



Central Fire District of Santa Cruz County

ANNUAL REPORT 2023







TOWER 72

CENTRAL
FIRE

3572

DISTRICT OVERVIEW

In 1987, Central Fire Protection District was created from the consolidation of the Capitola, Live Oak and Soquel Fire Districts.

In 1986, Aptos Fire District and La Selva Beach Fire District also consolidated, to become the Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District. By 2018, Aptos/La Selva FPD and Central FPD entered into a Shared Services Agreement, combining services with their Administrative and Community Risk Reduction Divisions.

In February of 2021, Central Fire Protection District and Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District consolidated into Central Fire District of Santa Cruz County.

Central Fire District serves the communities of Aptos, Capitola, La Selva Beach, Live Oak, Rio Del Mar, and Soquel.

The resident population is approximately 90,500, with a seasonal influx during the summer, and covers an area of 55 square miles. The District responds to requests for service for fire, water rescue, emergency medical services, hazardous materials calls, and assorted alarms.

The District operates seven fire stations, an Administrative Office & Community Risk Reduction Division, Training Division, and Fleet Services Facility. The District has several robust program areas including Community Risk Reduction, Community Education, Emergency Medical Services, Water Rescue, Fire Investigation, Hazardous Materials, Technical Rescue, and Training.

Central Fire District has a publicly elected Board of Directors consisting of five members who are elected to four year, staggered terms.

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CHIEF'S MESSAGE

As we look back on the past year, it is with great pride and immense gratitude that I present the Annual Report for Central Fire District of Santa Cruz County. It is a true honor to serve as the Fire Chief and lead an organization dedicated to the core values of safety, service, and professionalism. The 2023 Annual Report offers a detailed look at our achievements, statistical data, and the programs provided by our Fire District. This report underscores the hard work and commitment shown by the men and women of our organization in ensuring the health and safety of our community and visitors.

In 2023, the District faced various events, including weather-related emergencies resulting in facility evacuations, the welcoming of new team members, the retirement of long-standing fire service leaders, and subsequent promotions within the organization. Throughout, Central Fire staff continued to deliver outstanding service in line with the District's mission. Looking ahead, our staff is focused on future District development, recognizing the need to adapt to the changing demographics and service demands of our community. Many of the District's facilities are steeped in the tradition of legacy fire departments, with some aging stations remaining in the same location for over 60 years. Over this period, the population served by these stations has more than tripled, leading to changes in demographics and the type of calls for service. By leveraging our Master and Strategic Plans, we aim to chart a course for continued excellence in service delivery over the next 50 years.

It's been a successful two years since the consolidation of Central and Aptos/La Selva Fire Districts, bringing about positive changes and growth for the organization. As we move forward, we are committed to ongoing evolution, regional collaboration, and upholding our dedication to the community and our personnel. It is important to acknowledge that the achievements of 2023 would not have been possible without the exceptional staff of Central Fire. Their collective impact on the community is profound, and I am grateful for their unwavering commitment to our mission and the support of our elected officials.



Fire Chief Jason Nee



OUR MISSION

The Mission of Central Fire District of Santa Cruz County is to preserve quality of life for the citizens and visitors of the communities we serve by protecting lives, property, and the environment through emergency response, community risk reduction, and education.



photos: SLV Steve

OUR VALUES

Safety

We value safety as a priority in all our actions and take appropriate steps to maintain and improve the well-being of the community and our personnel.

Service

We value service by being prepared to serve with respect and compassion at any moment with knowledgeable and committed personnel.

Professionalism

We value professionalism through our readiness, leadership, and work ethic to provide the highest standards of service with dedication, teamwork, and respect.

