



CALIFORNIA FIREFIGHTERS

# MEMORIAL

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2023 • SHERATON GRAND HOTEL

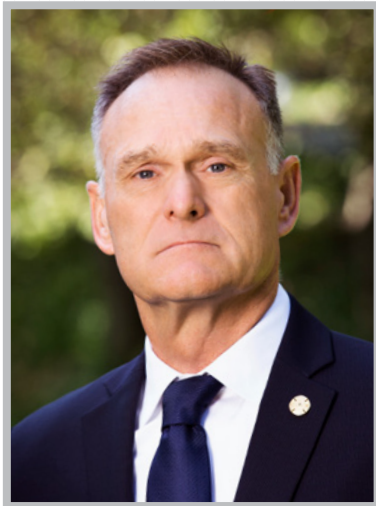




CALIFORNIA  
FIREFIGHTERS  
MEMORIAL







As President of California Professional Firefighters and Chair of the California Fire Foundation, I am honored to welcome you to the California Firefighters Memorial Ceremony, our annual tribute to the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our state.

This ceremony allows us to come together as one united family to pay tribute to the men and women who put their lives on the line every day. Etched into the polished limestone wall at the Memorial are the names of more than 1,500 firefighters who have given their lives in the line of duty since California became a state.

Today, we recognize 35 fallen brothers and sisters whose names join the heartbreaking list of those who have died in the line of duty. Every one of these brave souls risked it all for each one of us. They selflessly answered the call to protect perfect strangers when they needed help.

We have been blessed over the last two years with mild fire seasons, but this has not stopped our losses, as we continue to see firefighters fall to job-related illness, notably cancer. This memorial ceremony brings home to each of us the nature of the risks associated with the job, and the courage of our fallen in facing these risks.

This ceremony reminds us that for every fallen hero, there is a family who has also paid the price – a price that we can never forget. The firefighters and families who gather at this ceremony will be bonded forever, supported near and far.

I am proud that we gather to honor their sacrifice, comfort their loved ones, and salute the fortitude and commitment of those who fight on every day in service to their state and community.

Brothers and sisters, we will never forget you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian K. Rice". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

**Brian K. Rice**  
*President, California Professional Firefighters*  
*Chair, California Fire Foundation*











**2023 CALIFORNIA FIREFIGHTERS**  
**MEMORIAL**

**PRESENTATION OF COLORS**

City of Riverside Fire Department

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mike Lopez, Secretary-Treasurer, California Fire Foundation  
Treasurer, California Professional Firefighters

**NATIONAL ANTHEM**

Dennis Rodriguez, Firefighter, Los Angeles Fire Department

**INVOCATION**

Kevin Snider, Senior Fire Chaplain, Sacramento Area Fire Chaplaincy

**WELCOME**

Brian K. Rice, President, California Professional Firefighters  
Chair, California Fire Foundation

**ON BEHALF OF CALIFORNIA**

Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California

"Largo" from the Double Concerto in D minor, BWV 1043 by Johann Sebastian Bach  
String Quartet from the Sacramento Philharmonic & Opera

