

# Introduction

## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Mission Statement

Volunteerism is in our roots as a nation. In 1717, one of the first organized volunteer fire companies in America

### 1.2 Volunteer Fire Company (VFC) Background

Volunteerism is in our roots as a nation. In 1717, one of the first organized volunteer fire companies in America was formed in Boston, Massachusetts. In 1736, statesman Benjamin Franklin founded and served in the Union (volunteer) Fire Company in Philadelphia. Today a vast majority, over one million, of the firefighters in the United States serve as volunteers. It is estimated that over 25,000 fire departments are staffed with volunteers or a combination of volunteer and career firefighters.

### 1.3 VFC Organization

In 1931, the Butte County Board of Supervisors contracted with CAL FIRE. This contract was a major step toward integrating independent VFC's and career fire companies to work within a single fire department framework in Butte County.

In 1939 the State of California enacted section 14825 of the Health and Safety Code (attachment 8.45). This is the law that allows citizens of a community to form a Volunteer Fire Company.

With the enactment of Health and Safety Code section 14825, the umbrella of affiliation between CAL FIRE and Butte County Fire Department provides significant liability protection as well as other benefits that would not normally be afforded to completely independent VFC's. Section 14831 of the Health and Safety Code (attachment 8.44) authorizes the Board of Supervisors to regulate the formation and continued existence of VFC's.

The umbrella of affiliation also provides for each community to take great pride and to provide support for its community based VFC's.

## 1.4 VFC Responsibility

Each VFF must be familiar with the bylaws, procedures and policies of their VFC, as well as this Standard Operating Procedures manual. It is important that all VFF's take an active part in the internal operations of his/her VFC. A professional business-like organization must be maintained.

Every VFC that accepts or has accepted donations from the community must accept the responsibility that accompanies each donation. Citizens entrust the VFC to utilize contributions with sound business-like practices. The VFC must treat all its members fairly, firmly and consistently and all VFF's are expected to maintain professional standards.

The VFC shall generally be responsible for the administrative and non-emergency operational affairs of the VFC, including the administrative supervision of all its members.

## 1.5 CAL FIRE/BCFD Background

In California, as in most of the rest of the states, the state legislature recognizes those lands, outside of federal ownership and incorporated cities that are covered by brush, watershed, timber and grazing resources, as the state's (CAL FIRE) responsibility to protect them from wildfire. In counties such as Butte, valley agricultural crop lands and the structures and improvements outside of city or fire district boundaries are considered the local government's (BCFD) responsibility to protect. State law also provides for the formation of community (volunteer) fire companies under the supervision of the local county government. Fire protection within city or fire district boundaries is the responsibility of the city government or the fire district (unless they contract with CAL FIRE).

Fire protection in Butte County is a cooperative effort. Rather than establish separate fire protection agencies, one state and one county (with duplication of effort and expense), the County of Butte has contracted with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to operate the Butte County Fire Department. This cooperative fire protection system includes the important augmentation by community based volunteer fire companies, as well as the inclusion of the Cities of Biggs and Gridley Fire Departments within Butte County under additional CAL FIRE contracts.

**It is important to remember each VFC is a member of the Butte County Fire Department and not its own fire department and should be represented as such (Example: Butte County Fire Department, Clipper Mills Volunteer Fire Company and not the Clipper Mills Fire Department).**

The partner agencies (State/City/County) provide funding and primary equipment (generally). The individual communities, throughout the delivery area, provide community based funding.

Together, they have developed an effective all-risk, full-service fire protection organization with a mission to protect the lives and property of residents/property owners and to protect local natural resources (environment) from fire and other disasters.

The legal authority to engage in firefighting and emergency activities in most areas of Butte County is vested in the officers and staff of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection by legislative statute, Board of Supervisors resolution, and by contractual state, county, and city agreements.

Within the intent of the regulations, the CAL FIRE Unit Chief appointed as the County Fire Chief shall be responsible for all city (under contract), county and state fire department activities within Butte County.

## **1.6 CAL FIRE/BCFD Organization**

The CAL FIRE Unit Chief of the Butte Unit serves as the Chief of the Fire Department. The Unit Duty Chief (assigned Division Chief) supervises the day-to-day administration of the department. The Operational Division Chiefs administer the day-to-day operations within the division boundaries. A field Battalion Chief is responsible for the administration of incident operations, firefighting personnel, fire stations, apparatus, and equipment, assigned within a geographic area designated a battalion. The field Battalion Chief reports to the Division Chief and the Division Chiefs report to the Unit Chief. Each fire station, whether staffed by career and/or VFF personnel, has career captains that are responsible to the Battalion Chief for the care and maintenance of any assigned station, fire apparatus or equipment. Career Captains are also responsible for the supervision, training, and performance of their subordinates, i.e. Engineer, Firefighter, or VFF's. See attachment 8.1, Organization Chart.