OUR VISION

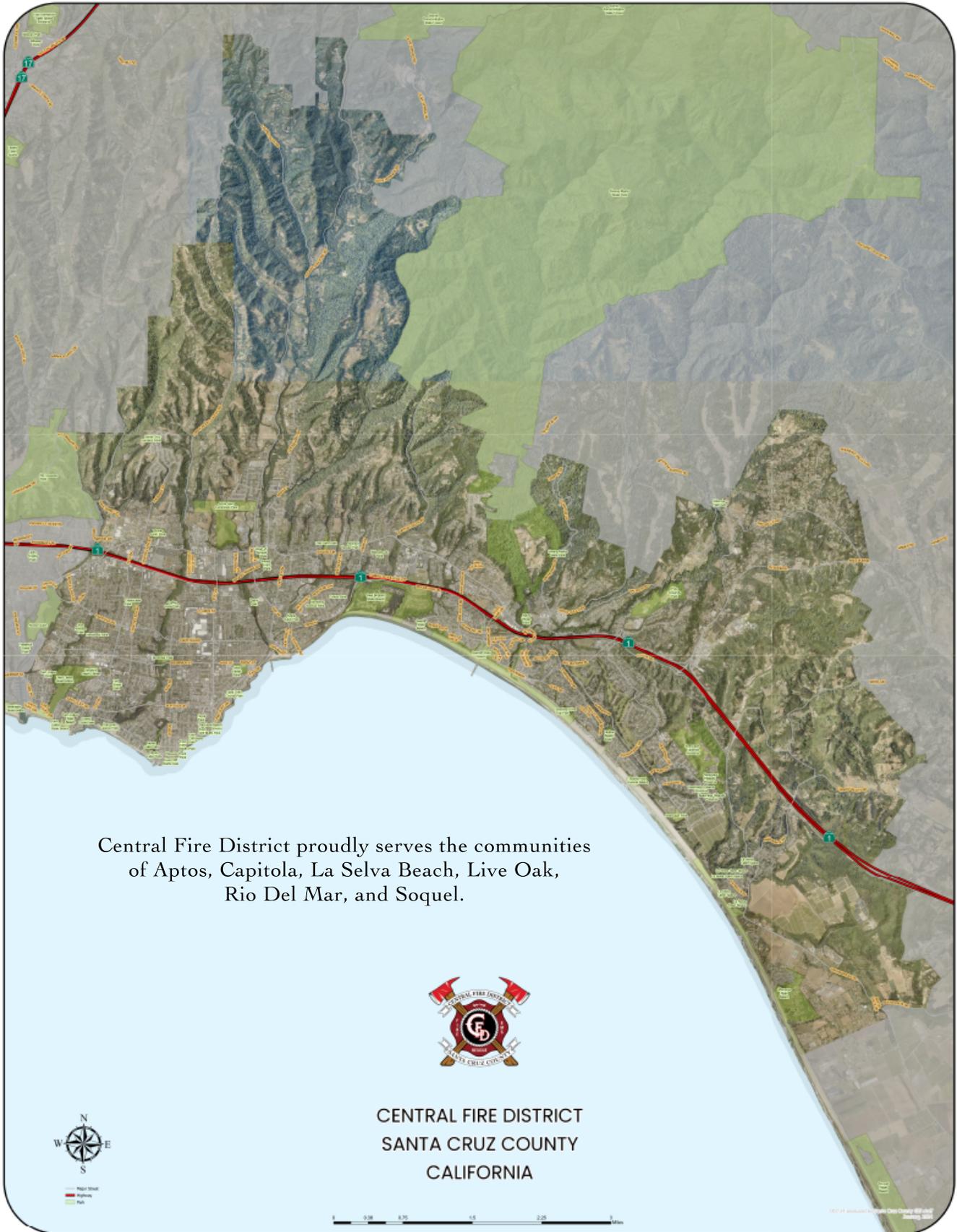
It is the Vision of Central Fire District of Santa Cruz County to:

Position the fire district securely (operationally, financially, and politically) through and beyond economic uncertainty while creating a resilient, predictable, and sustainable future.

Be a leader in the fire service, respected for our excellence in service delivery, our dedication to the community, and our commitment to our personnel.

Provide exemplary customer service, be fiscally responsible, and support a regional approach to collaboration and progressive innovation.

