

MONTECITO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



PHOTO BY MIGUEL FAIRBANKS PHOTOGRAPHY

DISTRICT OVERVIEW

Board of Directors &
Organization

CHIEF'S MESSAGE

2023 In Review & Looking Ahead

OPERATIONS REPORT

Incidents, Responses &
Training

PREVENTION REPORT

Projects & Accomplishments

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Education & Connection

FINANCIAL STATUS

Revenues & Expenditures



CONTENTS

District Overview.....3

Organization.....4-6

Chief's Message.....7

Board of Directors.....8

Mission, Vision, Values.....9

Operations Report.....10-27

Prevention Report.....28-36

Community Engagement.....37-42

Financial Status Report.....43

DISTRICT OVERVIEW

The Montecito Fire Protection District is an independent service district that provides fire, rescue and emergency services to the Montecito community.

The District is approximately 21.7 square miles in size and serves about 9,000 residents. The Montecito Fire Protection District is funded by a portion of general property tax revenue collected within district boundaries, which covers the costs of all services. We are governed by a five-member Board of Directors who are elected by public vote, each serving four-year terms.

STATIONS

- Station 91- 595 San Ysidro Road
- Station 92 - 2300 Sycamore Canyon Road

Our fleet includes structural and wildland fire apparatus, paramedic squad, ambulance, specialized Urban Search & Rescue vehicle, a mechanic's support vehicle and Battalion Chief vehicles.

Our South Coast Dispatch Center is located at Station 91 and provides dispatch services for the Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District and Montecito Fire Protection District.



PERSONNEL & SERVICES

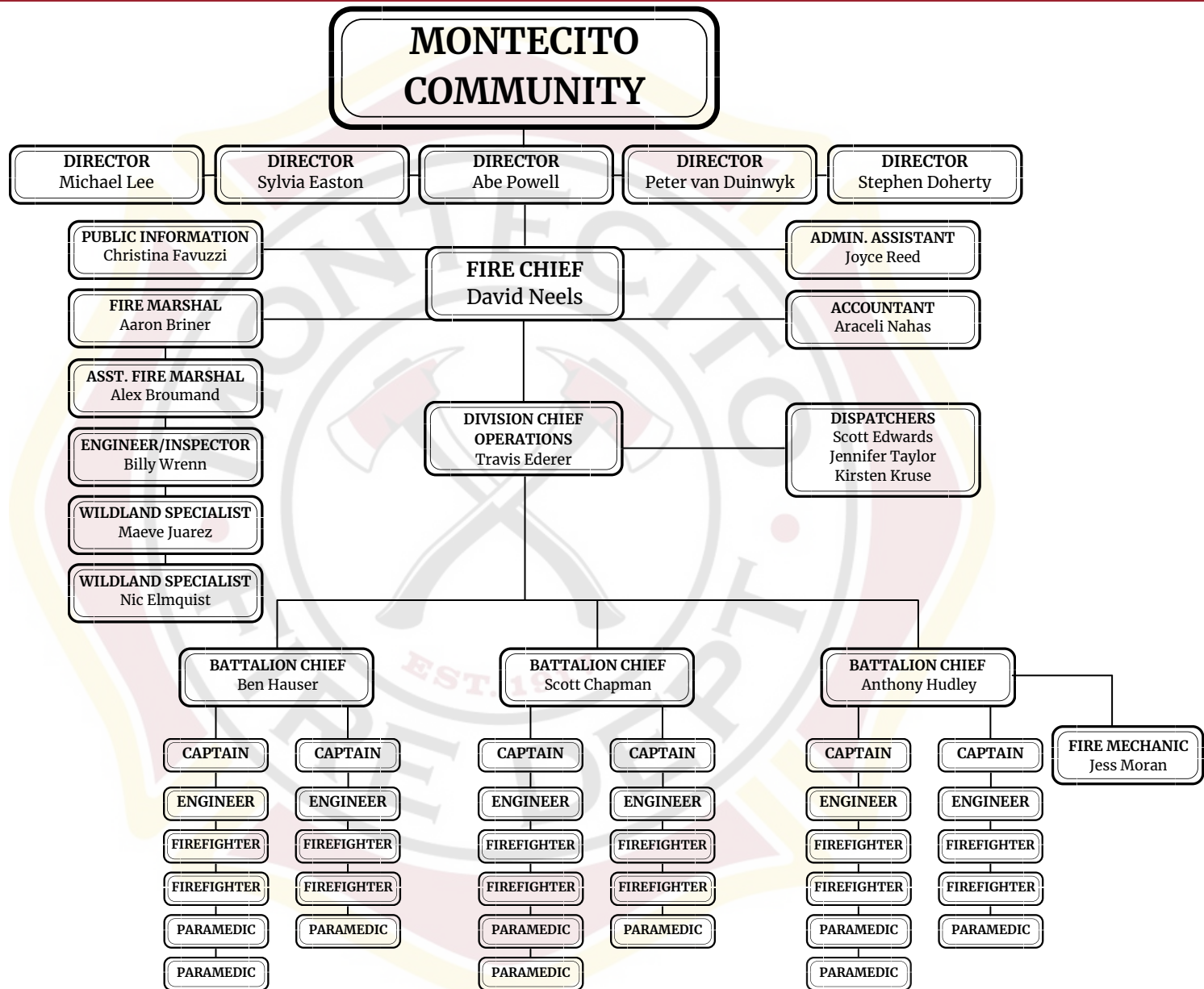
Our organization is comprised of 47 employees who work together to serve the Montecito community.

Our skilled personnel train throughout the year, often receiving specialty certifications that qualify them for specific roles serving on Incident Management Teams locally, and on state and federal incidents. These qualifications and skillsets enhance the capability and experience of our staff while building goodwill and reciprocity with other departments.

