



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY FIRE AGENCIES JOIN FORCES TO COMBAT CORONAVIRUS

In their ongoing effort to best serve the public during the COVID-19 crisis, San Bernardino County fire agencies have joined forces. Strategies most commonly seen when battling large wildfires are being used to tackle this new threat.

On Friday, March 6, San Bernardino County Fire Protection District activated its Incident Management Team (BDC-IMT-1) to identify a plan to manage exposed and/or sick members of its agency, to ensure responders have necessary personal protective equipment (PPE), and to maintain consistent communication with its cooperators.

After seeing the impact that COVID-19 has had on communities affected in previous weeks, multiple fire agencies throughout San Bernardino County united with the goal of maintaining uninterrupted service to the citizens of our county. BDC-IMT-1 has now expanded its mission to incorporate 18 cooperating agencies making the BDC-IMT a regional incident management Team. This regional approach reflects the cooperative nature of this endeavor. (XBO and BDC are the CalOES identifiers for the San Bernardino County Operational Area and San Bernardino County Fire District).

COVID-19 has the possibility of affecting a significant portion of the fire and EMS workforce. In response, eighteen separate fire agencies are now united to ensure consistent service regardless of jurisdiction. As the virus establishes itself within our county, citizens may see fire apparatus from other departments responding in their communities and even firefighters from different agencies on the same engine company. This will be an example of this partnership most visible to the public. Additionally, a worldwide shortage of PPE has placed these supplies at a premium. The unity of agencies ensures a reliable distribution of equipment as it becomes available. Again, PPE's are used to protect both the public and our first responders.

"This is a collaborative effort that we have used effectively in numerous natural disasters," says Kathleen Opliger, San Bernardino County Fire Deputy Chief of Operations, and Incident Commander for XBO-IMT-1. "COVID-19 is different from fires or floods in that it is a hazard that simultaneously threatens both the public and our first responders."

The following fire agencies are coordinating in the countywide response plan:

San Bernardino County Fire Protection District
Apple Valley Fire District
Barstow Fire Department
Big Bear Fire Authority
Cal Fire - San Bernardino Unit
Chino Valley Fire District
Colton Fire Department
Loma Linda Fire Department
Montclair Fire Department

Morongo Valley Fire
Ontario Fire Department
Rancho Cucamonga Fire District
Redlands Fire Department
Rialto Fire Department
Running Springs Fire Department
San Manuel Fire Department
Victorville Fire Department
Yermo Fire Department

San Bernardino County Team 1 is a type 3 all-hazard incident management team which deploys as a team of trained personnel, representing multiple disciplines who manage major and/or complex incidents requiring a significant number of local, state or tribal resources. They manage incidents that extend into multiple operational periods and require a written Incident Action Plan.