CENTRAL FIRE DISTRICT BOUNDARIES





At a Glance

QUICK FACTS

2023

**Mutual Aid
Given**
139

**Mutual Aid
Received**
11

EMS Incidents
5,334

Fire Incidents
3,721

**Total
Incidents**
9,055

Avg. Response Time
Dispatch to Arrival
0:06:10

Avg. Turnout Time
Dispatch to Enroute
0:01:13

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



George Lucchesi
Term of Office
2020 - 2024



Michael Hushaw
Term of Office
2022 - 2026



John Lucchesi
Term of Office
2022 - 2026



Ken Radliff
Term of Office
2020 - 2024



Dave Ronco
Term of Office
2020 - 2024

EXECUTIVE STAFF



Jason Nee
Fire Chief



Chad Akin
Assistant Fire Chief



Scott Cullen
Operations Division Chief



Anthony Cefaloni
Logistics Division Chief



Nancy Dannhauser
Finance Director



Gena Finch
Human Resources Director



Mike DeMars
Fire Marshal



Scott Vahradian
EMS Chief EMSIA



Patrick Winters
Battalion Chief
Training & Safety



Nigel Miller
Battalion Chief
A Shift

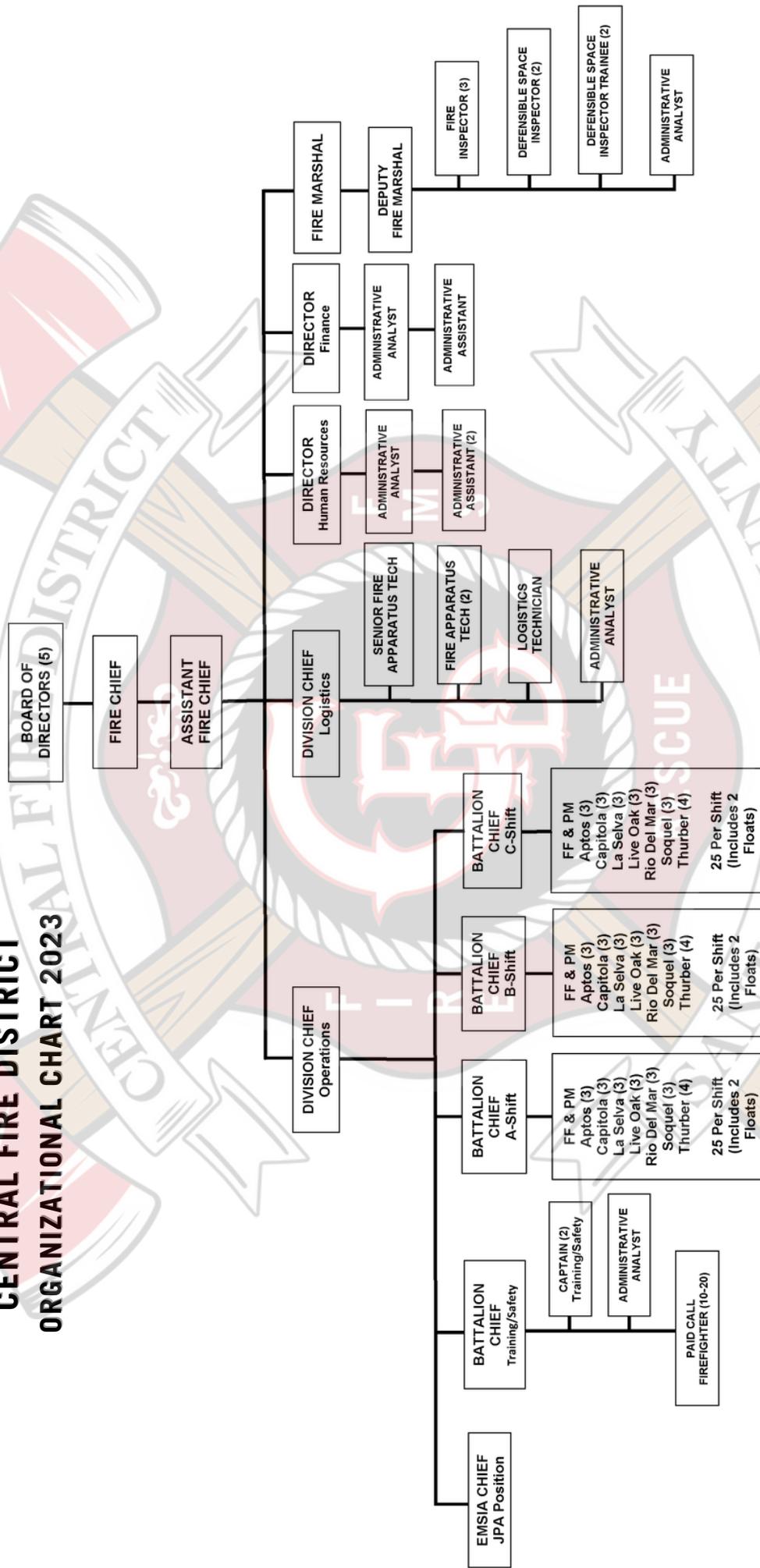


Michael Kretsch
Battalion Chief
B Shift



Ryan Peters
Battalion Chief
C Shift

CENTRAL FIRE DISTRICT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 2023



RETIREMENTS

It was a year of big retirements at Central Fire, with Assistant Chief Chad Akin, Division Chief Scott Cullen, and Battalion Chief Michael Kretsch all retiring in December 2023. Their dedication, leadership, and unwavering commitment to serving our community have been truly inspiring. As they embark on this new chapter in their lives, we want to express our deepest gratitude for their years of service. Your legacies will forever be remembered by those you have worked alongside and the lives you have impacted. Thank you for your service, and here's to a well-deserved retirement filled with happiness and good health!



Chad Akin



Scott Cullen



Mike Kretsch



BC Staley



BC Bauen



Captain Rodriguez



Captain Collender

PROMOTIONS



FF Busch

We are thankful to have a dedicated staff that chooses to take on more leadership roles and responsibilities. We are pleased to announce the following promotions in 2023: Anthony Cefaloni promoted to Assistant Chief; Nigel Miller promoted to Division Chief of Operations; Patrick Winters promoted to Division Chief of Logistics; Derek Staley promoted to Battalion Chief; Ernst Bauen promoted to Battalion Chief; James Collender promoted to Fire Captain; Miguel Rodriguez promoted to Fire Captain; and Paid Call Firefighter Stephanie Busch promoted to Firefighter.

NEW HIRES

We were pleased to welcome five new full-time firefighters to the Central Fire family in 2023. We also welcomed our newest group of Paid Call Firefighters (PCFs), with 13 of them graduating the PCF Academy. Our newest team members have joined us in our mission to serve and protect the community. We look forward to working alongside you for many years.



Paid Call Firefighter Academy Graduation



Aidan Magee
Firefighter/Paramedic



Kyle Todd
Firefighter/Paramedic



Carson Good
Firefighter/Paramedic



Matthew Birt
Firefighter/Paramedic



Shea Grabost
Firefighter/Paramedic



CENTRAL
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FIRE DIST
OF
SANTA CRUZ