Here are some of the important emergency services your fire department is trained and equipped to perform:

- STRUCTURAL FIRE PROTECTION
- WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION
- PARAMEDIC SERVICES
- VEHICLE ACCIDENTS & FIRES
- HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MITIGATION
- TRENCH RESCUE
- CONFINED SPACE RESCUE
- BUILDING COLLAPSE RESCUE
- TRAIL RESCUE
- TECHNICAL ROPE RESCUE
- SWIFT WATER RESCUE

ORGANIZATION



ORGANIZATION

MONTECITO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

STAFF PERSONNEL

FRONT ROW, left to right

Joyce Reed,
Administrative Assistant
Travis Ederer,
Division Chief of Operations
David Neels,
Fire Chief
Aaron Briner,
Fire Marshal
Christina Atchison,
Public Information Officer
Araceli Nahas,
District Accountant

BACK ROW, left to right

Billy Wrenn,
Engineer/Inspector
Nic Elmquist,
Wildland Fire Specialist
Jess Moran,
Fire Mechanic
Alex Broumand,
Assistant Fire Marshal
Maeve Juarez,
Wildland Fire Specialist



ORGANIZATION

MONTECITO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

CHIEF OFFICERS

left to right

Scott Chapman,
B Shift Battalion Chief

Ben Hauser,
A Shift Battalion Chief

Travis Ederer,
Division Chief of Operations

David Neels,
Fire Chief

Anthony Hudley,
C Shift Battalion Chief

Aaron Briner,
Fire Marshal/Battalion Chief



CHIEF'S MESSAGE



2023 IN REVIEW & LOOKING AHEAD

It is a true honor and privilege for the members of the Montecito Fire Protection District to serve the residents of our community, and we are pleased to share our 2023 Annual Report with you. This report serves as a comprehensive overview of our department's achievements and ongoing commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of our community. As Fire Chief, I work closely with our highly trained and dedicated group of men and women as we are guided by the principles of our Mission Statement: *The Montecito Fire Protection District is a progressive organization committed to the protection of people, property, and the environment. As part of the community, we exist to provide professional and timely service through preparation for, response to, and recovery from emergencies.*

Our personnel pride themselves on delivering high-quality 911 response to emergencies and other calls for service. This is accomplished through a multifaceted approach of effective dispatch, a robust and skilled response force, paramedics who offer a high level of care to patients, and a well-maintained fleet of apparatus and support vehicles. Our Prevention Bureau works with developers and contractors to ensure that life safety remains the top priority for all construction and development projects, fuel reduction programs continue to expand to reduce our risk of wildfire, and our staff works closely with property owners to maintain excellent defensible space and safeguard their properties with home hardening improvements. Additionally, our administrative staff ensures financial accountability and responsibility remain a benchmark of our operations, and our public messaging empowers and educates our community with the information needed before, during, and after an emergency. We are also continually grateful to our Board of Directors for their continued oversight and guidance.

As we move into 2024, our focus remains on continuous improvement and service delivery to our community. We will explore innovative technologies in the response to fire and emergency medical services, enhance community partnerships in emergency preparedness, and reinforce our commitment to professional development. Moreover, we will actively seek feedback from the community to better understand their evolving needs and expectations. It is through collaboration and shared responsibility that we can create a safer, more resilient Montecito for every community member.

A blue ink signature of David Neels, the Fire Chief, written in a cursive style.

David Neels
Fire Chief

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MONTECITO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Board of Directors is responsible for governing the Montecito Fire Protection District. The Board consists of five members, each of whom serves a four-year term.



STEPHEN DOUGHERTY, SYLVIA EASTON, JOHN ABRAHAM POWELL, PETER VAN DUINWYK, MIKE LEE

Peter van Duinwyk - President
Term of Office: 11/8/2022 - 12/4/2026

Michael Lee - Vice President
Term of Office: 11/3/2020 - 12/6/2024

Sylvia Easton - Secretary
Term of Office: 11/3/2020 - 12/6/2024

John Abraham Powell - Member
Term of Office: 11/3/2020 - 12/6/2024

Stephen Dougherty - Member
Term of Office: 11/8/2022 - 12/4/2026

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

Mission

The Montecito Fire Protection District is a progressive organization committed to the protection of people, property, and the environment. As part of the community, we exist to provide professional and timely service through preparation for, response to, and recovery from emergencies.

Vision

- We will serve our whole community with an innovative approach to preparedness, response, and recovery.
 - We will enhance our relationships through collaboration to resolve all challenges our community may face.
 - We will lean forward with intent in the pursuit of advancing technology and industry best practices.
 - We will develop exceptional leaders in our organization supported by a culture of empowerment.
 - We will enhance mental, physical, and spiritual health within our organization.
-

Values

We value community through:

- Respect
- Relationships
- Approachability
- Public outreach
- Transparency

We value service through:

- Commitment to excellence
- Competence
- Preparedness
- Collaboration
- Integrity
- Professionalism

We value our people through:

- Our culture of empowerment
- Mental, physical, and spiritual health
- Personal and professional experience
- Training and education

OPERATIONS REPORT

INCIDENTS, RESPONSES & TRAININGS



OPERATIONS REPORT

INCIDENTS & RESPONSES

Montecito Fire utilizes the following National Fire Incident Reporting System's (NFIRS) incident typing categories to organize response data:

FIRE

Structure fire, vehicle fire, vegetation fire, other fire categories

RESCUE & EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE

EMS, medical assist, lock-in, search for lost person, extrication, water and ice-related rescue, standby

HAZARDOUS CONDITION

Combustible/flammable spills and leaks, chemical release, electrical wiring/equipment problem, vehicle accident debris removal, attempted burning, overpressure rupture, explosion, overheat (no fire)

SERVICE CALL

Person in distress, water problem, smoke/odor problem, animal rescue, public service assist, unauthorized burning, cover assignment, severe weather and natural disaster, special incident type

GOOD INTENT CALL

Dispatched and cancelled enroute, no emergency found, controlled burning, steam mistaken for smoke, EMS call where party has been transported

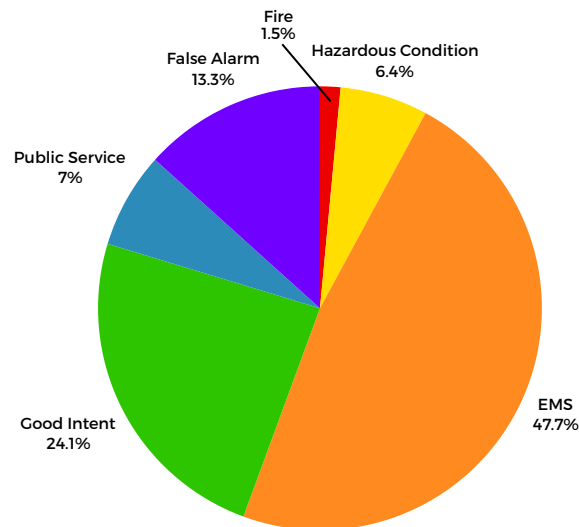
FALSE ALARM

System or detector malfunction, unintentional system activation, sprinkler activation

RESPONSES BY CATEGORY

Fire	26
Hazardous Condition	112
EMS	834
Good Intent	421
Public Service	122
False Alarm	223
Total Calls for Service	1,738

