



# PRESSRELEASE

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## For Immediate Release

Date: November 30, 2018  
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### **The Fire may be out and the Search for Human Remains complete, but the effects on the people it touched isn't....Including First Responders**

The effects of the Camp Fire in Butte County will be felt for years, if not forever, primarily by those it directly touched and impacted, but also by the First Responders who will need to move on and find a way to put it all in perspective.

**Fire Chief Schapelhouman said** *“We already started to make arrangements to offer critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) to the three distinctly different groups that we had respond to this incident. That may be more difficult than other incidents we’ve responded too given that it’s not only in our backyard, but it affected people we know, or knew. That certainly makes it more personal and potentially more difficult to put in the rearview mirror. Ideally, our first responders will learn from this experience, put it all in perspective, then move forward and be better ready for the next emergency”.*

#### **The first wave:**

The first wave of local responders from the Fire District consisted of firefighting personnel who responded on the first day and were engaged in fire suppression, or actively combating the fire and trying to help save life and property.

Captain Womble texted “Good morning Chief, E-101 engaged in a fast moving fire climbing ladder fuels into the crown. We flanked it and the crews made a hell of a stop. Saving 3 streets from being overrun. 1200 foot hose lay”. Most of those firefighters were struck by the massive amount of damage they found, and while humbled, very proud of what they accomplished.



**Pictured above** – Left to Right – Captain Greg Womble, Firefighter/Paramedic Nguyen and Engineers Bates and Lennon with Menlo Engine 101 on the Fire line in Magalia – **Credit Menlo Fire**

**The second wave:**

The second wave consisted of a coalition of Public Safety Drone Operators that completed the aerial mapping and damage assessments over the City of Paradise, Magalia and other formerly populated areas ravaged by the Camp Fire. The Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) Public Safety Drone Teams flew 518 mapping mission/flights over a 26.2 square mile area that encompassed 17,000 acres of the burned over landscape that resulted in 140 panoramas, 67 flythrough videos and 70,325 images, or 100 billion pixels at 1inch per pixel resolution for a total of 477 gigabytes of visual data.



**Pictured above** - The 16 UAS/Drone Teams were comprised of members from the Alameda County Sheriff's Department (ALCO SO), Menlo Park Fire Protection District, La Honda Fire Brigade, Contra Costa Sheriff's Department, Union City Police Department, Stockton Police Department, Stanislaus County Sheriff's Office, Union City Police, Newark Police and a San Francisco Police Officer along with key supporting representatives from Drone manufacturers DJI, Romeo Durscher, Drone Deploy and Google software mapping expert Michael Dittman, and software mapping expert Greg Crutsinger (PhD) with Scholar Farms. **Credit Menlo Fire UAS/Drone Team**

They would be some of the first to see and understand the "totality of circumstance", or the big picture aerial view of what had just occurred. Several had flown similar missions at the Tubbs and Carr Fires thinking they had seen the worst fires the State would ever experience. They were wrong, the Camp Fire eclipsed both of the others combined.

Click drone images at the top.

<http://buttecountygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=af7e5bb3960a48c096ed910c640a30b3>

### **The third wave:**

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

The 45 Team members and two Recovery Dogs, used 14 vehicles with 7 trailers that carried over 50 thousand pounds of technical search, rescue and recovery equipment deployed from the Task Forces Special Operations Warehouse in East Palo Alto.



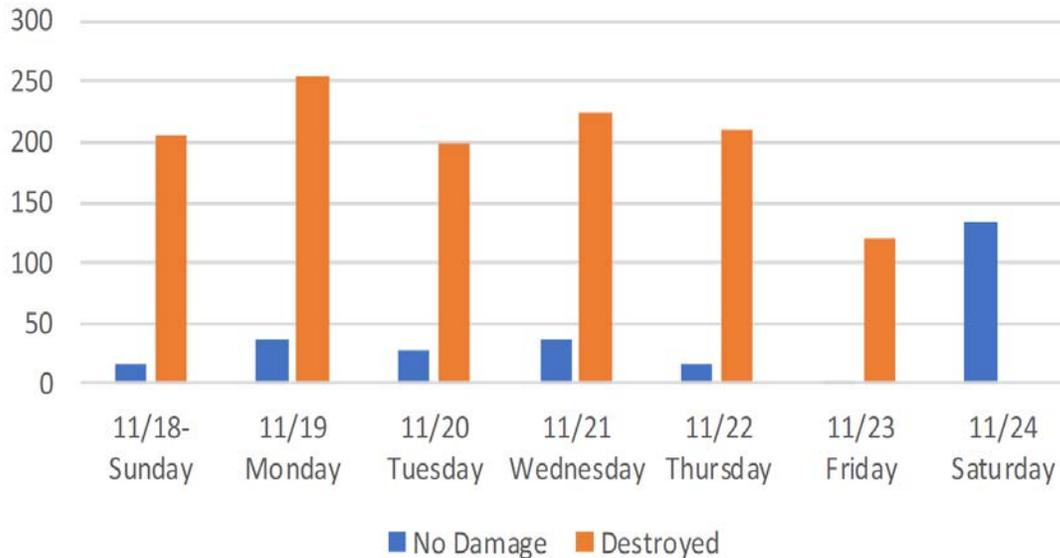
**Pictured Above** - Team members come from various fire agencies such as the **Menlo Park Fire District** (the sponsor), Central County, Milpitas, Mountain View, Palo Alto, Redwood City, Santa Clara City, Santa Clara County and San Jose Fire Department as well as Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety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

