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**SIERRA MADRE FIRE DEPARTMENT ACCEPTED INTO UNIFIED RESPONSE IN THE VERDUGO FIRE SYSTEM**

***Sierra Madre, CA. – July 2, 2020***

On July 1, 2020 the City of Sierra Madre Fire Department was accepted as a participating member for Unified Response in the Verdugo Fire system. The Verdugo Fire system is comprised of 13 fire departments that operate under a single automatic aid agreement. When an emergency call is received at the Verdugo dispatch center, the closest available fire apparatus responds to the incident, regardless of jurisdiction.

“Congratulations to Interim Chief Bartlett and the entire Sierra Madre Fire Department for this historic achievement!” said Mayor John Capoccia. “I’m very proud of their hard work and dedication to prove to the members of the Verdugo agency that we were up to the task. Sierra Madre residents should also be very proud and secure knowing that we’ve achieved this long-time goal.”

Sierra Madre has been a member of the Verdugo system since 1999, but has not been included in automatic aid and unified response due to its status as a volunteer agency. The Sierra Madre City Council established a goal in 2017 to transition from a volunteer fire department to a career department in order to be accepted into unified response.

“Sierra Madre is safer, as are Sierra Madre’s neighbors, due to our acceptance into borderless response.” said City Manager Gabriel Engeland. “I would like to thank our Interim Fire Chief Brent Bartlett, and the men and women of the Sierra Madre Fire Department, as well as our past Chief Kurt Norwood and Chief Steve Heydorff. Without their commitment and hard work, we would not have achieved the City Council’s goal of being accepted into automatic aid with our peer agencies.”

Retired Fire Chief Heydorff offered his sincerest congratulations to City Manager, Gabe Engeland, the Fire Department and especially, to the residents of Sierra Madre. Said retired Fire Chief Stephen Heydorff, “inclusion into Unified Response has been a goal of the Fire Department since Sierra Madre joined the Verdugo Dispatch System in 1999. Every decision made on the direction of the Department was made to complete that goal. Thank you, to all of the past and present members for their hard work, personal sacrifices and hours of training.”

The Sierra Madre Fire Department has a proud and storied history extending back to 1921, and the infamous “Sierra Madre Bakery Fire”. After the fire, Sierra Madre residents saw the need for a local department and the Sierra Madre Volunteer Fire Department was established. The Sierra Madre Volunteer Fire Department was the last volunteer department in operation in Los Angeles County when the transition to a career department was completed.

“I am so proud of our Fire Department, and so grateful for all the support we have received. The inclusion in to Unified Response with in the Verdugo System is going to greatly enhance the level of service afforded to our community. The members of your Sierra Madre Fire Department- vow to continuously provide quality service through the utmost professionalism,” said Interim Chief Bartlett

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