RESPONSES BY PERCENTAGE



TOTAL CALLS PER YEAR

2023	1,738
2022	1,529
2021	1,539
2020	1,426
2019	1,340



OPERATIONS REPORT

EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN 7 MINUTES OR LESS

Board Policy:

**Total Response Time of 7:00 minutes,
90% of the time**

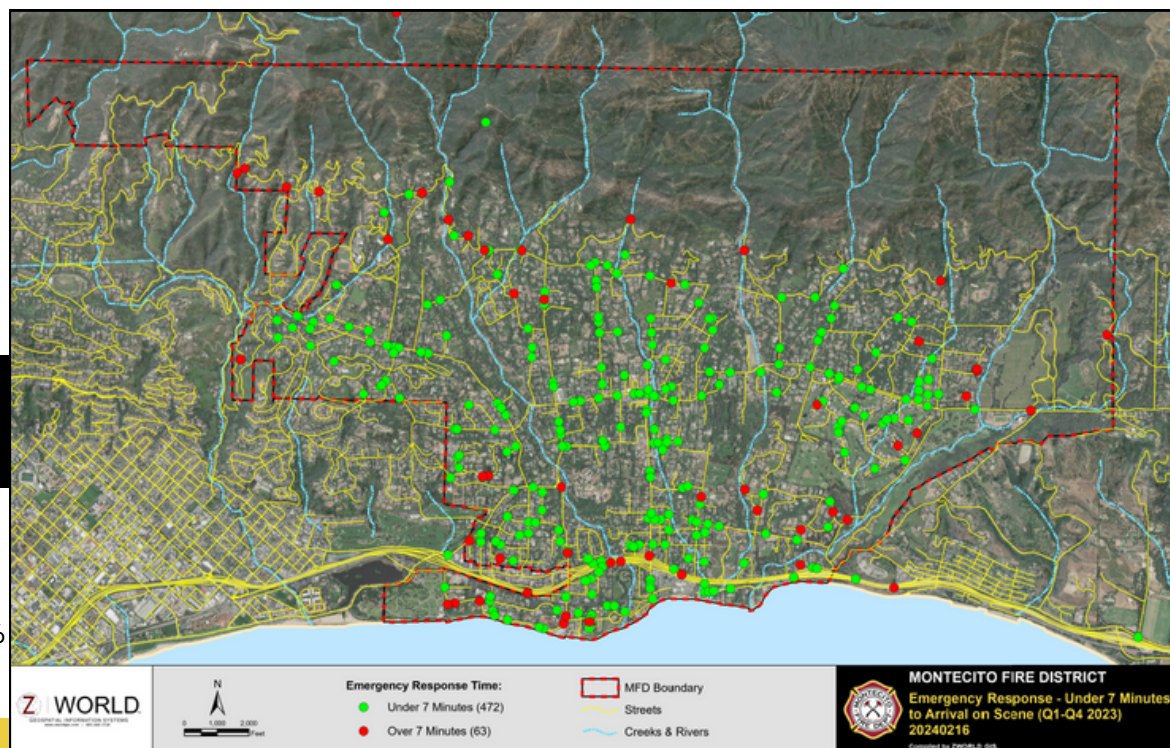
Total Response Time =
Call Processing + Turnout Time + Drive Time
(1:00) (2:00) (4:00)

**TOTAL EMERGENCY CALLS IN
MONTECITO FIRE DISTRICT = 539**

Total Response Time \geq 7:00 = 67 Calls = 12%

Total Response Time \leq 7:00 = 472 Calls = 88%

**7:00 minutes or less, 88% of the time
for Emergency Response in 2023**



OPERATIONS REPORT

SOUTH COAST DISPATCH

SOUTH COAST DISPATCH IN 2023

In 2023, our Dispatchers and Dispatch Cadre answered both emergency and business calls for service from South Coast Dispatch.

Our personnel effectively dispatched and tracked resources for a total of **4,067** incidents for both the Carpinteria-Summerland and Montecito Fire Protection Districts.



South Coast Dispatch dispatched and tracked

4,067

incidents for both Carpinteria-Summerland and
Montecito Fire Protection Districts in 2023

REGIONAL FIRE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

In April 2023, an official groundbreaking ceremony was held for the Regional Fire Communications Center. The RFCC will streamline the dispatch process for all of the Santa Barbara County Operational Area and expand the Joint Information Center and Call Center in the Office of Emergency Management. The RFCC is expected to be completed and operational in the fall of 2024 and South Coast Dispatch will merge in January 2025.



OPERATIONS REPORT

UPSTAFFING

STATION 90

The Montecito Fire Department temporarily placed a Type 6 engine into service on the southern end of the Fire District to ensure adequate emergency response times in light of ongoing Highway 101 roadwork and ancillary construction projects in the area. Construction on Highway 101, closure of the San Ysidro Road overcrossing, and other ancillary construction projects in the area posed delays to our emergency response capabilities.

Engine 691, as well as a temporary housing unit for the two firefighters staffing the engine, were stationed in a parking lot along Hill Road adjacent to the Biltmore property. We are greatly appreciative of Ty Warner for facilitating the opportunity to station this engine in an area of our community that was a challenge to access from June 14 to August 22 due to the numerous construction projects.

The necessity for this unique, temporary station south of Highway 101 proved itself more than 53 times over. Engine 691 was able to provide a timely response to a wide variety of calls on the southside of Montecito including medical aids involving advanced life support, traffic collisions and fire activity along the railroad corridor and enhanced response to structure fires.



OPERATIONS REPORT

MUTUAL AID RESPONSES

MUTUAL AID

In 2023, Montecito Fire responded to incidents across California and the western United States.

Sending our members out on these regional assignments allows them to assist other communities in need. Through these diverse assignments our personnel gain qualifications in a myriad of specialties, improving their overall understanding of the complexities in our mission relating to preparation, response, and recovery. This knowledge is immediately applicable to incidents within our district and operational area.

- CHILCOOT FIRE - OR
- QUARTZ RIDGE FIRE - CO
- SLO COUNTY SAR
- BONNY FIRE
- LPF FIRE SUPPORT
- HAPPY CAMP COMPLEX
- ONCC SUPPORT
- PLANT FIRE
- RABBIT FIRE
- SMITH RIVER COMPLEX
- SOUTH FORK COMPLEX
- OES PREPOSITION XSB
- SRF LIGHTNING COMPLEX
- QUARRY FIRE
- YORK FIRE



OPERATIONS REPORT

TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TRAINING

In 2023, Montecito Fire personnel and Board Members logged **11,900** training hours.