Serving the Cr
Capitola. Live

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LOGISTICS

DIVISION

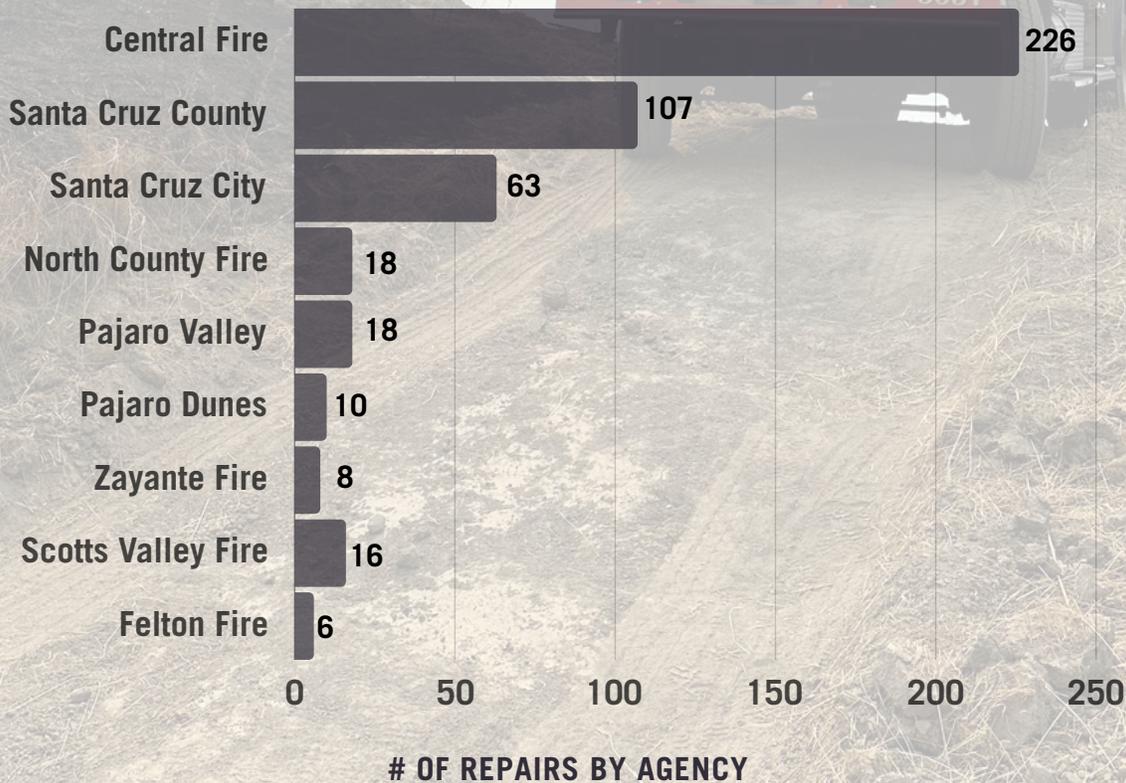
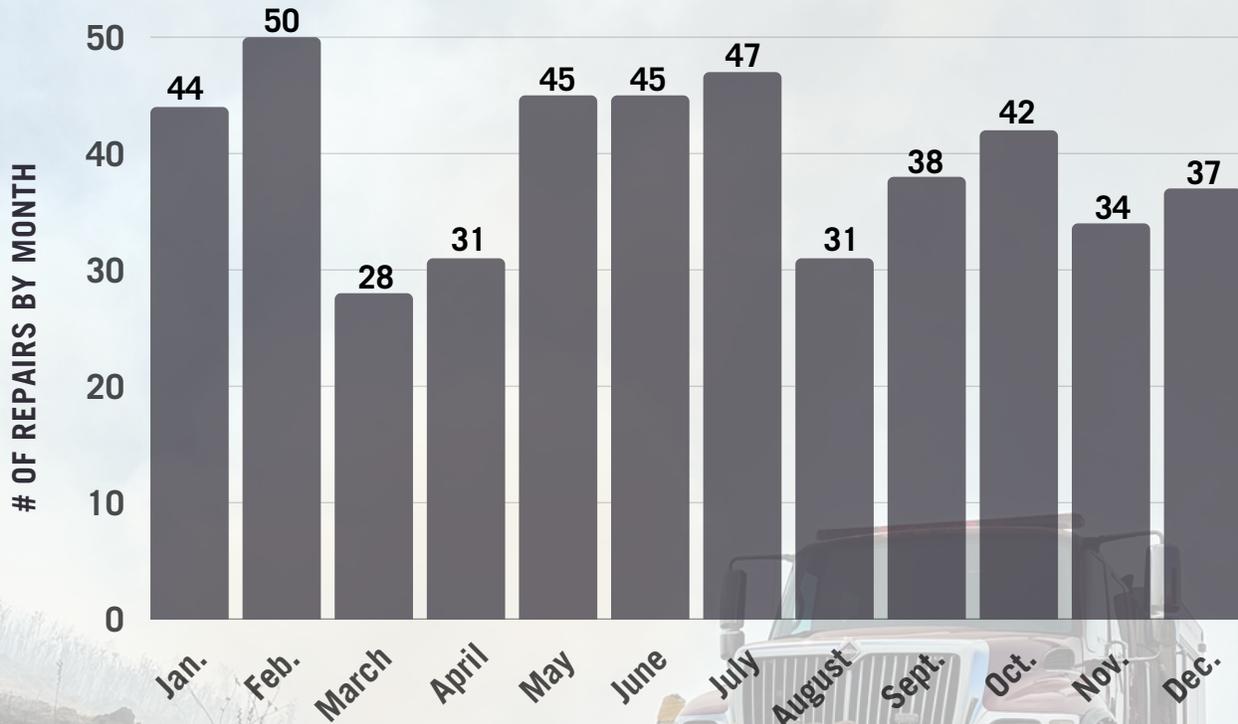
The Logistics and Fleet Services Division of the Central Fire District in Santa Cruz County plays a pivotal role in ensuring the operational efficiency of the District's fleet of vehicles and support apparatus. Moreover, it extends its expertise by offering contract services for fleet maintenance to neighboring fire agencies in both Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties. Additionally, the Division manages the procurement of supplies and oversees facilities maintenance, repairs, and development across all District premises.

Situated in the city of Capitola, our Fleet Services Facility proudly holds the certification as a California Green Business. We prioritize environmentally responsible practices in the maintenance and utilization of our fleet, equipment, and facilities, ensuring a safe and cost-effective operation. The entire team in the Fleet and Logistics Division diligently ensures our commitment to service, expertise, and sustainability year after year.

