



North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts



Steve Leighton, Fire Chief

MEDIA RELEASE

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North Tahoe Fire Appoints New Fire Chief

Tahoe City, Calif. May 6, 2021 – At its April 27, 2021 Board meeting, the Board of Directors announced the appointment of Steve Leighton as Fire Chief for the North Tahoe Fire Protection District.

The Board selected Leighton to replace retiring Chief Mike Schwartz, who served as North Tahoe's Fire Chief since 2012. During Schwartz's 9-year tenure with NTF, his priorities were to improve personnel, apparatus, facilities, and finances. He successfully increased staffing from 28 full-time employees to 65, while modernizing the District's fleet and facilities. He inherited a post-recession budget of \$9.6 million that he grew to just over \$17 million. The District's service area grew to include the west shore via contract for service with Meeks Bay Fire Protection District in 2014. Prior to his retirement, Schwartz renewed a 15-year agreement to continue to provide service to Alpine Meadows via contract with the Alpine Springs County Water District.

Schwartz, who had nearly 30 years in the fire service prior to joining North Tahoe Fire, is a firm believer that good leadership includes succession planning. He is pleased the Board was able to execute a succession plan that's been a year in the works. "We are a value-based organization, and I'm proud of the accomplishments we've made," said Chief Schwartz (Ret.). "The District's standing as a leader in the Basin and in the region is a result of our fantastic people, who exemplify service and values in all they do." Schwartz is retiring to travel and to spend more time with his grandchildren. He serves as a Fire Adapted Community Leader and will remain an active member of the Tahoe community.

Chief Leighton, a 29-year veteran of the fire service, served as North Tahoe Fire's Division Chief of Operations until his promotion to Assistant Chief in 2020. Leighton was promoted to Acting Chief this January, and his appointment to Fire Chief became effective May 1, 2021. He holds degrees in Public Relations, Fire Science Technology, and holds a nationally accredited Chief Fire Officer certification.

As Fire Chief, Leighton brings a strong fire service background, having spent more than 20 years as the Division Chief of Operations for the Reno Fire Department, where he managed all areas of the Department, including the hazardous materials, technical rescue and water entry teams.

The varied demographics of the District, which spans the north and west shores of Lake Tahoe, provide opportunity for its personnel to respond to emergencies in rural, suburban and urban settings. North Tahoe Fire is an all-hazard emergency organization, which requires its firefighters to be proficient in wildland firefighting, structural firefighting, back country/technical rescue, swift and shore-zone water rescue, hazardous materials mitigation, and emergency medical services.



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“It is a pleasure and honor to accept the appointment of the Fire Chief for the North Tahoe Fire Protection District,” said Chief Leighton. “I am extremely proud of this organization, and the hard work our members do on a daily basis.”

Chief Leighton also serves as Fire Chief of the Meeks Bay Fire Protection District.

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