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Strong Interagency Relationships Creates Exceptional Public Service

By Brad Lutts, Unit Chief, Lassen-Modoc Unit

The Lassen-Modoc Unit has long recognized the value of maintaining close working relationships with other emergency response and support agencies within its local sphere of influence. This cooperation is vital to providing an effective full service emergency response system, particularly in the more remote areas of the State.

In Lassen-Modoc, this collaborative effort includes local fire and law enforcement agencies, the County Office of Emergency Services, several federal wildland fire agencies, a military base, private service providers, and various state agencies including CAL FIRE. Through mutual respect, coordination meetings, officer associations, joint training and information sharing, agencies are well prepared to work together during emergencies.

At the heart of this emergency response system is SIFC, the Susanville Interagency Fire Center. SIFC was established in 1970 and now provides 24-hour emergency dispatch services

to the Lassen National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, Lassen Volcanic National Park and CAL FIRE's Lassen-Modoc Unit. Through a cooperative agreement between CAL FIRE and the Firenet Lassen Joint Powers Agency, SIFC also provides emergency dispatch services to 23 local government fire districts and city fire departments, the California Correctional Center Fire Department and three emergency medical service providers in Lassen and Northern Plumas counties. SIFC was the first fully integrated interagency emergency command center in the nation and remains as the premier model of interagency cooperation.

In 2004, SIFC moved into a new facility. The 9,000 square foot structure accommodates a main dispatch floor with six state-of-the-art dispatch consoles, a large “Expanded Dispatch” area for processing resource orders for major incidents, dispatcher living quarters, a main conference room and a number of workrooms and offices.

SIFC is also the designated Emergency Operations Center for the Lassen County Office of Emergency Services and functions as the alternate 911 public safety answering point and alternate dispatch center for the Lassen County Sheriff's Office and Susanville City Police Department.

Having strong interagency relationships, a working knowledge of each agency's policies and procedures, and an understanding of their differing missions, strategies and legal mandates is invaluable. With these issues identified and resolved prior to an emergency, the Unit is able to provide the most efficient utilization of resources and as a result, furnishes exceptional service to the public.

