“We have to retain our fire family structure. There are many great things in the fire service, but it is also work. It’s not just a glorious thing, it’s a demanding and draining thing. The dedication is a spiritual reality, and if a firefighter loses that reality, they’ve changed the reason for being a firefighter. We’re out to help and that’s the whole point.”

- Monsignor John Sammon
Greetings,

The Orange County Fire Authority celebrated its 20th anniversary in spring of 2015. In one sense it’s difficult to imagine where the time has gone, but one look back at what has taken place and it’s easy to see two decades of significant accomplishment. While there is so much we have done, there remains so much more we have yet to do.

A Joint Powers Authority, established among 18 cities, transformed the former Orange County Fire Department into the Orange County Fire Authority in March 1995. A committed group of cities and the Orange County Board of Supervisors formed the JPA with an organizing meeting on March 1. This was followed by the inaugural Board of Directors meeting on March 30 that launched OCFA. The founding members included Buena Park, Cypress, Dana Point, Irvine, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, Lake Forest, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Mission Viejo, Placentia, San Clemente, San Juan Capistrano, Seal Beach, Stanton, Tustin, Villa Park, and Yorba Linda.

Shortly after the inception of OCFA, also in 1995, the City of Westminster joined the Authority. They were followed by Laguna Woods in 1999, Rancho Santa Margarita in 2000, and Aliso Viejo in 2001. With the addition of OCFA’s new cities has come the construction of six new fire stations, as well as updates and reconstruction of several existing fire stations.

Through the years, OCFA has faced some formidable challenges well beyond our primary business of saving lives and putting out fires. The pages and timeline that follow are a testament to our lasting strength and unending commitment to provide the best service possible for nearly 1.8 million citizens who live in our member-cities and the county.

A special note of recognition is appropriate here for one of our directors, who has not only served longer than any of his colleagues, but has been a member of the OCFA Board of Directors since its inception. Stanton Councilmember David John Shawver has served for 20 years with tremendous dedication and distinction. We are proud to say he’s still going strong, faithfully representing all OCFA cities.

Enjoy this publication and the decades that follow.

Jeff Bowman
Fire Chief

Al Murray
Board Chair
March 1
An organizational meeting is held at 180 South Water Street, Orange, to establish a Joint Powers Authority that will guide the future Orange County Fire Authority.

March 30
The inaugural meeting of the Orange County Fire Authority Board (established among 18 cities and the county) is held at the Irvine City Council Chambers; Board Chair Thomas Wilson presides.

March 30
Larry Holmes is named OCFA’s first fire chief.

April
OCFA sends California Task Force 5 members to assist with recovery efforts following the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19.

July 20
Westminster becomes OCFA’s 19th member-city.

1995-1996
1997
OCFA’s Executive Committee officially recognizes the Pipe and Drum Corps. The Corps performs at OCFA functions, member-city events, and during local, state and national memorial services.

1997 October 1
Chip Prather is named OCFA’s second fire chief.

1998
OCFA’s Executive Committee recognizes the formation of the OCFA Honor Guard. The Honor Guard presents colors at all formal OCFA events and travels to annual state events in Sacramento and the national fallen firefighter ceremonies in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and Colorado Springs, Colorado.
September 22
A 5 million gallon water reservoir in the city of Westminster fails, sending a wall of water and concrete cascading into Fire Station 65 and an adjacent condominium complex. Several on-duty firefighters sustain injuries and the water causes thousands of dollars in damage. Six people are injured, and more than 30 people are rendered temporarily homeless. Incredibly, no lives are lost.

December 26
An arsonist is caught on video setting fire to a massage center in Laguna Hills. Seventy-five firefighters are called into action, and the damage is estimated at $1 million.

1998-1999
March 23
Rancho Santa Margarita becomes OCFA's 21st member-city.

January 12
Fire Station 47 opens in Irvine.

July 26
Aliso Viejo becomes OCFA's 22nd member-city.

September
Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, OCFA sends dozens of firefighters to assist in recovery efforts at Ground Zero.

November 17
Ground breaking ceremonies are held for OCFA's $50 million, 20-acre campus. The facility will eventually be called the OCFA Regional Fire Operations and Training Center.

2000-2001
April 23
OCFA crews, including the Urban Search & Rescue Team, respond to a head-on collision between a southbound Metrolink commuter train and a northbound Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight hauler. Two passengers are killed and hundreds are injured.