Our average is **330 hours of training per person** in the ranks of Firefighter, Firefighter Paramedic, Engineer, Captain and Battalion Chief.

Our department was fortunate to recognize the California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS) qualifications of several of our members in 2023. We recognize their completion of training task books and significant time spent on incidents to gain experience and expertise in specific disciplines.

11,900

Training Hours in 2023

PERSONNEL WHO COMPLETED TRAINING TASK BOOKS IN 2023

Shaun Davis: Safety Officer, FireLine (SOFR)

Jess Moran: Equipment Manager (EQPM)

Araceli Nahas: Status/Check-in Recorder (SCKN);
Resource Unit Leader (RESL)

STAFF RIDES

In 2023, Montecito Fire Department personnel attended the Esperanza and Gettysburg Staff Rides. In the fire service, a staff ride is a study of a past wildland fire, often examining why fatalities occurred, honoring the lives lost, and discussing the strategies and tactics employed during the incident. These experiences develop leadership, awareness, and decision making.



Montecito Fire Captain Shaun Davis and Division Chief of Operations Travis Ederer attended L580 - Leadership Is Action class in Gettysburg, PA.

OPERATIONS REPORT

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

TRAINING AT ACQUIRED STRUCTURES

In April, Montecito Fire participated in structure fire training at a residence in neighboring Summerland. Firefighters had the opportunity to train on various structure fire evolutions alongside our partners from Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District. The single-family residence in Summerland served as an excellent training ground for our crews.

We are extremely grateful for the opportunity to train at structures within our community when they are slated for demolition or remodel. Many thanks to the Prevention Bureau for their assistance in acquiring structures for training.



WILDLAND FIRE TRAINING

In the spring, all Montecito firefighters completed Wildland Fire Safety Refresher Training, referred to as RT 130. The annual training includes a review of the previous year's fire season, projections for the upcoming fire year, analysis of fatality fires and physical testing to ensure firefighters are prepared for the rigors of wildland firefighting.

In Montecito, we have the opportunity to utilize the local trail network as our training ground. Firefighters hiked the Buena Vista Trail and completed drills, including deploying practice fire shelters and executing progressive hose lays. This training prepares our personnel for the critical and challenging realities of today's wildfires.



OPERATIONS REPORT

NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

WINTER STORMS

In January, a series of significant storms moved through southern Santa Barbara County causing extreme saturation of our mountains and foothills, subsequently creating a serious risk for flooding and debris flow. Storms on January 4 and 9 prompted us to evacuate members of our community. The district suffered serious impacts including road washouts, debris-laden flooding and landslides.

On March 13, another significant storm moved through Santa Barbara County. An evacuation warning for areas identified on the Storm Impact Consideration Map was issued on the evening of March 13 and upgraded to an evacuation order the following morning. By the evening of March 14 all residents were allowed to return home. Storm impacts across the district included many downed trees and lines, roadway flooding and minor slides.

On March 21, a large Torrey Pine fell onto a residence on Pomar Lane. The tree fell onto the home's living room where the family was sitting at the time. Fortunately, no one was injured. The structure suffered significant damage. Montecito firefighters shored up the structure to provide temporary stability.

Saturated root systems and drought-stressed trees led to numerous downed tree issues across the district.



OPERATIONS REPORT

NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

WINTER STORMS PREPAREDNESS

Ahead of the 2023/2024 rain season, we transitioned from providing plastic bags to burlap bags at our sandbag filling station at Lower Manning Park. This environmentally conscious change was made possible through a partnership between the Montecito Fire Department's Board of Directors and local, non-profit organization Heal the Ocean.

As part of standard operating procedures, Montecito Fire provides a sandbag filling station ahead of rain events at Lower Manning Park to assist community members with preparing their properties for potential flooding impacts. However, the use of plastic bags for filling sandbags poses hazards to the environment.

Following the 2022/2023 rain season, the Montecito Fire Protection District Board of Directors requested that future activations of the sandbag filling station be supplied with burlap bags and to discontinue use of plastic bags once the stock of them is exhausted.

The change from plastic to burlap costs the Fire District about \$1 more per bag. Heal the Ocean generously offered to reimburse the Fire District for the first 3,000 burlap bags as part of the organization's longstanding efforts to reduce pollution along the Santa Barbara County coastline.

Going forward, Montecito Fire Protection District will fund the purchase of burlap bags as a permanent commitment to being environmentally responsible.



OPERATIONS REPORT

NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

PICACHO LANE STRUCTURE FIRE

Montecito Fire responded to a reported structure fire on the 900 block of Picacho Lane at 4:56 p.m. on January 27. Upon arrival, Montecito firefighters saw light smoke coming from the garage. The fire was contained to the garage and knocked down within 10 minutes of firefighters arriving on scene. One adult male was taken to the hospital by paramedics for smoke inhalation.

Approximately 25 firefighters responded to the incident from Montecito Fire, Carpinteria-Summerland Fire and Santa Barbara City Fire.



OPERATIONS REPORT

NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

TRAIL RESCUES

Montecito Fire responded to numerous trail rescues in 2023. Notably, on May 13, firefighters were dispatched to the Romero Canyon Trail where a 26-year-old woman was hiking with her dog when she was bitten by a rattlesnake on her foot. Santa Barbara County's Air Support Unit hoisted the hiker out and Montecito firefighters hiked down with the patient's dog and turned it over to Santa Barbara County Animal Services who later reunited the pair.

On June 10, Montecito firefighters responded to the Cold Springs Trail to assist an injured 19-year-old female who was about two miles up the trail in the area of Tangerine Falls when she slipped and fell. Rain created slippery conditions along the rocky trail.

When responding to calls for service on our local trails, we are grateful to often be assisted by Santa Barbara County Fire Department, Santa Barbara County Search and Rescue and U.S. Forest Service - Los Padres National Forest.



OPERATIONS REPORT

NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

HIGHWAY 101 INCIDENTS

At 3:10 a.m. on August 13, Montecito Fire responded to a traffic collision on Highway 101 southbound just north of the Olive Mill offramp. Two vehicles were involved. One vehicle went down an embankment off the highway. Of the two people in that SUV, one suffered major injuries and required extrication. Sadly, the other person was ejected and died as a result of the crash. Three people in the other involved vehicle suffered minor injuries. All patients were transported to the hospital by ambulance.