**Fire Chief Schapelhouman said** *“This has been a rough but important deployment for the Team Members, especially for the Search Dogs. Everyone’s pretty beat up, it was long days working in a completely devastated burned out community that’s located in our back yard. Everyone knows somebody who lost a home or more. The Team was honored to be there, but it’s hard to feel completely finished with so many people still missing and I know many feel like their leaving a little piece of themselves behind because it’s hard not to be emotionally impacted by what they saw and were involved with”.*



**Pictured Above** – The 45 members of California Urban Search and Rescue Taskforce 3 and their two search dogs take a final Team photograph prior to returning home last Sunday, after working 7 straight days through Thanksgiving, in cold and sometimes rainy conditions where they searched 1347 structures for the lost and missing at the Camp Fire under difficult and unimaginable conditions in the burnt out and devastated areas of the community of Magalia, located above the City of Paradise - **Credit Task Force 3**

## Magalia CA-TF3 1,346 Total Searches



Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) isn't mandatory, it's voluntary, for these first responders. Emotions and feelings will vary depending upon what each person's role was, what they actually did, their background, experience and a variety of other factors.

Because the groups are a blend of experienced veteran responders, first timers, civilian volunteers and professional firefighters, it's important that they interact and understand that they can reach out and help support each other, since they were the ones who lived it. Some of the

**Fire Chief Schapelhouman said** *“when I started in the Fire Service, 38 years ago, we didn't really talk about the hard stuff, you had to sort it out on your own and figure out if you could truly handle what you were seeing, having to do and then mentally process it and put it in perspective. My first experience with any type of debriefing was when a guy stuck a shotgun in his mouth and killed himself in front of a group of us, that was 30 plus years ago and we've come a long way since then”.*

Many of the Urban Search and Rescue Task Force members also have the additional advantage of being veterans of multiple significant National Disasters. From the Oklahoma City Bombing to the World Trade Center Collapse, Hurricane Katrina or numerous other events. The number of supportive and understanding battle hardened peers on the Team offers an impressive list of veterans who are always available to the other members of the group if they need to talk, or just vent, listen or need a shoulder to cry on.

A lot is written and said about PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) these days, but very little, if anything, is known about Post Traumatic Growth (PTG). That's essentially where you come

out the other side of one of these events more resilient, grounded and can see it from a different angle and how that can actually make you a stronger and better person.

*“I’ve seen a lot of very terrible things in my career, brutal death, and unbelievable destruction that hollows people out, you can see it in their eyes first, the pain, sadness, grief and guilt. It pulls you in if you’re not careful. It took me five years to get past and sort out what we saw and did at the Oklahoma City Bombing, only to be tested again when we responded to Ground Zero in New York. During the Space Shuttle Columbia Disaster my job was to use dogs to find the astronauts, I had conditioned myself to not look at photographs or news clips of the astronauts until after our job was complete. Katrina was another story, we would tie off the floaters and cover the dead on dry ground, but we didn’t have time to deal with them. We rescued over a thousand people only to come home and find out that the perception of the event was that it was a failure. We were celebrated for our efforts in NY and OKC where we rescued no one but lifted the Counties mood and spirit because of our efforts and I see similarities and opportunities for that to occur on this recovery mission as well”* **Fire Chief Schapelhouman, said.**

While it was specifically emphasized to the group of 45 responders with Task Force 3 that went to the Camp Fire that this mission was a recovery operation, the sights, smells, what they did and who they encountered will all be part of their story and collective growth as individuals and as members of one of the most elite and experienced group of first responders in the Nation.

### **The fourth wave ?**

The Fire District and Task Force are already pre-rostering personnel and preparing their water rescue equipment for response to any of the burned out areas. The Task Force responded to two rain maker Hurricanes in Hawaii earlier this year and the Fire District’s Swift Water Rescue Team was in Oroville twice in early 2017 because of potential for dam failure.

**END**