**FLAG PRESENTATION TO FAMILIES**

Chris Tubbs, President, California Fire Chiefs Association

**THE LAST ALARM**

Dan Terry, President Emeritus, California Professional Firefighters

**"TAPS"**

Thomas Jay, Battalion Chief, City of Riverside Fire Department

**"AMAZING GRACE"**

Pipes and Drums of California Professional Firefighters

**VIDEO HONORING THE FALLEN**

**RECESSIONAL TO MEMORIAL WALL IN CAPITOL PARK**







## HOWARD PHEATTE

*Foreman, Oakland Fire Department  
September 20, 1884*

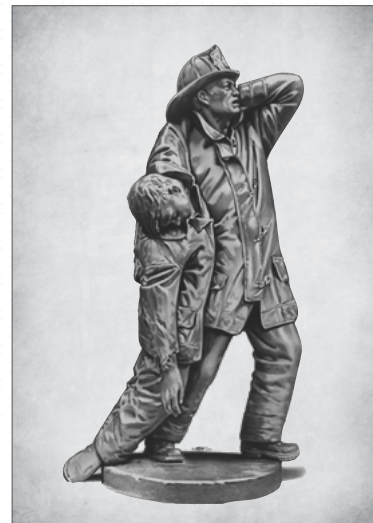
Howard Pheatte was Foreman of Phoenix Engine Company No. 1 and was revered by his peers. It was said he was a man of irreproachable character and unquestioned reputation, and these qualities had made him a favorite with his fellow firemen. Howard succumbed to injuries he sustained from fighting a fire that occurred at a medical college in September 1884.



## HENRY DOODY

*Hoseman, Oakland Fire Department  
September 18, 1939*

Henry Doody embodied the finest qualities of a true firefighter and was a highly respected member of the Oakland Fire Department who served the citizens of Oakland with honor and distinction for 32 years. He began his career in 1907 as a Substitute Driver and loved everything about the fire service. He passed away from a job-related illness in September 1939. At the time of his death, Henry was survived by his wife and two sons.



## EARL JONES

*Captain, Oakland Fire Department  
December 26, 1944*

Earl Jones began his career as a Hoseman and served the citizens of Oakland with pride and distinction for 30 years. Ever an example, Earl was a highly respected member of the Oakland Fire Department who led by example and embodied the finest qualities of a true firefighter. He passed away in December 1944 from a heart attack. At the time of his death, Earl was survived by his wife and three children.



## JAMES WALDMEIER

*Fire Chief, City of San Luis Obispo  
October 7, 1956*

James Waldmeier served the citizens of San Luis Obispo with honor and pride for 14 years. He began his career as a civilian firefighter at Camp San Luis Obispo prior to joining the City of San Luis Obispo in 1942. James passed away from a heart attack while fighting a residential fire. At the time of his passing, he was survived by his wife and two children.









## VICTOR VEGA

*Firefighter, Richmond Fire Department  
November 7, 2005*



Victor Vega served the citizens of Richmond with honor and distinction for over 30 years. He began his career as a firefighter and finished his career as a firefighter, sharing his knowledge and experience, training dozens of new firefighters. Outside of work, he loved to play poker, the 49ers, enjoyed golf and was a semi-pro bowler in his younger years. Victor passed away from job-related cancer and is survived by his wife and three children.

## STEPHEN LEONG

*Captain, Fresno Fire Department  
December 31, 2015*



Stephen Leong served the citizens of Fresno for more than 32 years. He loved the fire service, fire engines, Chinese American History, and spending time at the ocean. Stephen succumbed to job-related cancer and passed away in December 2015. Stephen is survived by his wife and three children.



## TIMOTHY J. MROZINSKI

*Chief, Rocklin Fire Department  
June 6, 2017*



As a young boy, Timothy J. Mrozinski wanted to follow in his father's footsteps to become a firefighter. He began his career as a firefighter in 1969 with the Carmichael Fire District working through the ranks of Firefighter, Fire Engineer, and Fire Captain. He joined the Rocklin Fire Department in 1977 and served the citizens of Rocklin with honor and distinction for 27 years. Timothy enjoyed vacationing with his family, coaching youth sports, and participating in the California Firemen's Muster Association where he competed with antique fire equipment. He passed away in June 2017 from job-related cancer and is survived by his two children.

## DANIEL J. GEARY

*Firefighter, CAL FIRE  
July 5, 2018*



From the age of four, Daniel Geary knew he wanted to be a firefighter and later followed his two uncles into the fire service. He began his firefighting career with the Valley Center Fire Department in San Diego County before joining CAL FIRE in the San Diego Unit in 2013 as a Fire Fighter II. Daniel served the citizens of California with honor and distinction for over 15 years, leaving a lasting impact on CAL FIRE and the communities he served. Outside of his work, Daniel loved surfing, motorcycle riding, working out and music. He passed away in July 2018 from a job-related illness.