On September 16, Montecito Fire and Carpinteria-Summerland Fire responded to a bus fire on Highway 101 southbound near the Sheffield Drive exit. The driver of a tour bus noticed something was wrong with the vehicle, pulled over, and evacuated the approximately 30 passengers and their luggage. The engine compartment of the bus caught fire and was fully engulfed. Firefighters knocked down the flames within minutes of arriving on scene. No one was injured. The bus closed one lane of traffic on Highway 101 for several hours until a heavy wrecker could remove it.

When responding to incidents on Highway 101 during the ongoing construction, we are especially thankful for the strong partnerships and collaboration we share with Carpinteria-Summerland Fire, Santa Barbara City Fire, AMR, CHP, and Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office.



OPERATIONS REPORT

PERSONNEL UPDATES

RETIREMENTS & APPOINTMENTS

On March 31, Chief Kevin Taylor officially retired after 35 years of service and more than eight years with Montecito Fire. He began his career in 1987 as a seasonal firefighter with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. He later became an EMT, attended paramedic school at Stanford University and completed the fire academy at Allan Hancock College. In 1991, he was hired in his hometown of Paso Robles as a firefighter/paramedic and spent 24 years there promoting through the ranks to fire captain/paramedic and battalion chief.

In February 2015, Chief Taylor joined Montecito Fire Department as Division Chief of Operations. On June 24, 2019, our Board of Directors promoted him to Fire Chief. He championed a culture of empowerment within our fire department by encouraging and supporting personal and professional development for every member of the organization to prepare confident and capable leaders for the future of Montecito Fire.

Our Board of Directors selected Division Chief of Operations, David Neels, as Chief Taylor's successor. Chief Taylor and Chief Neels worked closely to ensure a smooth transition. Chief Neels was appointed Fire Chief effective April 1, 2023.

Chief Neels began his firefighting career in 1989 in San Luis Obispo County while earning his bachelor's degree in agricultural engineering from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. In 1998, he joined Santa Barbara County Fire Department as a firefighter paramedic. During his 21 years with Santa Barbara County Fire Department, he progressed through the ranks to engineer, captain and battalion chief. In November 2019, he joined Montecito Fire Department as a battalion chief. He was promoted to Division Chief of Operations in January 2021. Neels has worked with state Incident Management Teams for over 15 years, responding to major emergencies across the Western United States. In addition to his role as Montecito Fire Chief, he currently serves as an Incident Commander for the Santa Barbara County Type 3 Incident Management Team.



FIRE CHIEF KEVIN TAYLOR



FIRE CHIEF DAVID NEELS

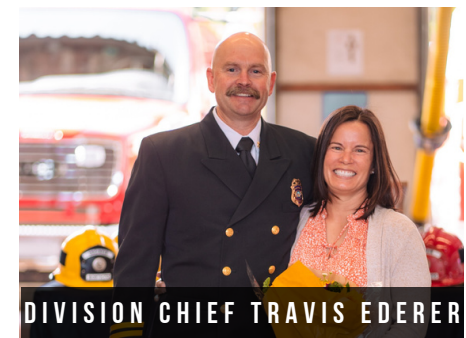
OPERATIONS REPORT

PERSONNEL UPDATES

PROMOTIONAL CEREMONY

In April, we celebrated the promotions of six of our members whose new positions became effective between January and May of 2023. We recognized three newly appointed engineers, a captain, a battalion chief and our division chief of operations.

We also honored the exceptional actions of Fire Mechanic Jess Moran who repaired critical radio infrastructure following the damaging January storms.



OPERATIONS REPORT

2023 STAFFING

A SHIFT

Battalion Chief
Ben Hauser

Captains
Jeff Villarreal
Lucas Grant

Engineers
Eric Klemowicz
Daniel Arnold

Firefighter/Paramedics
Garet Blake
Brandon Bennewate

Firefighters
Dustin Barthel
Patrick Ruiz
Jess Gilkey
John Weber

Dispatcher
Kirsten Kruse



OPERATIONS REPORT

2023 STAFFING

B SHIFT

Battalion Chief
Scott Chapman

Captains
Jordan Zeitsoff
Robert Galbraith

Engineers
Rodney Walkup
David Johnson

Firefighter/Paramedics
Ryland McCracken
Shawn Whilt
Kevin French

Firefighters
Steve Cochran
Charles Spencer
Tyler McManigal

Dispatcher
Jennifer Taylor



OPERATIONS REPORT

2023 STAFFING

C SHIFT

Battalion Chief
Anthony Hudley

Captains
Evan Skei
Shaun Davis

Engineers
Loren Bass
Nicholas Eubank

Firefighter/Paramedics
Andrew Rupp
Trevor Burch
Jared Gamm

Firefighters
Evan Hamaker
Jered Walberg
Justin Pickens

Dispatcher
Scott Edwards



PREVENTION REPORT

PROJECTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



PREVENTION REPORT

MONTECITO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

PREVENTION BUREAU

left to right
Engineer/Inspector
Billy Wrenn

Wildland Fire Specialist
Nic Elmquist

Fire Marshal
Aaron Briner

Wildland Fire Specialist
Maeve Juarez

Assistant Fire Marshal
Alex Broumand



PREVENTION REPORT

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

NEIGHBORHOOD CHIPPING

- 50 days
- 215 participants
- 136 tons of vegetation removed

NEIGHBORHOOD TAG & TRIM

- 10 days
- 10 miles of roads completed
- 18 tons of vegetation removed

FUEL TREATMENT NETWORK

- 30 days
- 105 tons of vegetation removed

DEAD TREE REMOVAL

- 28 dead trees
- 90 tons of vegetation removed

ROADSIDE WEED ABATEMENT

- 69 days (vs. 36 in 2022)
- 23 miles of roads and trailheads completed

GRAZING

- 45 days
- 30 acres treated



232

Days of Vegetation
Management Projects
across the District

349

Tons of Vegetation
Removed from Very High
Fire Severity Areas

\$455,000

Total Cost to Implement
Vegetation Management
Projects

\$120,000

Funded by California
Climate Investment Fire
Prevention Project

PREVENTION REPORT

DEFENSIBLE SPACE & HOME HARDENING PROJECTS

NEIGHBORHOOD CHIPPING

Now approaching 15 years running, the Neighborhood Chipping Program asks residents to cut down overgrown vegetation within 100 feet of their homes and pile it on their curb to be chipped and hauled to a recycling center. Our contractor devoted 50 days of hard work to chip hundreds of piles of vegetation and haul away 136 tons of chipped material out of Montecito.

