CAL FIRE State Fire Marshal Monthly Report to the California Fire Prevention Officers



**Kate Dargan**  
**State Fire Marshal**

One of the best things about my job is every now and then I get to honor deserving, heroic people. On June 6, 2007 on the Capitol steps in Sacramento, I joined emergency responders and sports champions to address the **Local 9-1-1 Heroes Awards Ceremony**. This event featured children who called 911 in an emergency and the dispatchers who took that call. We heard story after story about a young boy or girl



who was afraid that their parent, or brother or sister was about to die. They overcame their fear and called for help and did just what the dispatcher told them to do. And then we heard from those amazing dispatchers who take those calls every day and get the right help to the right people right now. My thanks to **9-1-1 For Kids** who sponsored this wonderful event.

I have been on the road quite a bit lately, speaking to stakeholder groups and conducting public hearings about the new **Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps** and the new **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Building Codes** which will go into effect next January. Both of these topics are complex even for those of us in the fire service but the public and stakeholders in the building trades seem to be right on board with us. The response has been positive for the most part and the proposed changes have been constructive. We are well on our way to implementing some of the most important Wildland Urban Interface codes and building practices in our history.

Of course, the **Angora Fire in South Lake Tahoe** is occupying our thoughts as we go to print with this report. From the perspective of the fire service, this is the classic Wildland Urban Interface fire that we speak so much about. All of the factors are there, starting with the human-caused first spark, the destruction of hundreds of homes, the evacuation of families, the damaged natural resources and lost property and businesses. The blame game started quickly on this one as the failure to remove dead and dying trees became a controversial topic for media stories and emotional interviews. This fire provides both validation for our fire safety messages and frustration as we realize it won't be the last of its kind. However, together we will build a California of the future in which all homes are built with fire safe materials and practices and surrounded by defensible space. In that California our firefighters will have a much safer battlefield and far fewer homes and lives will be lost.

It is that vision that keeps me going.

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## Fire Prevention

### Illegal Fireworks Confiscated

The weekend before the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday, officers from Cal Fire, San Bernardino County Fire and San Bernardino County Sheriff conducted a comprehensive “fireworks interdiction” effort that resulted in the seizure of 5,000 pounds of illegal fireworks. This brings the total seized illegal fireworks **this year in San Bernardino County alone to more than 60,000 pounds.**



This is a continuation of a significant enforcement effort initiated last year by arson and bomb investigators from OSFM and the county of San Bernardino to stem the tide of illegal fireworks coming into California from the town of Pahrump,

Nevada located in Nye County adjacent to the California border. Retail fireworks stores in Pahrump sell tons of these products every year to California residents. The same fireworks that are illegal in California are also illegal in Pahrump. Buyers are informed that they must not ignite the fireworks in Nye County and that they have to get it out of the county within 24 hours. CAL FIRE Chief Ruben Grijalva has addressed the Nye County elected officials letting them know what a problem their policies and laws create for California.



In many other areas of California, OSFM Arson and Bomb investigators assisted local governments with fireworks sting operations to take these illegal and dangerous products off the street. In one case, commercial grade six inch mortars were recovered.

Last year OSFM destroyed and disposed of more than 100 tons of illegal fireworks. To help pay for this enormous undertaking, OSFM is working to get **SB 839 (Calderon)** into law. This bill will increase fines and penalties for illegal fireworks violations and create a model ordinance for an administrative civil penalty process.

If you have illegal fireworks issues or problems, please call Tom Hoffman in Sacramento at 916-341-4364.

### **Hazard Maps and Building Standards**

The Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps/Building Standards project is continuing to move along. The 56 counties with State Responsibility Area (SRA) are going through the public hearing process. All hearings will be complete by August 1. Chief Dargan is also holding "stakeholder" briefings around the state, trying to keep local government, building and fire officials, building industry personnel, insurance companies, etc., updated as the project progresses.

A new webpage link has been developed that has a huge amount of information. It can be found at <http://www.fire.ca.gov/wildland.php>. The information includes building standards, the individual county SRA Maps, frequently asked questions, publications, and dates of all the public hearings and stakeholder meetings. You can even sign up to receive an email when the web pages are updated. Send in your public hearing comments or ask a question that is not on our website and you will be answered. Plus your question/answer will be added to the website. If anyone has questions or input about the project, please send us an email. We are trying to share as much information possible.

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## Fire and Life Safety

### UC Riverside Suspect Arrested

In our last report we told you about a series of fires that were set on the campus of UC Riverside. A former student has been arrested as a result of the cooperative effort of state and local law enforcement ABI Deputy State Fire Marshal Marge Yarbrough was the lead on this case directly working with FBI, DOJ, U.S. Marshal, UC Riverside Police and Riverside City Police. Her diligent work and leadership on this case were instrumental in apprehending the suspect and allowing the campus to return to normal functions.

### Movin' On Up

Congratulations to Ed Gonzalez on his promotion from Deputy State Fire Marshal to Deputy State Fire Marshal III Specialist. Ed began his career in the fire service with the Sanger Fire Department in 1979. He joined the SFM in 2001.



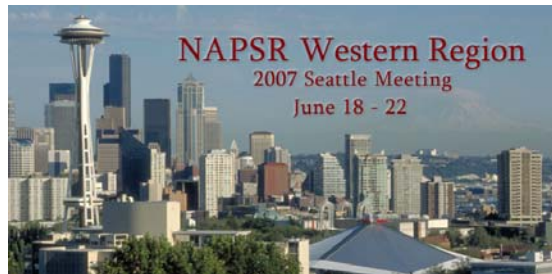
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## Pipeline Safety

### Western States Pipeline Managers Met in Seattle

Chief Bob Gorham and Supervising Engineer Linda Zigler, attended the Western Region meeting of the National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives in Seattle, Washington during the week of June 18-22, 2007. During this annual meeting, pipeline program managers from 11 western states and representatives from the U.S. Department Of Transportation - Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Administration met to exchange ideas, coordinate inspection policies and to receive inspection, enforcement and training



information. Discussions were held on new technologies, operator qualification programs, GIS mapping and the Pipeline Inspection Prevention and Enforcement Act of 2006.

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### **New ZIP Code for SFM**

To those of you who send us mail, we have a new ZIP Code for the SFM Headquarters in Sacramento. It is **95811**. So, our street address is now:

CAL FIRE – Office of the State Fire Marshal  
1131 S Street  
Sacramento, CA 95811

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**CAL FIRE**  
**Office of the State Fire Marshal**  
<http://osfm.fire.ca.gov>

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