

Transitions... *A look at CAL FIRE's newest unit chiefs*

Santa Clara Unit (SCU)

Chief John Ellis

By Chris Morgan, fire prevention specialist II, Santa Clara Unit



On April 17, 2006, Chief John Ellis was appointed unit chief of the Santa Clara Unit. He will manage a firefighting force protecting 1.5 million acres of wildland. Chief Ellis started his career in 1980 with the National Park Service as a law enforcement ranger at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

In 1983, he became a public safety officer with the city of Brisbane, until 1985 when he accepted a position as a public safety officer (combined fire and police) with the city of Rohnert Park. He later obtained the rank of captain and emergency servic-

es coordinator.

In 1994 Chief Ellis became the fire chief for the City of Marysville. Shortly after that the city of Marysville contracted with CAL FIRE for fire services and Chief Ellis became a CAL FIRE battalion chief.

Chief Ellis first came to the Santa Clara Unit in 2001, as the first East Bay division chief. In 2003 he was assigned to the Northern Region Office as the region's administrative officer and later as the South Division operations Chief in the Butte Unit of the CAL FIRE.

San Benito-Monterey Unit (BEU)

Chief George Haines

By Curt Itson, battalion chief, San Benito-Monterey Unit



On March 9, 2006, Chief Ruben Grijalva appointed George Haines to the unit chief position in the San Benito-Monterey Unit. "I am honored that Director Grijalva is giving me this opportunity to continue to serve the people of San Benito and Monterey Counties as the unit chief," said Haines. "We have fantastic employees in this unit, and I am dedicated to maintaining and building on CAL FIRE's history of success in the Central Coast area."

Haines served as acting unit chief since February 2006 and previously served as assistant

chief since 1993. During this period Haines held positions in both administrative services and operations. As incident commander on one of CAL FIRE's Incident Command Teams, he oversaw major fires throughout Southern California.

Chief Haines is a past president of the Monterey County Fire Chief's Association. His goals are to continue the successful operation of the San Benito-Monterey Unit and mentor the incoming company and battalion level officers as CAL FIRE faces the challenges of the future.

Riverside Unit (RRU)

Chief John Hawkins



Chief John R. Hawkins was appointed unit chief of Riverside and fire chief of Riverside County Fire on August 1, 2006. The Riverside County Board of Supervisors worked with CAL FIRE to select and approve Chief Hawkins for their County Fire Chief position.

Chief Hawkins has worked for CAL FIRE for 42 years and has been assigned throughout the state. He began his career in 1964 as a seasonal firefighter. He has worked through the ranks and held a variety of positions. Prior to being appointed he was the deputy chief in Riverside where he was responsible for all special operations including

training, health and safety, EMS, hazardous materials, technical rescue, video production, and telecommunications.

He co-supervised the multi-agency response to the devastating drought problems in the San Jacinto Mountains and was the unified incident commander as part of the Riverside County Mountain Area Safety Task Force (MAST) which has provided him with a well-rounded background.

Chief Hawkins understands the complexities of Riverside County and is prepared to meet the challenges of providing emergency services to the citizens we protect.

Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit (TCU)

Chief Mike Noonan

By Nancy Longmore, fire prevention specialist II, Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit



Mike Noonan was appointed Chief of the Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit on June 19, 2006 after the retirement of Fred McVay. Chief Noonan has been in the fire service for 27 years and is a native of Tuolumne County.

Since arriving back in TCU Noonan has been a battalion chief at Sierra Training Center, Sonora and Baseline Camp; he has been a division chief at Baseline Camp and the South Division. He was involved in the CAL FIRE Incident Command Teams 8 and 7 as the operations section chief and deputy incident commander.

His previous assignments included fire apparatus engineer, training captain, crew captain, and engine captain. He started his career in TCU and has worked in Sonoma, Santa Clara, and Tulare units prior to returning to TCU in 1997. He is a graduate of Summerville High School, Columbia Junior College (AA-Fire Science), and Fresno Pacific (BA-Management and Organizational Development). Chief Noonan is married to his high school sweetheart, Anna, and they have eight children (4 boys and 4 girls) and one grand-daughter.

Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit (NEU)

Chief Brad Harris

By Tina Rose, fire prevention specialist II, Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit



On May 1, 2006, Brad Harris officially became the Nevada-Yuba-Placer unit chief after being appointed by CAL FIRE Director Ruben Grijalva. With 29 years of distinguished firefighting experience under his belt, the NYP Unit will benefit greatly from a proven leader.

Chief Harris began his career working as a seasonal firefighter in the Shasta-Trinity Unit. After graduating from college he took a firefighter/engineer job with Moffitt Field Fire Department at the Naval Air Station facility. He was later hired as a fire protec-

tion operator/fire investigator for Oroville City Fire Department.

In 1986, he came back to CAL FIRE in the Riverside Unit as a fire apparatus engineer. He went through many promotions: from fire captain in 1990, to battalion chief in 1992, to division chief in 2001 and then to deputy chief of Riverside's Field Operations in 2003.

When asked what he will miss the most about Riverside his reply was "most definitely the people." Chief Harris and Mary, his wife of 26 years, plan to make Nevada County their new home.

Mendocino Unit (MEU)

Chief Marc Romero

By Tracy Boudreaux, fire prevention specialist II, Mendocino Unit



On May 8, 2006, Chief Ruben Grijalva announced the appointment of Marc Romero, as the successor of the Mendocino Unit. Chief Romero began his career in the San Luis Obispo Unit in 1974. He later ventured to the Mendocino Unit to work at Howard Forest Helitack. This proved to be a career defining move as he obtained his first permanent appointment for CAL FIRE as a fire control aid. His employment continued in the Coast Region for several years.

In 1982 Romero went to Tulare as a permanent fire apparatus engineer but returned to Mendocino in 1985 as a fire captain.

He promoted to a chief officer in 1992 when he became the last emergency command center chief to supervise the Region's ECC, which was closed in 1994 during a department reorganization.

After a stint in Sonoma-Lake-Napa as a field battalion chief, Romero's next promotion came in 1997 when he moved to Redding as the division chief of the Northern Operations Command Center. Eventually, he became the Shasta-Trinity administrative division chief and later the unit deputy chief of operations. Chief Romero and his wife Carmen currently reside in Redding and are looking forward to their return to Mendocino.

San Luis Obispo Unit (SLU)

Chief Matt Jenkins



Chief Matt Jenkins was appointed unit chief for San Luis Obispo on March 20, 2006. Chief Jenkin's fire service career began 29 years ago in San Luis Obispo County as a reserve firefighter in Los Osos. He then became a firefighter at the Cameron Park Fire Department in El Dorado County where he worked for over 18 years and advanced to fire chief.

Upon conducting an efficiency study for the Cameron Park Fire Department, he decided to contract emergency services with CAL FIRE. This gave him the opportunity to transfer to

the Central Coast as a battalion chief then later he promoted to assistant chief and then to deputy chief. Chief Jenkins has been involved with the development of six cooperative fire protection agreements between the state and local agencies.

He has significant experience in emergency incident management and commitment to fire prevention and public education. He has committed his life to public service and is honored to be entrusted with protecting the lives and property of San Luis Obispo County and beyond.

Lassen-Modoc Unit (LMU)

Chief Brad Lutts

By Nikole Melo, fire captain, Pre-Fire Engineering, Lassen-Modoc Unit



Brad Lutts was appointed Chief of the Lassen-Modoc Unit following the retirement of Don Posten in March of 2006. Chief Lutts is a 30 year veteran of public safety and emergency response services in California, having performed both fire protection and law enforcement duties.

Since arriving in the Lassen-Modoc Unit in 2000, Lutts has served as administrative officer, the division chief in command of Devil's Garden Conservation Camp, operations chief, and as a team incident commander.

His previous CAL FIRE assignments include law enforcement bureau chief in the San Mateo-

Santa Cruz Unit, field battalion chief in the Mendocino and San Mateo-Santa Cruz Units, fire captain specialist/law enforcement in the Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit and seasonal fire fighter in the Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit.

Lutts believes the Lassen Modoc Unit is strong organizationally and operationally and will successfully meet any challenges that lie ahead. The unit's personnel are its most important resource and the unit will continue to develop its employees to achieve the department's mission and their individual professional goals.