In 2023, Montecito Fire offered the program to approximately 1,631 residences in 10 neighborhoods within the fire district boundary. These areas are identified as part of the Very High Fire Severity Zone and therefore, are prioritized for wildfire mitigation projects. A total of **215 properties** participated in the Chipping Project this year.

This program is always expanding. In 2024, we are adding 89 residences to the program to include Moore, Las Tunas, Picacho Lane, Stone Meadow Lane, Green Meadow Road, Alcala Lane, Delzura Drive and Camino Viejo.



PREVENTION REPORT

DEFENSIBLE SPACE & HOME HARDENING PROJECTS

VENT RETROFIT PROGRAM

To minimize the effects of future wildfires on our community, our Board of Directors approved the allocation of funds from the Fire Defense Zone Budget to establish a Home Hardening Assistance Program. This initiative concentrates on installing ember-resistant vents in homes, which are designed to prevent flames and embers from entering residences and significantly reduce the risk of structural ignitions during wildfires.

During 2023, we successfully retrofitted **eight homes** within the district with these new vents. The program garnered national attention and due to the high volume of applications, we prioritized homes located in the Very High Severity Zones.

In response to the concerning trend of insurance companies declining coverage for California residents and the growing requirement for compliance with Zone Zero standards, we have decided to temporarily pause the Home Hardening Assistance Program. This pause will allow us to enhance the program to maximize the benefit to residents. Our goal is to align our efforts with the needs of high-risk homes, assisting residents in retrofitting, hardening, and creating defensible space to protect against wildfires. By doing so, we aim not only to support our community members but also to demonstrate our proactive measures and potentially satisfy the requirements of insurance providers.



PREVENTION REPORT

DEFENSIBLE SPACE & HOME HARDENING PROJECTS

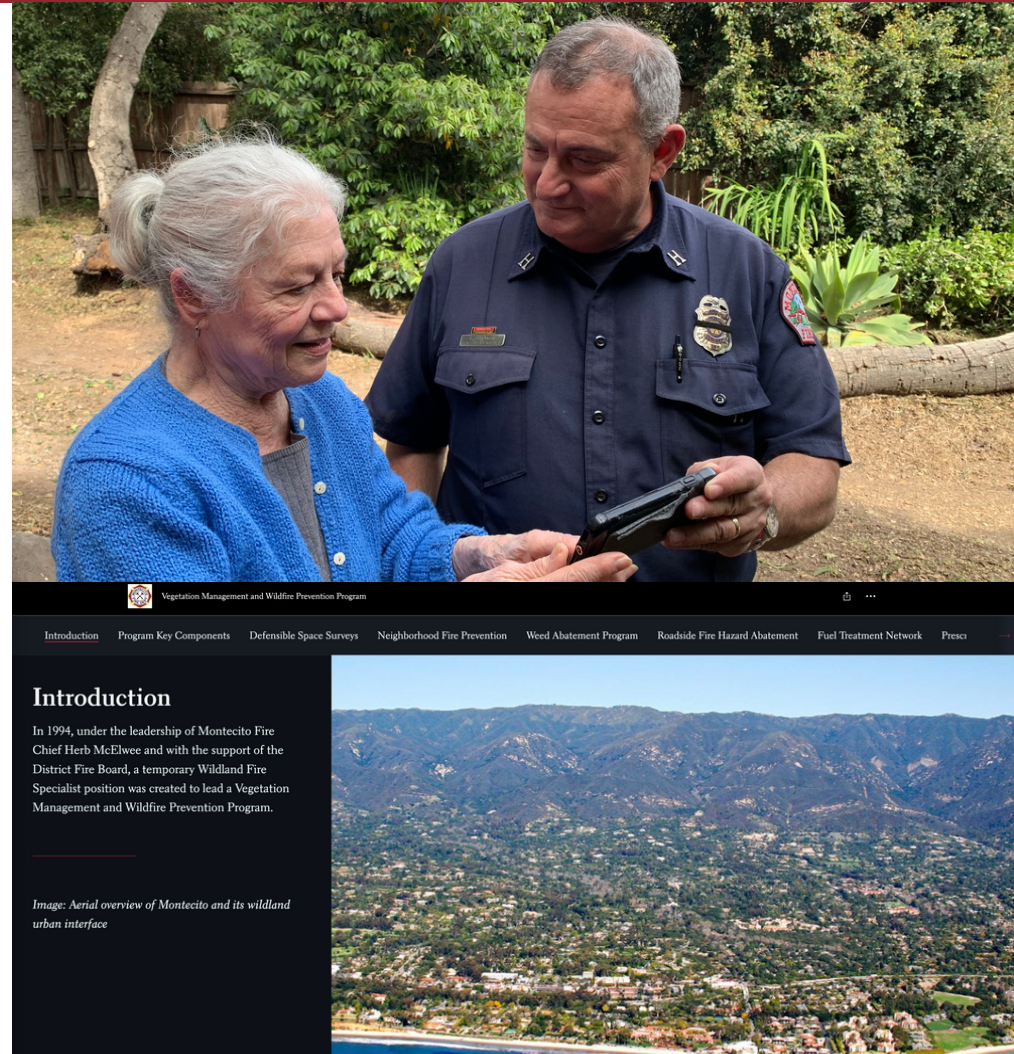
DEFENSIBLE SPACE SURVEYS & INSPECTIONS

The most critical step a property owner can take to mitigate future impacts of wildfires is to enhance defensible space on their property. Defensible space increases the odds a structure will survive a wildfire by reducing fire intensity adjacent to structures and limiting its exposure to direct flame impingement. It creates a safer environment for evacuating residents and provides firefighters a safe area to protect structures.

In 2023, our Wildland Fire Specialists conducted **55 Defensible Space Surveys** throughout the fire district at the request of property owners. The surveys are typically 30-45 minutes and focus on vulnerabilities of the structures, characteristics of the surrounding vegetation, and property access and egress routes. After the property visit, a report is provided to the owner explaining the vulnerabilities of the property and the specific recommendations to mitigate these vulnerabilities. These surveys offer opportunities to build relationships with community members.

Additionally, Fire Department personnel conduct annual, mandatory **Defensible Space Inspections** of more than 1,500 parcels within the district. If compliance issues are found on a property, a corrective letter is sent to the property owner identifying the needed mitigated actions and a date for the subsequent inspection. These requirements include mowing dead grass to below a 2-inch height, removing dead trees, and ensuring tree limbs are at least 10 feet away from chimneys.

