

# ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY

## *NEWS RELEASE*



**From The Office of Fire Chief Chip Prather  
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**June 27, 2006**

### *OCFA Releases Report on Allegations from Yorba Linda Homeowners*

On June 26, 2006, the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) released the final written operational incident review of the December 7, 2005 fire that destroyed a home on Avenida De Marcia in Yorba Linda. The OCFA initiated this incident review after the homeowners, Jeff and Patricia James, expressed their concerns at a March 7, 2006 Yorba Linda City Council meeting.

The homeowners had accused the OCFA and its firefighting crew of: (1) calling Mr. James a “scab” because he works for the non-unionized Vernon Fire Department; (2) using Mr. James’ T-shirt as a mop after the fire; (3) having a delayed response to the fire; (4) taking a long time to put water on the fire; and (5) taking excessively long to produce a fire report and, when completed, the report was of poor quality.

OCFA Fire Chief Chip Prather initiated an investigation into these allegations on March 16, 2006. An internal management team thoroughly examined how the fire progressed and the operational tactics used to control the incident, while an independent third-party investigator was used to investigate the allegations of name-calling and the use of the shirt as a mop. The third-party investigator conducted a series of interviews with OCFA personnel, the homeowners, neighbors and other witnesses.

The June 26 incident review report concludes that, with the exception of taking an excessively long time to produce the fire report, the remaining allegations brought forward by the homeowners are not factual. “The OCFA did take excessively long to prepare the fire incident report, and when it was provided, it was of poor quality” said Chief Prather. “Our agency has since developed enhanced systems to reduce these delays and to assure better quality in the future.” In order to help future fire victims, the OCFA has enacted the following:

- The OCFA has instituted an “occupant liaison” program to assist homeowners with the difficulties and hurdles that are associated with a large fire loss.

- The OCFA is making a more user-friendly version of the *Post-Fire Recovery Handbook*, which is a brochure that OCFA provides to all fire victims.
- The OCFA is revising its report-writing class for fire captains, which will help ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the reports. Training for all fire captains begins in August.
- For reports that may be delayed by a lengthy investigation, the OCFA has initiated a brief “notice of incident report,” which will provide homeowners and insurance companies with a short summary of the fire loss without all of the details about the cause and origin of the fire.

The June 26, 2006 written incident review and its conclusions are final. Members of the media who would like to review the report or who would like additional information should contact Battalion Chief Ed Fleming at (714) 573-6028 or (714) 296-5796.