



PRESSRELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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From the Fire Line

Menlo Park Firefighters Captain Ken Babcock, Engineer Paramedics Dan Giraudo, Scott Basset and Scott Johnson have all been on the front lines of the Carr Fire working near Rainbow Lake since last Thursday, as part of the Southern San Mateo County Type 1 "Heavy" Strike Team, consisting of five fire engines, a command vehicle and 22 personnel.

The crew relieved four other Menlo Fire personnel who had been deployed to the Carr Fire when it first started near Redding, fourteen days earlier. Those firefighters were happy to be relieved and rotated out along with the other members of all three San Mateo County Type 1 Strike Teams, consisting of 15 fire engines, three command vehicles and 66 personnel from every Fire Agency in San Mateo County.

The fire engines are in short supply, so the crews were rotated but the Type 1 or "Heavy" fire engines were left in place as the work horses that daily support the fire fight. These municipal engines are typically used for structure protection and normally stay on paved roads, but nothing is typical this fire season with so many fires and resources in high demand and short supply.

Southern Strike Team Leader Deputy Chief Don Long, with Menlo Fire, arrived on Thursday as well and after addressing a mechanical problem with Menlo Engine 4, the Strike Team pulled a 24 hour shift on the North end of the fire where Chief Long texted "we have a lot burning below us with spot fires over the line. At daybreak I called in helicopters for water drops and used dozers to ring the spot fires. A lot of work for our first shift."



Credit Menlo Fire Deputy Chief Long – Carr Fire Night Operations

In addition, specially trained and certified fire line paramedics, assigned to work with hand crews on the front lines of all fires, are rotated in and out of fires across the State. Menlo Park Fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman said “as soon as one Paramedic Firefighter comes back every two weeks, another is immediately sent out to either the same, or different fire, essentially, we have an open order because the need can’t be completely filled right now”.

Menlo Fire Line Paramedic Joe Foster is on the Mendocino Complex Fire while Eric Bunzel and Alex Perlstein are both at various locations on the Carr Fire. They are required to check in daily but as they are assigned deeper and deeper into forest, regular communications becomes more challenging.

The Menlo Park Fire District just received its final reimbursement for all 22 of the fires it deployed to in 2017. The last fire was in December 2017, deep in the Angeles National Forest in Southern California. A group shot of the Strike Team shows them all wearing Christmas caps.



Southern San Mateo County Fire Strike Team – Angeles Forest Fire December 2017

It isn't lost on the firefighters that Fire Season never seems to end anymore in California. What's more disturbing is the number of firefighters who have died this year, either battling the fires directly or in support of field operations.

"Our fire station flags have been at half-mast in memorial of line of duty deaths for most of the last two months, that's not lost on any of the firefighters who come in to work, or any of us responsible for sending these dedicated men and women into harm's way" Chief Schapelhouman said.

Work on these fires can be dangerous, dirty, exhausting, mind numbing and challenging to even the most experienced and senior firefighting personnel. But together, they battle an age old enemy that is both feared and respected, that can never be taken for granted or underestimated.

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