Learn more about Montecito Fire's Vegetation Management and Wildfire Mitigation Program at our online StoryMap viewed [HERE](#).



PREVENTION REPORT

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

GRAZING

The Montecito Fire Department, in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council, was thrilled to embark on the Santa Barbara South Coast Prescribed Herbivory Project. This time-tested approach aims to reduce wildfire risk by utilizing grazing animals, such as sheep and goats, to naturally lower fuel loads in a cost-effective and environmentally friendly way.

In 2023, we grazed 30 acres within the open spaces of Ennisbrook, San Ysidro, and East Mountain Drive. This was a collaborative project with the Land Trust of Santa Barbara County, Montecito Trails Foundation, UCSB, and the Santa Barbara Regional Wildfire Mitigation Program.

We have an additional 100 acres planned for grazing in 2024.



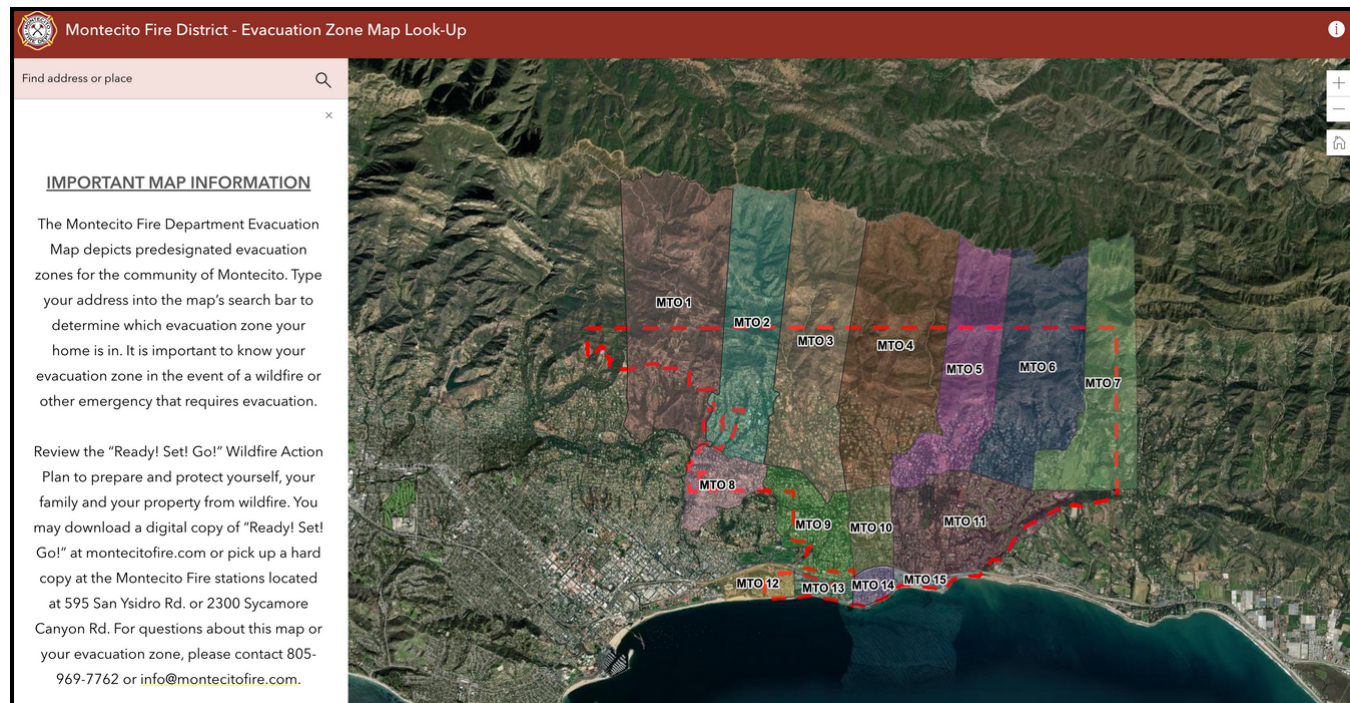
PREVENTION REPORT

WILDFIRE & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

EVACUATION ANALYSIS

In 2022, Montecito Fire hired the transportation consultant Fehr & Peers to conduct a Community Emergency Evacuation Analysis. Innovative software makes it possible to improve evacuation planning through the integration of spatial analytical methods. By simulating emergency evacuations, analysts identified vulnerabilities specific to Montecito and provided recommendations to improve and increase efficiency in future emergency evacuations.

In 2023, Montecito Fire targeted one of the recommendations, collaborating again with Fehr & Peers to determine if a more **granular phased evacuation** and reduction in size of some of our evacuation zones would decrease congestion along critical traffic corridors during an emergency evacuation. The analysis confirmed adding **eight additional evacuation zones** would be advantageous and the proposed evacuation zone realignment was presented and approved at the January 22, 2024 Board of Directors meeting. An implementation plan and community information will be shared as this project progresses.



PREVENTION REPORT

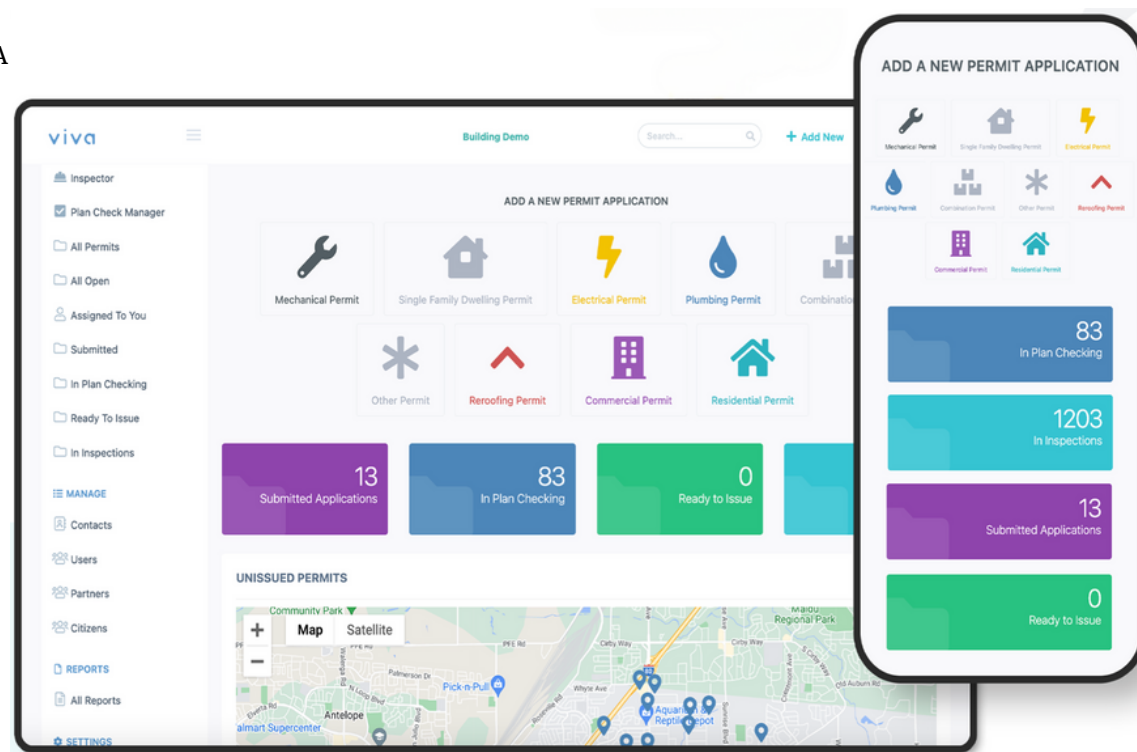
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