## **1.7 VFC Responsibility**

The day to day operations of the fire department will be delegated to the Division Chiefs and then to the Battalion Chiefs. The Battalion Chiefs are responsible for administering the VFF program within their respective battalion.

Each station will have a CAL FIRE Fire Captain assigned to the VFC as a Career Liaison Officer between the department and the VFC. The Career Captain will maintain a professional, productive and supportive relationship with the VFC officers and members. The Career Captain will also confer with the VFC Captain on all applicable station level issues directly or indirectly related to the VFC or its members.

For the volunteer firefighter program to be successful, it is critical and mandatory that an open line of communication and a professional relationship between ALL career staff (especially the Career Captain) and the volunteer fire company officers and membership is maintained and the VFC members and the career staff be treated with the respect they deserve.

## **1.8 Definitions**

### Active Roster

A listing of all Volunteer Fire Fighters (VFF) who are members in good standing with the Department.

### BOS

Board of Supervisors, Butte County.

### Career Captain

CAL FIRE employee with the rank of Fire Captain. Each Volunteer Fire Company (VFC) is assigned a Career Captain to assist with the management of the VFC. The career captain serves as the Liaison Officer between the VFC and the department.

### Career Station

A career staffed fire station. May also have volunteer firefighters assigned to it.

### Department

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) – Butte Unit, Butte County Fire Department, City of Biggs Fire Department, City of Gridley Fire Department.

### Member

Any VFC member in good standing, regardless of rank.

### PVFF

Probationary Volunteer Firefighter. VFF with probationary status. A VFF, who has been formally accepted as a Volunteer Firefighter, and is receiving their required training during probationary status.

### SOP

Standard Operating Procedures.

### VFC

Volunteer Fire Company. The group of members consisting of the active roster. The company is identified by the fire station number, i.e., VFC #74 is at Station #74.

## VFF

Volunteer Firefighter. Any member that is on the active roster and off probation.

## VFF Allocation

The total number of VFF's authorized for a volunteer company.

## Volunteer Liaison Officer

Volunteer in good standing selected by the Fire Chief to hold the position of Volunteer Liaison Officer (VLO). The Volunteer Liaison Officer is the liaison officer between the volunteer fire company captains and the County Fire Chief. The Volunteer Liaison Officer will assist the department regarding issues related to integrated operations and administration of the volunteer fire program.

The Volunteer Liaison Officer will report directly to the County Fire Chief.

## VFC Station

An unstaffed fire station maintained by a VFC under the direction of a Career Liaison Officer.

## Volunteer Auxiliary

A group consisting of community members and/or volunteer firefighters who support a VFC. Support can be defined as any act(s) that enhances a VFC's operations (such as fundraisers, social events, etc.) that are in agreement with the Department's mission.

## **Volunteer Fire Company Positions**

### VFF Captain

Volunteer Fire Company Captain. A Volunteer Firefighter from each VFC, elected by the VFC, approved by the Fire Chief, to coordinate the volunteer firefighters, volunteer operators, volunteer stations and apparatus. Appointments are effective January 1 of each year and serve a calendar year term.

### VFF Lieutenant

A VFF from each VFC, elected by the VFC, approved by the Fire Chief, to assist the VFF Captain. In the absence of the VFF Captain, he/she will act on appropriate issues for the VFF Captain.

### Company Secretary

A VFC in good standing, elected by the membership, to maintain company records, take notes, and compile agendas. This position may be combined with the Treasurer duties.

### Company Treasurer

A VFC in good standing, elected by the membership, to coordinate the financial operations of each VFC's Treasury. This position may be combined with the Secretary duties.

### Company Training Officer

A VFC in good standing, appointed by the VFF captain, to coordinate the training operations of each VFC.

## **Volunteer Company Levels of Response**

### VFF Support Responder

A VFF meeting the training requirements to respond to designated incidents and perform specific functions as a Support Responder.

### VFF EMS Responder

A VFF meeting the training requirements to respond to designated incidents and perform specific functions as an EMS and Support Responder.

### VFF Full Responder

A VFF meeting the training requirements to respond to all incidents as a fully trained firefighter.

### VFF Breathing Support Operator

An EMS or full responder certified to drive and operate a Breathing Support.

### VFF Water Tender Operator

An EMS or full responder certified to drive and operate a Water Tender.

### VFF Operator

A full responder certified to drive and operate specified fire apparatus (Utility, squad, rescue, etc.).

### VFF Engineer

A full responder certified to drive and operate all fire apparatus (utility, squad, rescue, squad with water, engine and water tender).