

# Monthly Message from the Chief

**May 2012**

Although California experienced wet Spring conditions, delayed fire activity and overall fewer fires last year, 2012 is shaping up to be in very sharp contrast. CAL FIRE has already responded to a dramatic increase in the number of wildfires during the exceptionally dry winter months this year. The heavy vegetation is well below seasonal fuel moisture averages in many areas and late season rains have produced an abundance of grass that is rapidly drying.

Earlier this month, I had an opportunity to participate in fire crew readiness exercises in the Bay Area and go along on the hiking portion of the drill with Delta Crew 6. I was also able to visit with CAL FIRE personnel and our cooperators throughout the State as part of our information and education outreach during Wildfire Awareness Week. Everyone is focusing on training and preparing facilities and equipment as we gear up for the peak of fire season. The energy and anticipation is palpable with all of us, me included, as we prepare for and respond to the first fires of the season. We are ready to do what we do best.



Keeping up to date on conditions as fire season unfolds around the state is a critical component of the situational awareness we need to stay safe. Also unfolding on the safety front is the undertaking by CAL FIRE of a ground breaking personal protective equipment (PPE) evaluation for wildland firefighting. This Summer, Firefighters in all major program areas will be wear testing several PPE garments to determine the effects of various materials, design and layering on overall radiant heat protection and heat stress. The results of this evaluation, combined with information from other studies and several years of dedicated work by CAL FIRE staff, will determine the future of wildland PPE for not only CAL FIRE, but also the fire service throughout the United States and internationally. Once again, CAL FIRE is demonstrating its leadership in the fire service.

The ongoing fiscal crisis faced by California, and particularly changes to employee compensation, is a distraction for all of us. We are living through a very difficult time in our department's history and it is not easy for any of us. The CAL FIRE Executive Team continues to concentrate on these issues on behalf of you and the Department, and will continue to keep you informed as information becomes available. It is important, however, that we stay focused on our mission and our service to the public. The first priority is providing our unmatched level of emergency response and fire service leadership, while ensuring the safety of our fire fighters and the public.

**Chief Ken Pimlott**  
CAL FIRE Director