October
OCFA supports efforts by neighboring agencies to fight a siege of fires that burn from October 21 through November 4. OCFA sends 35 engines in support of the firefighting efforts throughout Southern California.
2004

OCFA’s WeFit, (Wellness and Fitness Program), is created to promote injury prevention and employee health and wellness. The collaborative effort, between OCFA and Local 3631, provides employees with access to health and lifestyle information, routine or trainer-led workouts, and specific programs to build strength, flexibility, and fitness.

April 7

The Regional Fire Operations and Training Center (RFOTC) opens, consolidating Executive Management and all OCFA administrative functions within a single location.
February 7
A fire breaks out at Sierra Peak in the Cleveland National Forest. The fire is contained six days later with more than 10,000 acres burned and eight firefighters injured.

September 7
Fire Station 51 opens in Irvine.

September 2005
OCFA sends members of California Task Force 5 to support Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts.

September 14
Fire Station 27 opens in Irvine.
October 21-November 8

On October 21, one of the most significant Orange County wildland fires in more than 30 years ignites. The arson-caused fire burns near Santiago Canyon Road and Silverado Canyon Road, east of Irvine Lake. Driven by extreme Santa Ana winds in excess of 50 mph, combined with low humidity and long-range spotting of embers, the fire spreads three miles in less than 20 minutes. It lasts for 19 days, burns 28,517 acres, and destroys 42 structures (14 homes, four commercial buildings, and 24 out buildings). Another 14 structures (eight homes, three commercial buildings, and three out buildings) are damaged before the fire is contained on November 8.
January 2008
Member-cities approve a 20-year contract to run from 2010-2030 under the Joint Powers Agreement.

April 10
Fire Station 55 opens in Irvine.
November 15-19
On November 15, the Corona Fire Department receives an initial report of a vegetation fire at the westbound 91 Freeway and Green River. Within minutes, OCFA receives similar reports at its Emergency Command Center. Driven by high temperatures, eight percent humidity, Santa Ana winds in excess of 60 mph, and long-range ember spotting, the Freeway Complex Fire results in the greatest loss of Orange County homes since the 1993 Laguna Beach Fire. More than 381 homes, commercial structures, and out buildings are damaged or destroyed. Six cities in four counties are impacted within the fire’s 30,000-acre path before it is contained on November 19.
December
OCFA purchases two Bell 412 helicopters equipped with water tanks, snorkels, rescue hoists, and night vision capacity. The helicopters improve response capabilities in wildland firefighting and remote rescues.
December 22
OCFA responds to numerous emergencies following heavy rains, mudslides, and debris flows. This prompts evacuations in Silverado, Modjeska, Dove, and Williams Canyons, as well as parts of San Juan Capistrano. Five homes in Dove Canyon sustain severe damage during the mudslides and several homes in Silverado Canyon and Williams Canyon are also damaged.

June 11
Keith Richter is named OCFA’s third fire chief.

2010
OCFA implements fiscal measures to reduce costs and sustain service levels during what comes to be known as the Great Recession, one of the most devastating economic downturns since the Great Depression. Despite severely curtailed revenue, OCFA avoids layoffs and keeps all stations open.

September 11
On the day marking the 10th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, OCFA pays tribute to those who lost their lives in 2001.
September 28
Following after-action report recommendations from the Santiago and Freeway Fires, OCFA and partner agencies successfully conduct Orange County’s first-ever community evacuation drill. More than 1,000 households from the wildland urban interface neighborhoods of Cowan Heights and Lemon Heights participate.

September 9
OCFA reaches a milestone when the TriTech Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is brought online. More than one million addresses and 160,000 street segments are incorporated into the CAD, a geographic information system that will improve location accuracy and reduce response times.

October 1
Jeff Bowman is named OCFA’s fourth fire chief.

July 13
OCFA, along with outside agencies, battles a 230-acre brush fire at the 241 Toll Road and the Santiago Canyon Road Exit.

July 16
Fire Station 56 opens in Ladera Ranch.
The Firefighter’s Prayer

When I'm called to duty God wherever flames may rage give me strength to save a life whatever be its age

Help me to embrace a little child before it is too late or save an older person from the horror of that fate

Enable me to be alert to hear the weakest shout and quickly and efficiently to put the fire out

I want to fill my calling and to give the best in me to guard my neighbor and protect his property

And if according to your will I have to lose my life bless with your protecting hand my children and my wife.

- Author Unknown

LOST IN THE LINE OF DUTY
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Fire</th>
<th>EMS</th>
<th>Other*</th>
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*Includes: hazardous material response, swift water rescue response, and public service calls
**Santa Ana joins OCFA

20 YEARS BY THE NUMBERS
INCIDENTS AND POPULATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2015