## STEPHEN WAKEFIELD

*Fire Chief, Crescent City Fire Rescue  
April 26, 2019*

Stephen Wakefield always wanted to be a firefighter and followed his father's footsteps in 1976 and joined the Crescent City Volunteer Fire Department, where he served as a Firefighter, Captain, Battalion Chief, Assistant Chief, and finally Fire Chief. He served with intensity, passion, dedication and a burning desire to do the best job possible. In 2015, Chief Wakefield was a major influence in integrating Crescent City Volunteer Fire Department and the Crescent Fire Protection District to create one department that serves the needs of this community. Stephen served as Chief of that new department, Crescent City Fire and Rescue, from its inception until 2018. He passed away in April 2019 from a job-related illness.



## PEDER C. MCELROY

*Captain, Branciforte Fire Protection District  
May 30, 2020*

Peder C. McElroy served the citizens of Santa Cruz with honor and pride for 24 years. Prior to his career in the fire service, he served in the U.S. Navy. Peder began his long career in the fire service as a volunteer. Ever an example, he received Firefighter of the Year in 2000. He passed away from a job-related illness in May 2020. Peder is survived by his wife and four children.



## KYLE RUTHERFORD

*Engineer, Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District  
March 20, 2021*

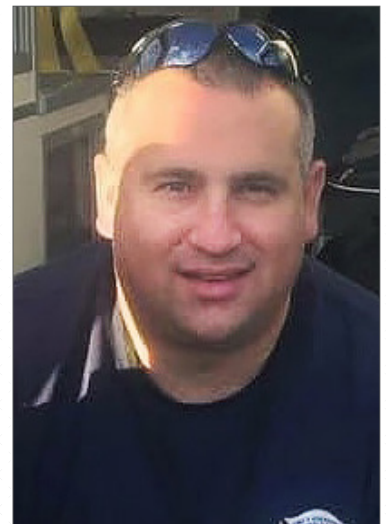
Kyle Rutherford followed in his father's footsteps into a career in the fire service. Kyle began his career as a Firefighter with the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District in 2015 and was later promoted to Engineer in April 2018, proudly serving and protecting the Sacramento community of North Highlands. Outside of his work, he was an avid outdoorsman enjoying camping, hunting, and fishing. He passed away from a job-related cardiac event in March 2021.



## MATTHEW ROMINGER

*Firefighter/Paramedic, Mountain Warfare Fire Department  
May 16, 2021*

Matthew M. 'Bear' Rominger was a dedicated public servant. He worked as a police officer, firefighter and paramedic in a career that spanned over three decades. Matthew was a member of multiple departments, special teams and responded to thousands of calls throughout his service. Outside of work, he coached youth basketball and invested heavily into his family through football, soccer, hockey, and many other sports. He passed away in May 2021 from job-related COVID-19 complications. Matthew is survived by his wife and four children.









## JEFFREY VITTI

*Captain, Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District  
June 1, 2021*

Jeffrey Vitti served in the Air Force, both active and in reserve status, for seven full years before pursuing his career in the fire service. Jeffrey became interested, like many in his generation, watching the show "Emergency" when he was a kid. Outside of his work he loved scuba diving, traveling, playing the guitar, and spending time with his family. He passed away from job-related cancer in June 2021.



## ANTHONY CANO

*Firefighter Paramedic, Lakeside Fire Protection District  
July 8, 2021*

Anthony Cano served the citizens of the Lakeside Fire Protection District with honor and distinction for five years. He loved the fire service and began his career as a Reserve Firefighter with Lakeside Fire District and shortly after, promoted to a Firefighter Paramedic. His involvement in the district included mentoring new paramedic students and reserve firefighters and he enjoyed participating in the Lakeside Firefighters charity softball team. Anthony passed away in July of 2021 from a job-related illness and is survived by his two children.