VIVA

VIVA is Montecito Fire Protection District's new online system for submitting all permit types, including Fire Protection Certificate Applications (FPCs), fire sprinkler system plans, tent permits, burn permits, and new address applications. VIVA allows the entire submission, review, and approval process to occur on a community-facing platform. By consolidating the entire process in VIVA, the Prevention Bureau noted an improvement in permit processing times as well as the ability to quickly address applicants' concerns and questions related to their projects. It also allows for a more seamless review of projects by multiple Prevention staff members at one time.

An applicant for a project can allow their contractors, architects, engineers, and other related parties to have access to the project by creating a VIVA account for them. This allows everyone involved to stay up-to-date on the project status. Once the application or permit is submitted through VIVA, it is reviewed by our staff. The applicant is notified once their submission has been approved and the approved plans, condition letters, or permits are accessible in VIVA. Also, FPCs are uploaded to the Santa Barbara County Building and Safety Accela system.

We are excited about this improvement to our processes and appreciate the positive feedback we have received from applicants regarding the ease of use and information exchange. The Montecito VIVA website is <https://montecitofire.vivasoft.io/>



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

EDUCATION & CONNECTION



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

CERT TRAINING

In May, Montecito Fire and MERRAG hosted a free, four-day CERT training. Ten local participants learned various emergency preparedness skills including fire suppression, disaster medical operations, and rescue operations. Special thanks to our Administrative Assistant Joyce Reed for facilitating this important training for our community.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS COMMUNITY MEETING

On June 28, we held our annual Wildfire Preparedness Community Meeting at El Montecito Presbyterian Church alongside our partners from CHP, Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office, Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management and Santa Barbara Police Department. We covered the fire danger outlook, home hardening, defensible space, as well as evacuation readiness in light of the ongoing road construction in Montecito. In an effort to reach more members of our community, we will look into developing a wildfire preparedness video series in 2024.



FOURTH OF JULY PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Nearly 1,300 plates were served at the Montecito Firefighters Association's July 4th Pancake Breakfast. Fire Station 91 was dressed up in red, white and blue thanks to volunteers and friends of the fire department. The Montecito Rotary Club volunteered in the kitchen for the second year in a row to help the firefighters prepare the pancakes. We look forward to this community event every year!



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

During the first two weeks of October, Montecito firefighters visited eight schools within the district to teach fire safety to students. Our school visits are part of the more than 100-year tradition of National Fire Prevention Week. We look forward to these visits each fall as an opportunity to connect with our youngest community members and educate them on fire safety and emergency preparedness.



MONTECITO BEAUTIFICATION DAY

On November 4, more than 100 people volunteered their time on a Saturday morning to collect trash and improve areas around Montecito. Montecito Firefighters Association continued our tradition of serving the volunteers a well-deserved lunch in the Upper Village. The theme of Beautification Day this year was “It Takes a Village” and it truly does - our community comes together every year for this event and this year was no exception!



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

PUBLIC ACCESS AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATION PROGRAM

Montecito Fire Department replaced **24 AEDs** in our fleet of emergency response vehicles and facilities to meet the new, mandated requirements for first responder AEDs. These existing AEDs have **4 years of service life remaining**.

We repurposed these AEDs by placing them throughout our community with minimal financial impact during the introduction phase of a Public Access Defibrillation program.

We prioritize distributing the AEDs to businesses and facilities where large numbers of people gather such as schools, fitness centers, hotels, golf courses and community centers.

Montecito firefighters provide training to personnel at locations receiving AEDs to ensure they know how to properly utilize these lifesaving devices.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CONNECT WITH MONTECITO FIRE

SOCIAL MEDIA

Montecito Fire continues to grow our social media followings and better connect with our community members through these platforms. We encourage all community members to follow us on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter for both critical information related to emergency situations and feature posts to help them become more familiar with Montecito Fire.



[@montecitofire](https://www.instagram.com/montecitofire)



[facebook.com/MontecitoFire](https://www.facebook.com/MontecitoFire)



twitter.com/montecitofire
[@montecitofire](https://twitter.com/montecitofire)



FINANCIAL STATUS REPORT

REVENUES & EXPENDITURES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2023

Montecito Fire Protection District remained financially strong in 2023. The leadership and oversight of the Board of Directors allowed us to continue to provide a wide range of services within its operating budget, while also preparing to remain healthy and resilient in the future.

We take pride in making fiscal transparency and accountability a high priority. The Finance Committee reviews monthly reports and an independent auditor produces an annual report, all of which are accessible on our website, www.montecitofire.com.



REVENUES & FINANCING SOURCES

Property Taxes	\$22,406,591
Interest/Rental Income	197,761
Fire Assignments	1,577,248
State Fire Prevention Grant	149,612
Charges for Services	221,088
Miscellaneous Revenue	120,374
TOTAL	\$24,672,674

EXPENDITURES & FINANCING USES

Salaries & Employee Benefits	\$18,581,629
Services & Supplies	2,378,477
Capital Assets	87,257
Pension Obligation Bond Repayments	1,257,928
Transfer to Capital Reserves Fund	530,000
Transfer to Land & Building Fund	1,350,000
Increase to Residual Fund Balance	487,383
TOTAL	\$24,672,674



2023 ANNUAL REPORT MONTECITO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

