



PRESSRELEASE

Menlo Park Fire Protection District 170 Middlefield Rd Menlo Park, CA 94025 650-688-8400 Fax: 650-323-9129

For Immediate Release

Date: September 22, 2020
Contact: Harold Schapelhouman, Fire Chief
Phone: (650)380-1006 Cellular

Bay Area Urban Search and Rescue Task Force returns to Butte County for the second time in two years, not to fight fire, but to look for the missing

East Palo Alto – California

California Task Force 3 (CA-TF3), sponsored by the Menlo Park Fire Protection District, was on the move Monday morning. Twenty vehicles ranging from semi-tractor trucks pulling four 53-foot trailers loaded with 80,000 pounds of technical rescue and search equipment, to small vans and four-wheel drive equipped pickup trucks, were headed to the North Complex West Zone Fire.

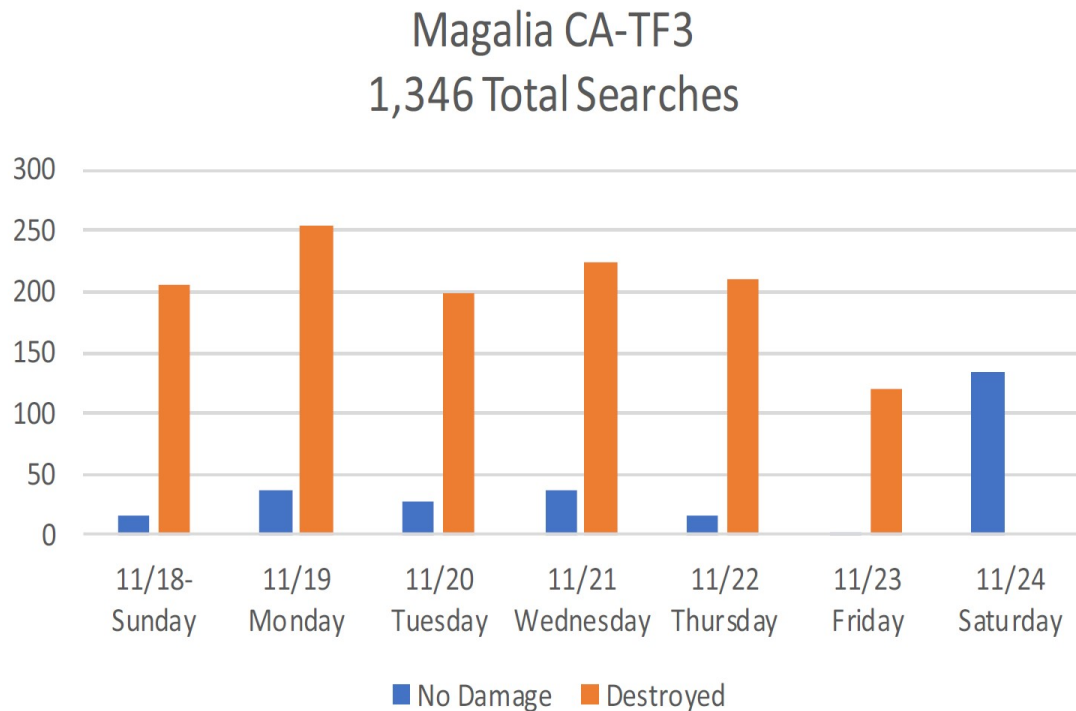
The 80-person team with 4 specially trained dogs and consisting of highly trained and experienced firefighters and civilian professionals like Doctors, Structural Engineers, Hazardous Material Specialists, Communications and Heavy Equipment Operators, were not being tasked to fight the fire, but to specifically help clear thousands of destroyed structures and search for human remains.

For many, this is the second time in two years that they will be working in Butte County looking for missing, the last time was during the Camp Fire in 2018. Under a special request from the Governors Office of Emergency Services (CAL-OES), the Fire/Rescue Branch in support of the Butte County Sheriff Department requested Task Forces 3's assistance on Sunday.

The Bay Area Task Force will join a smaller number of Task Force 7 (Sacramento) and Regional Response Fire/Rescue units from Los Angeles and Santa Barbara County, all deployed under the State's Mutual Aid system who have, or will be assigned to this unique detail.

Fire Chief Schapelhouman said *"We don't advertise our human recovery capabilities, but it goes along with our primary search and rescue mission profile. We understand that everyone needs to be found. Family and friends need and deserve closure, and in many cases, in-order to receive death benefits, individuals must be respectfully located first. It's a very methodical*

process that in a structural environment requires the layering of a building to allow anthropologists and/or search dogs to help locate the missing and overlooked. We have essentially done the same thing but in different ways at the Oklahoma City Bombing, World Trade Center Collapse, in search for the Astronauts of the Space Shuttle Columbia, during Hurricane Katrina and two years ago in Magalia, during the Camp Fire, where a smaller group from our Task Force searched 1,346 structures”.



During the Camp Fire and after working 7 straight days through Thanksgiving, in cold and sometimes rainy conditions, Task Force 3 searched 1,347 structures for the lost and missing under difficult and unimaginable conditions in the burnt out and devastated areas of the community of Magalia, located above the City of Paradise.

Fire Chief Schapelhouman said, “*we are a multi-agency team, our partnerships make us stronger and we couldn’t and wouldn’t want to support a National Rescue Team alone. By sharing firefighters from 16 different fire agencies and our dedicated civilian professionals, we not only draw the best of the best, we also ensure that we can keep all of our fire stations fully staffed and meet both our wildland and State/Federal mission requests. Other Task Forces like us across the Country are currently engaged in hurricane responses and similar human recovery missions in Oregon State”.*

As the sponsor of California Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Task Force 3 (CA-TF3), the Fire District is one of eight California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (CAL-OES) Task Forces and one of twenty-eight specialized National Response Teams sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).



Pictured above during the Camp Fire - Team members come from various fire agencies such as the **Menlo Park Fire District** (the sponsor), Central County, Milpitas, Mountain View, Palo Alto, Redwood City, San Mateo Consolidated, Santa Clara City, Santa Clara County and San Jose Fire Department as well as Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety, the Woodside Fire Protection District along with civilian professionals with Stanford Hospital, Genentech and Stanford Research International (SRI). **Credit Task Force 3**

The Task Force starts operations on Tuesday, September 22, 2020, and is expected to be on-site until the end of the month.

END