HIGHLIGHTS 2023

- Construction commenced on a significant improvement project at the Fleet Services facility, marking the culmination of nearly five years of planning. The project focuses on reinforcing the facility's foundation with steel anchors to address structural issues, ensuring its safety and longevity. Phased construction allows uninterrupted service for both Central Fire and partner agencies, sustaining emergency vehicle operations.
- Despite the challenges posed by construction, our skilled fleet personnel forged ahead with repairs, shop reorganization, and professional development. Technicians participated in training events hosted by apparatus manufacturers, the California State Fire Mechanics Academy, and the Safety Officers and Apparatus Technicians Conference in Arizona.
- The pandemic underscored supply chain vulnerabilities and rising material costs, posing additional challenges for emergency services. To address these issues, the Logistics Division assessed infrastructure and facilities, prioritizing upgrades over continued repairs. Notably, aging fire apparatus bay doors were replaced with modern, high-speed models at the Thurber Lane Station, enhancing reliability and responsiveness.
- Extreme weather in early 2023 inflicted significant damage on Soquel and Live Oak Fire Stations, necessitating extensive repairs. Live Oak received new windows, stairs, roofing, and interior work, while Soquel underwent mud removal, drainage enhancements, and living quarters refurbishment.
- Personnel safety remains a top priority in the 2023 strategic plan. To minimize exposure to hazards, a dedicated protective equipment storage area was constructed at the Soquel Station, separating harmful gear from employees. Additionally, exercise areas at Soquel and Rio Del Mar Stations were relocated to isolated spaces, reducing potential exposure risks associated with equipment.

FLEET SERVICES



OPERATIONS

DIVISION

The Operations Division encompasses several emergency response program areas including Emergency Medical Services, Aquatic Rescue Response, Hazardous Materials, and Technical Rescue Response. The District responded to over 9,050 calls for service in 2023. The Central Fire District Chief Officers, including the Assistant Fire Chief and Division Chiefs, provide augmented duty

coverage supporting the District's Shift Battalion Chiefs in emergency response and program management oversight. The Operations Division, in addition to responding to calls for service, oversees several program management areas. The highlights for a few of those programs are detailed in this report.

HIGHLIGHTS 2023

- The District collaborated with our county dispatch center, Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 (SCR911), to develop and implement an automated dispatching capability for Technical Rescue members.
- Collaborated with other government agencies in response to the January coastal storm surge. High swells, King Tides, and strong winds caused major damage to low-lying areas of the district.
- A Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of District administrative and line personnel, was formed to review community input and develop the goals and objectives to guide the District through the next five years.
- Coordinated with Aquatic Rescue Response Team to increase staffing of the Rescue Water Craft (RWC) for forecasted large swells and high tides.
- Increased staffing and opened the District Operations Center (DOC) in preparation for multiple atmospheric river, flooding, and high wind events.
- Collaborated with Capitola Police Department for the preparation and planning of emergency response procedures for special events, such as the Capitola Art & Wine Festival and Wharf to Wharf Race.
- Provided interagency collaboration to support the Santa Cruz County Training Officers Association in conducting a countywide Unified Response to Violent Incidents exercise.
- Provided ongoing education for the District's EMT and Paramedic personnel to uphold their certification.
- Central Fire assisted CAL FIRE with their annual Extended Fire Attack drill. The Santa Cruz Gardens neighborhood was utilized for the field segment of the drill. Crews from Central, Santa Cruz, Watsonville, and CAL FIRE engaged in structure protection procedures and helicopter operations throughout the drill.
- Conducted monthly and annual incident reporting to the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). NFIRS data is valuable as it enables NFIRS users to identify trends, quantify activities, determine causes, plan the deployment of limited resources, and aid in the reduction of loss of life and property due to fires.
- Supported the County-contracted ambulance transport provider, American Medical Response (AMR), during peak operational periods with the District's capable transport ambulance.
- Collaborated with SCR911 and county fire agencies to enhance Tablet Command and Zone Haven/EVAC platforms.



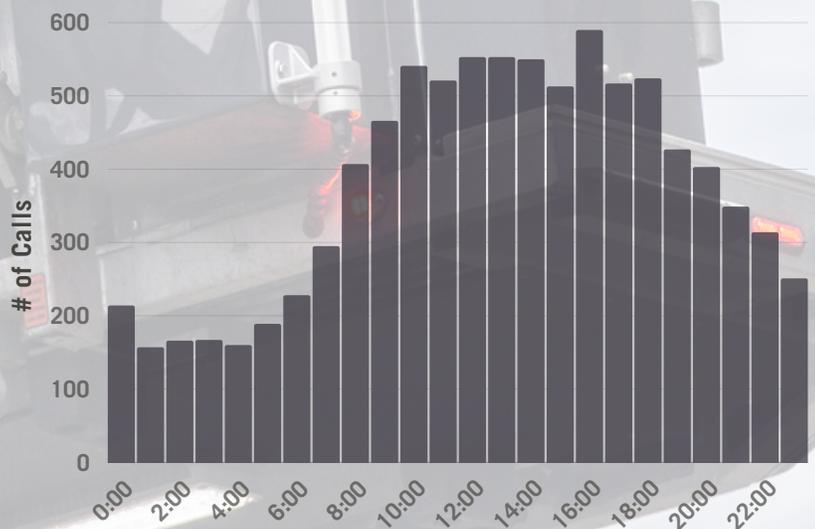
INCIDENTS BY STATION



STATION	CALLS
1 - LIVE OAK	2,569
2 - THURBER	815
3 - SOQUEL	1,265
4 - CAPITOLA	1,472
5 - APTOS	1,334
6 - RIO DEL MAR	1,026
7 - LA SELVA BEACH	574

