



North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts



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PRESS RELEASE

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North Tahoe Firefighter Deployed to Loma Linda-Murrieta to Support COVID19 Surge

Tahoe City, Calif. Jan. 12, 2021 – Firefighters are no stranger to being deployed on 14-day assignments during disasters, and this winter, crews will don a different uniform as they report to hospitals instead of wildfires.



Firefighter/Paramedic Stephanie Lockhart was the first to volunteer when North Tahoe Fire received an emergency request for assistance from Loma Linda University Medical Center-Murrieta, where ICU beds are currently at 99% capacity. Lockhart will be on assignment at the hospital working 12-hour shifts, assisting nurses and other hospital staff with patient care for the next two weeks.

The California Office of Emergency Services penned the agreement with the California Fire Service on December 28, 2020. The agreement clears the way for firefighter/paramedics and EMTs to utilize the existing California Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid system and the California Fire and Assistance Agreement (CFAA) to provide desperately needed support to California's hospitals and alternate care sites.

"As a result of the COVID19 surge, hospitals are the ones calling 911 for help and the fire service is answering that call with fire mutual aid, sending our crews into combat hand-in-hand with healthcare professionals in response to this viral inferno," said Mike Schwartz, Fire Chief for North Tahoe Fire. "The California Fire Service has an extremely efficient framework to mobilize resources, and this agreement cuts through the red tape, allowing our first responders to use their medical training to provide assistance where it is most needed during this pandemic."

Firefighters with North Tahoe Fire began receiving vaccinations for COVID19 earlier this month. Schwartz says the agreement was designed to provide surge support to hospitals and alternate care facilities for up to six months, or until fire season limits the availability of fire resources.

Vaccination is one of the most significant resources to end the COVID19 pandemic. Schwartz encourages communities to follow guidance to reduce the spread of COVID19, and encourages Californians to take the vaccine as soon as it is available. Information on California's plan to distribute safe and effective vaccines can be found at <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>.