

Communities Pull Together to Fight Fire

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 28, 2021

For More Information, Contact:
Kelsey Martinez Combellick

(408) 299-5050 office

(408) 299-1277 cell

kelsey.m.combellick@bos.sccgov.org

COMMUNITIES PULL TOGETHER TO FIGHT FIRE

Fire Station 8: “An extra line of defense when and where we need it most”

On the cusp of the 2021 fire season, enhanced and extended fire and rescue protection in the North County is expected to gain final approval from the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors at its June 8 meeting.

The three-jurisdiction Fire and Medical Services Agreement uses staffing and equipment from the County’s Central Fire Protection District (SCCFPD) and the City of Palo Alto with funding from the Los Altos Hills County Fire District (LAHCFD) to provide an “all-risk” engine crew during wildland fire season at Fire Station 8, strategically located in Palo Alto’s Foothills Park.

“This just makes so much sense; it’s a critical and life-saving cooperative agreement as we struggle with climate change and wildfire in ways we couldn’t imagine just a few years ago,” said County Supervisor Joe Simitian, whose district (District Five) includes Station 8 and its neighboring communities in the higher-risk wildland-urban interface of Los Altos Hills and Palo Alto”.

“I’m particularly pleased we could get it done before fire season officially starts on June 15,” added Simitian, who, with his colleagues will be voting on the agreement in their capacity as the SCCFPD Board of Directors.

The Station 8 agreement, approved by LAHCFD on May 18, and recommended for approval by the Palo Alto City Council on June 1, will bolster fire protection for communities adjacent to the Page Mill Road corridor from Skyline Boulevard to Interstate 280 during the wildland firefighting season, June 15 – October 31, or as weather conditions require.

Agreement specifics include:

- A 3-person engine company for a minimum of 12 hours per day, seven days week, with more hours should weather conditions such as red flag warnings occur.
- The Station 8 engine will be an “all-risk” resource available for mutual aid response and equipped to respond to medical emergencies, rescues, wildland fires, and structure fires.
- Palo Alto Fire Department and SCCFPD will staff Station 8 on a monthly rotation beginning in June 2021 through the end of the fire season; the agreement is renewable annually for up to four additional years.

“We are pleased to participate with County Fire and the City of Palo Alto in regional fire protection to boost emergency response times and proximity to areas of high fire danger. This agreement will benefit the residents of Los Altos Hills and Palo Alto and enhance public safety by providing additional resources in this strategic location during the high fire season,” said Mark Warren, LAHCFD President.

During California’s 2020 fire season, more than 9,600 fires burned nearly 4.4 million acres, the largest wildfire season in the state’s modern history, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Residents of Los Altos Hills received evacuation warnings when the CZU Lighting Complex fires in Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties moved towards northwestern Santa Clara County.

Predictions for 2021's fire season are no less dire, with January one of the driest in California's history.

"Simitian noted that, "the stepped-up presence at Station 8 also adds protection for the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and provides additional resources in the event mutual aid is needed in Los Altos, or elsewhere in the County."

"With the increased fire danger we have been seeing, I am very pleased with joint staffing of Palo Alto Fire Station 8. The cooperation between Palo Alto, Los Altos Hills and Santa Clara County is an excellent example of local agencies working together to maximize fire resources while increasing the level of service within our communities," said Palo Alto Mayor Tom Dubois.

Until 2016, Station 8 was staffed by the Palo Alto Fire Department from July 1 – October 31. Since then, due to budget cuts, the station has been staffed only on high fire danger days or special events like 4th of July.

"With the ominous 'new normal' of our wildfire seasons in California, resource availability, location, and staffing are critical. Station 8 gives us an extra line of defense when and where we need it most," Simitian said. "I want to give a particular shout out to Palo Alto Fire Chief Geo Blackshire and SCCFPD Acting Chief Brian Glass for their leadership in reaching this agreement. This really is a winner all around."

###