INCIDENTS BY TIME OF DAY

HOUR	# of Calls	HOUR	# of Calls
00:00 - 00:59	214	12:00 - 12:59	553
01:00 - 01:59	157	13:00 - 13:59	553
02:00 - 02:59	166	14:00 - 14:59	550
03:00 - 03:59	167	15:00 - 15:59	513
04:00 - 04:59	160	16:00 - 16:59	590
05:00 - 05:59	189	17:00 - 17:59	517
06:00 - 06:59	228	18:00 - 18:59	524
07:00 - 07:59	295	19:00 - 19:59	427
08:00 - 08:59	407	20:00 - 20:59	403
09:00 - 09:59	466	21:00 - 21:59	349
10:00 - 10:59	541	22:00 - 22:59	314
11:00 - 11:59	51	23:00 - 23:59	251



DEEP FIRE

Shasta -Trinity National Forest





TRAINING

DIVISION

The Training & Safety Division plays a crucial role in the Central Fire District's operations. The Division's mission is to ensure the safety of its members and provide them with the highest quality training and instruction. Their top priority is to prepare and support personnel, enabling them to deliver exceptional service to the community.

In 2023, the Training Division was busy. Firefighter Miguel Rodriguez led Central Fire District's Paid Call Firefighter Academy 23-01 from January to June, where 13 recruits graduated and joined as Paid Call Firefighters. Later in the year, Captain Richard MacDonald led the Santa Cruz County Regional Fire Academy (SCCRFA) 23-02, in collaboration with neighboring agencies, resulting in six Central Fire District employees earning their Firefighter 1 and Firefighter 2 certifications.

Following the academy, firefighters undergo an 18-month probationary period, a crucial phase in their career, where they are supervised while gaining experience on fire apparatus and responding to emergency calls. In 2023, seven firefighters successfully completed this probationary training.

The Training and Safety Division focuses on career development and succession planning, offering certification courses to prepare personnel for advancement. Succession planning and continued development are pivotal to our organization's success.

They also conducted classes in Santa Cruz County, including the California State Fire Training Chief Fire Officer series, aimed at developing future leaders. Additionally, they organized a Captains Academy, which involved administrative exercises and live-action scenarios, culminating in a live burn exercise at the Ben Lomond Training Center, in collaboration with fellow fire agencies in the county.

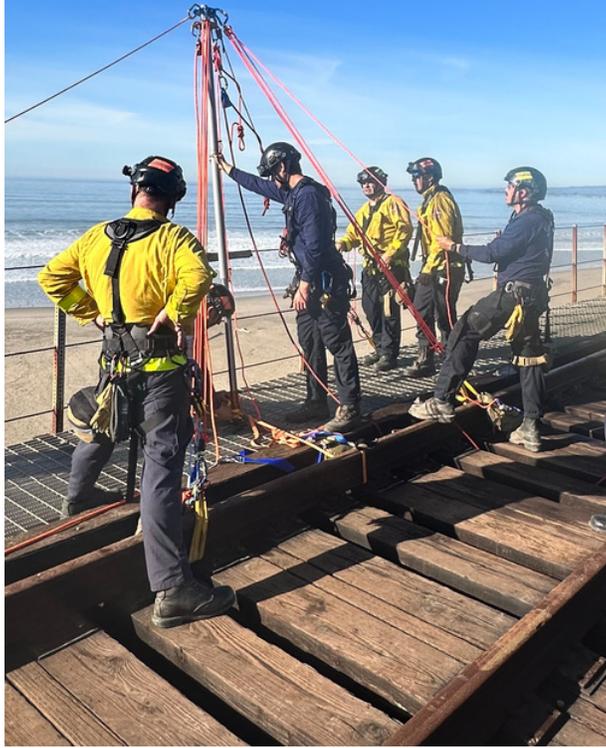
We congratulate the members of the 2023 Training and Safety Division Team who have been promoted to other positions within Central Fire District. These include Battalion Chief Winters, who has been promoted to Division Chief of Fleet and Logistics; Captain Staley, who has been promoted to Battalion Chief of A Shift; and Firefighter Rodriguez, who has been promoted to Fire Captain. We look forward to a healthy and safe training year in 2024 with a fresh new Training and Safety team!

HIGHLIGHTS 2023

- County drills in disciplines such as Truck Operation, Engine Operations, Wildland, and Special Operations
- Multiple collaborative drills with the Santa Cruz Fire Department
- Training and evaluation of Individual and Company Performance Standards
- Quarterly Command & Control Training
- Gas Emergency Response drill with Pacific Gas & Electric
- Coastal Emergencies Training
- Specialty Teams Training (Technical Rescue, Aquatic Rescue Response, HazMat, Fire Investigation)



Training sessions depicted include vehicle extrication, high-angle rope rescue, live fire exercises at the Ben Lomond Training Center, hazardous materials handling, and an exclusive opportunity to witness an Air Rescue Training demonstration with a CAL FIRE HAWK helicopter.



photos courtesy of CFD staff





photos: SLV Steve

CRR

DIVISION

In 2023, the Community Risk Reduction Division accomplished significant milestones in ensuring the safety and protection of our community against the threat of wildfires. The Division successfully completed the annual state mandated inspections for the year, obtained approval for the updated weed abatement ordinance from the Board of Directors, and finalized defensible space inspections for the 2023 fire season. These efforts have been crucial in enhancing our preparedness and response capabilities to combat potential fire hazards effectively. We're grateful to have had four hardworking Defensible Space Inspectors on the team during the 2023 fire season.

