

Tonya Hoover, Assistant State Fire Marshal

By Mallory Fites, Student Assistant, Communications

Assistant State Fire Marshal Tonya Hoover was appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger Sept. 4, 2007. She's been actively involved in fire prevention, public education and risk mitigation for 20 years. We took some time to learn more about her career and position with CAL FIRE:

What makes coming to work fulfilling for you each day?

First of all, the opportunity to do what I love doing everyday. I also hopefully am able to mentor and offer a wider view of things and to engage with folks in subject matter that's dear to my heart.

What's the hardest part about your job?

The hardest part of my job, I'll be honest, is being placed in a different environment with a different set of rules, a different system and getting to know how that system operates and what's the best way of getting things accomplished.

The hardest thing is I'm the kind of person who likes to start off running and then it's like wait a second, we have to do this first! Sometimes I'm not the most patient person in the world and I ask a lot of questions.

What have been your biggest career accomplishments?

I've always wanted to be a Fire Marshal. I had a position with a very supportive community and supportive fire chiefs at Morago-Orinda Fire which allowed me to grow and explore avenues that weren't typical of a fire bureau. I was able to step outside the box and use great technology during my time there.

The second was to have my peers give me the Northern California Fire Prevention Officers' Charlie Grey Award for Outstanding Service to Nor Cal Fire Prevention Officers. When your peers can say you did something right when you were acting for the benefit of everyone... for me it was like getting the Oscar!

Also having the opportunity to serve state government, that is an accomplishment. I've spent 20 years watching people go to the Office of the State Fire Marshal thinking to myself that's pretty cool. They're true leaders in the fire service.

What are some of your hobbies and interests outside the office?

My hobby became my passion and my passion is my profession. I enjoy talking to people, I love sharing information, I like finding out what other people are doing and how they're interacting.

I also enjoy skiing; I'm getting better with every season. I enjoy being out in the snow. I love antiquing and I love the hunt for something. I read short articles and I like to gather information that will help me in my day-to-day work.

I love watching my daughter grow. She's experiencing all sorts of things as a teenager.

I ride my bike when the weather is nice. I love turning my iPod, which my daughter bought me, on to my favorite music and going for a walk.

Where do you see CAL FIRE in the future?

I think that CAL FIRE is the premier fire



service for the State of California. We're the largest fire department in California and we're probably the largest fire department in the Country.

I see CAL FIRE being a model in how integrating a large agency can be successful and it illustrates how to move the fire service forward.

There will be constant issues as simple as collar brass and working conditions to bigger issues such as, how we purchase apparatus and work with other agencies. All these wants and needs have money attached to them so we will continue to struggle with the same things local government struggle with.

We are in a dynamic time, we have the support to think outside the box and not a whole lot of state agencies can say that.

Our employees are extremely dedicated to the cause and I wouldn't have taken this position if I wasn't either.

CAL FIRE sets the model for departments all over the country. If you can have an agency of our size that can communicate internally back and forth, the information flow is great. When the fire planning folks can share information that can be used for operations, you know the system is working.

Sharing that information is important for how we slow fire, attack fire and prevent fire.