## MARCUS PACHECO

*Assistant Fire Engine Operator, United States Forest Service  
September 2, 2021*

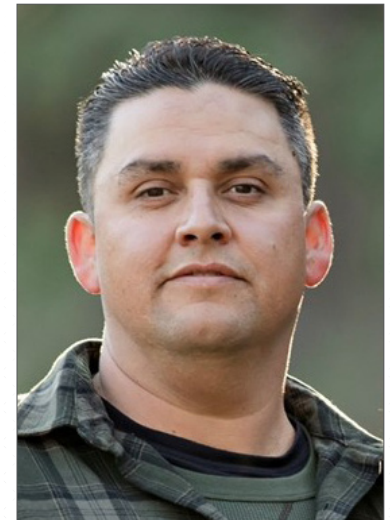
Marcus Pacheco loved the fire service and began his fire service career in 1988. Prior to joining the United States Forest Service, he worked for Susan River Fire Protection District as a volunteer firefighter. In addition to his extensive career, he served as a Volunteer Firefighter and Training Officer for the Standish-Litchfield Fire Protection District. Marcus passed away from complications of job-related COVID-19. He is survived by his wife and three children.



## MATTHEW BRABO

*Captain, CAL FIRE  
February 1, 2022*

As a little boy, Matthew 'Matt' Brabo knew he wanted to be a firefighter and began his career in 2001 as a Firefighter I in the Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit (NEU) with CAL FIRE. He embodied the finest qualities of a true Fire Captain and served the citizens of California with honor and distinction for over 20 years. Matthew was appointed Fire Captain in 2016, taking a position with the CAL FIRE Training Center in Lone, where he continued his service until his passing. He enjoyed being outdoors and duck hunting, but his priority was his family. Matthew passed away from a job-related illness in February of 2022. Matthew is survived by his wife and two daughters.









## STEVEN MCCANN

*Captain, Los Angeles County Fire Department  
February 9, 2022*

Steven McCann dedicated 16 years of his life to the fire service. He was highly respected and an esteemed Department member who embodied our core values of courage, caring, and community, both on and off duty. Steven passed away from a medical emergency while responding to a 9-1-1 call in February 2022. He is survived by his daughters.



## NICKOLAS RAMIREZ III

*Firefighter/Paramedic,  
San Diego City Fire Department  
February 16, 2022*

Nickolas "Nick" Ramirez III joined the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department in May of 2003 and graduated from the 60th Basic Fire Academy. He was a firefighter/paramedic and worked at stations 10, 23 and 34. In 2014, Nick was promoted to deputy fire marshal in the Community Risk Reduction Division which was his most recent assignment. Nick passed away in February 2022 from complications of job-related COVID. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.



## HEATH KELLY

*Firefighter/Paramedic,  
South San Francisco Fire Department  
March 4, 2022*

Heath Kelly served the citizens of South San Francisco with honor and pride for 16 years. He began his career as an Emergency Medical Technician and joined South San Francisco Fire Department as a Firefighter/Paramedic. He loved the fire service and during his career, he served as a Paramedic Field Training Officer, a Technical Rescue Specialist, and was qualified as an Acting Fire Apparatus Engineer and Acting Captain. He passed away from a job-related illness in March 2022. Heath is survived by his wife and daughter.



## ROBERTO MEDINA

*Captain, National City Fire Department  
May 1, 2022*

Roberto Medina always had a strong interest and desire to help people in his community. He began his 22-year-long career as a firefighter and was the first department-sponsored paramedic. Roberto also served as the Union President and received the St. Florian Award in 1996. He was an avid outdoorsman, fisherman, hunter, and excellent chef. Roberto passed away from a job-related illness in May 2022. He is survived by his wife and daughter.







HENRY



## JACK E. SHEPPARD

*Engineer, San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District  
July 6, 2022*

Jack Sheppard started his fire service career with the California Department of Forestry in 1974. During his 45-year career he also worked for the U.S.