Throughout 2023, the Division conducted state-mandated fire inspections, completed entertainment venue inspections in the City of Capitola and

diligently inspected various construction projects, including new subdivisions and multi-family dwellings. CRR staff also installed or replaced smoke alarms and batteries in 24 senior residents' homes. The Division's staffing includes the Fire Marshal, two Fire Inspectors, a CRR Coordinator/Analyst, and a Captain Specialist.

Notably, Captain Specialist Tim Welte, who played a pivotal role in the GIS mapping project during the 2023 fire season, has returned to his role as an Engine Company Captain after completing a temporary assignment.

As the Division moves forward, plans are in place to fill key positions, such as the Deputy Fire Marshal and a newly created Fire Prevention Specialist role to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness.

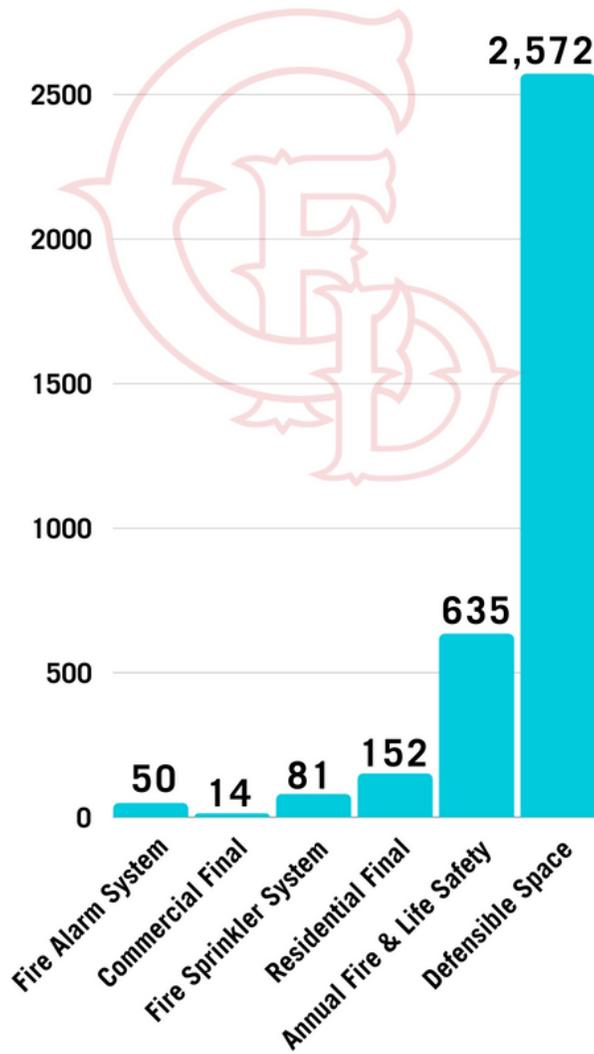
HIGHLIGHTS 2023

CRR staff participation in public education and community outreach increased in 2023, attending the following events:

- Jack Rabbit Fundraiser Run for the Live Oak Education Foundation
- Fire Safety Presentation for Residents of Camphill Communities group home
- Day of the Child Event at Live Oak Elementary School
- Soquel Elementary School Carnival
- Fire Evacuation Training for Fairway Drive Firewise Group
- Vegetation Management Presentation for Via Gargano and Churnside residents
- Family Fun Night at Live Oak Elementary School
- Firewise Presentations for Seascape HOA, Cathedral Drive, Day Valley Drive, Larkin Valley Drive, Forest Meadows, Muir Drive, Pau Hana Drive, Viewpoint Road and Las Barancas Residents
- Presentation for Aptos Firewise Alliance
- Fire Extinguisher Training for USCG Auxiliary
- Back to School Event for Castle MHP
- Cruz Aware Presentation for Fairway Drive Firewise group
- National Night Out Event with Capitola PD
- Pleasure Point Street Fair
- Live Oak School District Back to School Barbecue
- Fire Safety Presentation for Stable Life Services
- Aptos Chamber of Commerce Business Showcase
- Central Fire District's 2nd Annual Open House
- Sheriff's Department Annual Trunk or Treat
- Soquel Creek Water Harvest Festival
- Green Acres Elementary School Carnival
- Second Harvest Food Bank Holiday Food Drive
- Aptos Community Town Hall Meeting



TOTAL INSPECTIONS 2023



photos courtesy of CFD staff

ADMIN DIVISION

The Administrative Division oversees areas regarding strategic planning, policy development, personnel management, risk management, budget development and fiscal oversight. The Division encompasses the roles of the Fire Chief, Administrative Services, Human Resources, and Finance.

The Administrative Division plays a crucial role in the efficient functioning of the organization, serving as the support system in various key functions.



HIGHLIGHTS 2023

- Processed over \$20 million in payroll across 26 pay periods.
- Developed agenda packets for 18 Board and Committee meetings, along with supporting documentation, dedicating approximately 155 hours to this task.
- Managed 7 recruitment processes and assessments for various positions, receiving a total of 277 applications.
- Recruited 23 new employees, including 5 Firefighter/Paramedics, 14 Paid Call Firefighters, and 4 seasonal Defensible Space Inspectors.
- Promoted 8 employees to higher positions within the organization.
- Provided essential support and data to ad-hoc negotiation committees, resulting in new agreements.
- Completed more than 480 hours of continuing education on various topics.
- Implemented a new transparent payroll system to enhance employee visibility and understanding of the payroll process.
- In 2023, we organized a Badge Pinning Ceremony to recognize members who were promoted or newly hired. Our intention is to continue this annual tradition to honor members from the preceding year.

CFD ANNUAL REPORT 2023



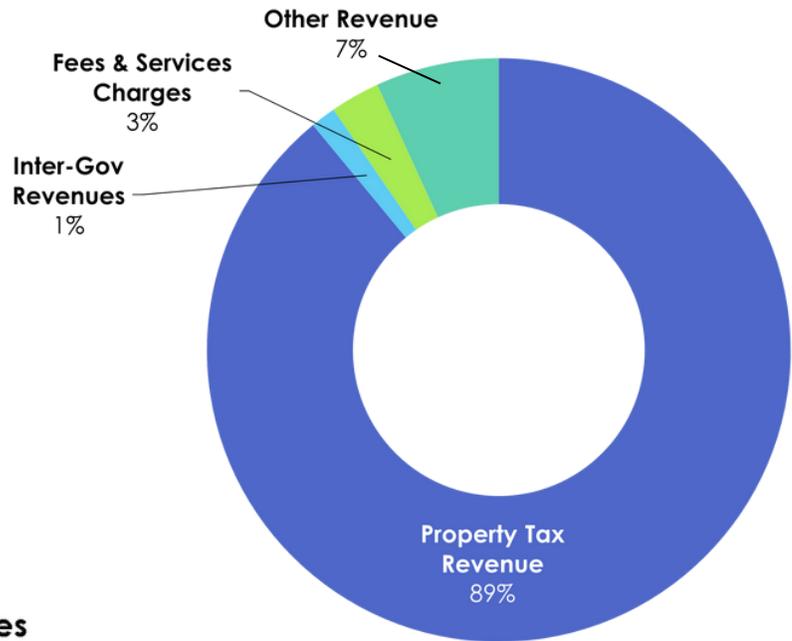
photos courtesy of CFD staff

FINANCES

BUDGET FY 2022/23
\$47,208,249

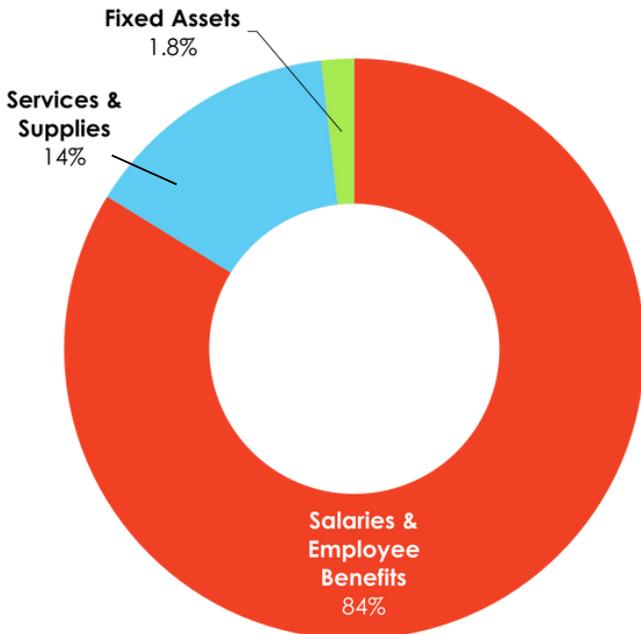
Financing Sources

Property Tax Revenue 89%
Inter-Gov Revenues 1%
Fees & Services Charges 3%
Other Revenue 7%



Financing Sources

Property Tax Revenue	\$42,021,446
Inter-Gov Revenues	\$659,874
Fees & Services Charges	\$1,300,586
Other Revenue	\$3,226,343
TOTAL	\$47,208,249



Expenditures

Salaries & Employee Benefits 84%
Services & Supplies 14%
Fixed Assets 1.8%

Expenditures

Salaries & Employee Benefits	\$35,052,054
Services & Supplies (less intrafund transfers)	\$6,019,158
Fixed Assets	\$765,880
Total	\$41,837,092

Capital Set-Asides

Capital Replacement	\$7,632,560
Total	\$7,632,560

CENTRAL

FIRE DISTRICT FACILITIES



Live Oak Station 1
930 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062



Thurber Station 2
3445 Thurber Lane
Santa Cruz, CA 95065



Soquel Station 3
4747 Soquel Drive
Soquel, CA 95073



Capitola Station 4
405 Capitola Avenue
Capitola, CA 95010



Aptos Station 5
6934 Soquel Drive
Aptos, CA 95003



Rio Del Mar Station 6
300 Bonita Drive
Aptos, CA 95003



La Selva Beach Station 7
312 Estrella Avenue
La Selva Beach, CA 95076



Administration Office
930 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062



Training Division
6934 Soquel Drive
Aptos, CA 95003



Fleet Services
410 Kennedy Drive
Capitola, CA 95010



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