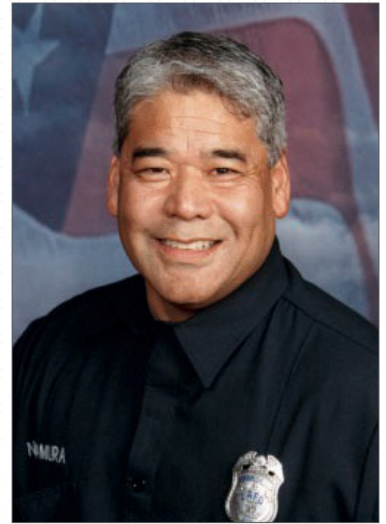
Forest Service and in the private ambulance industry as an EMT. Jack was awarded a commendation for "outstanding recruit" in his academy class of 1986. He also managed the District's small hand tool program where he coordinated, inventoried, and repaired chainsaws and various other tools, and assisted with in-service training on new wildland apparatus. Jack's interests outside of the fire service included fishing, horseback riding and weightlifting. He passed away from job-related cancer in July 2022.



## RUSSELL N. NAKAMURA

*Firefighter, Los Angeles City Fire Department  
July 7, 2022*

Russell N. Nakamura proudly served the citizens of Los Angeles with honor and pride for 35 years. Russell loved the fire service and began his career as a firefighter in 1980. He was a well-respected member of the department as well as in his community. He succumbed to job-related cancer in July 2022.



## BRIAN FALK

*Captain, Kern County Fire Department  
July 14, 2022*

Brian Falk served the citizens of Kern County with pride and excellence for 20 years. Prior to his time in the fire service, Brian had a distinguished career as a Probation Officer.

He had a love for community and becoming a firefighter fit his desire to assist people in their time of need. He began his career with Kern County Fire Department in 2002. Brian loved racing cars, fishing, and spending time with friends and his family. Brian passed away from a job-related illness and is survived by his wife and two children.



## MATTHEW CLAPSADDLE

*Firefighter Paramedic, Ventura Fire Department  
August 20, 2022*

Matthew "Clappy" Clapsaddle served the Ventura Fire Department for 28 years. He started a career in the fire service because from an early age, he was taught to always help others and a career in the fire service was a natural choice for him. During his career he served as a paramedic and an active member on the USAR and Ocean Rescue Teams, receiving the Nancy Merman EMS Award and a Life Saving Award. Matthew loved his faith, his family, his profession, and was always happy in the ocean. Matthew passed away from a job-related illness. He is survived by his wife and son.









## JERRY G. WELTON

*Firefighter, Monrovia  
Fire and Rescue  
September 21, 2022*

Jerry G. Welton served the citizens of Monrovia with pride and distinction for 30 years. Jerry's interest in firefighting stemmed from an incident involving his best friend, inspiring him to become a paramedic to be able to make a difference for others and not feel helpless. Outside of his work, Jerry enjoyed working on cars, parachuting, and participating in sprint car racing. He passed away from job-related cancer in September 2022. Jerry is survived by his wife and two children.



## KARL HEGLE

*Captain, San  
Bernadino County Fire  
Department  
November 2, 2022*

Karl Hegle served the citizens of San Bernadino County with honor and distinction for over 27 years. Karl loved the fire service and started his career in 1995 with California City Fire Department. He joined Upland FD in 2007, serving that community until Upland FD transitioned into the San Bernardino County FD in 2017. Karl also served as a flight paramedic, and a member of Los Angeles County Sheriff Search and Rescue as a reserve deputy. Karl was known for his positive and upbeat personality and always stated, "every day is a gift". He passed away in November 2022 from job-related cancer. He is survived by his four children.



## MICHAEL HORTON

*Fire Marshal, San  
Bernardino County Fire  
Protection District  
November 02, 2022*

Michael 'Mike' Horton's interest in the fire service was inspired by his brother-in-law, who was a firefighter. He started his career in the fire service with Norco Fire Department in 1980; and in 2001 joined Riverside County Fire Department before spending the rest of his career with San Bernadino County Fire Department. Mike loved being with his family. He also loved the river, his boat, and his Harley Davidson motorcycle. Mike passed away from job-related cancer in November 2022 and is survived by his wife, five children and preceded in death by his son.



## MICHAEL J. TOOLEY

*Fire Apparatus  
Engineer, Orange  
County Fire Authority  
November 16, 2022*

Mike Tooley followed in the footsteps of his uncle when he decided to become a firefighter. He began his fire service career with Orange County Fire Authority in 1997 and promoted to Engineer in 2006. He passed away from job-related cancer in November 2022, and is survived by his daughter.









## SCOTT K. GOMES

*Captain, CAL FIRE  
November 17, 2022*

For over 30 years, Scott Gomes served the citizens of California with honor and pride. Scott began his CAL FIRE career in 1989 as a Firefighter I in the San Luis Obispo Unit (SLU). He was always a helper and a giver and entered the fire service right after high school. In his free time, Scott enjoyed the outdoors, hunting and fishing. He loved his family, coaching the local youth sport teams and mentoring the youth in his community. In November 2022, Scott passed away from a job-related illness. He is survived by his wife and their two sons.



## MARK SCHMIDT

*Firefighter, Kern  
County Fire  
Department  
November 27, 2022*

A public servant at heart, Mark Schmidt worked in juvenile probation prior to starting his career in the fire service when he was 40 years old. Mark served the community of Fellows with honor for 17 years. Mark was a genuine family man and exceptional role model, who loved working out, playing softball and was an exceptional gardener. He succumbed to job-related cancer in November 2022.



## JOHN J. MCNELIS

*Captain, Barstow Fire  
Protection District  
December 21, 2022*

John McNelis became interested in a career in the fire service to be able to serve others. He began his career with Barstow Fire Protection District as a Firefighter/ Paramedic and rose through the ranks to Captain and embodied the finest qualities of a firefighter. John loved all sports but none more than his beloved Dodgers. He was a dedicated family man. John passed away from job-related cancer in December 2022. He is survived by his wife and three children.



## PAUL CRIMMINS

*Battalion Chief, San  
Rafael Fire Department  
January 24, 2023*

Paul Crimmins proudly served as a member of the Marinwood and San Rafael Fire departments for more than three decades. He was a motivated and enthusiastic professional who loved the fire service and took every opportunity to contribute to the betterment of the departments he worked for. He was an advocate and mentor to countless firefighters and was deeply admired and respected. Paul was an avid runner, and an enthusiastic hiker who loved exploring the open space and parks of Marin and Sonoma Counties. Paul succumbed to a lengthy battle with job-related cancer in January. He is survived by his wife and four children.







ALAN HEIN BIG PINE  
CORY BRUCE NORTON SAN  
SEAN D. LAFFAN OAKLAND

JORGE LOERA CAL FIRE  
MARK S. ROEDEL CAL FIRE  
GEORGE A. ROOQUE LOS ANGEL

JOSEPH ALBERT GREER JR HERALD FIRE  
W. CHRIS FIREBRIGHT RANCHO S

W. MICHAEL BRUNZELZ SAN  
RANCHO MERTZ RANCHO S  
BRUCE MERTZ RANCHO S

ANDY V. MERTZ RANCHO S  
STEPHEN MERTZ RANCHO S  
JOHN E. ROEDEL CAL FIRE

TORY CARLOS MERTZ RANCHO S  
CHRISTOPHER MERTZ RANCHO S  
CHRISTOPHER MERTZ RANCHO S

HENRY MUNOZ MERTZ RANCHO S  
WILLIAM ROBERT MERTZ RANCHO S  
JONATHAN FLEMING MERTZ RANCHO S

DAVID ALLEN MERTZ RANCHO S  
JACOB R. FLEMING MERTZ RANCHO S  
MICHAEL J. FLEMING MERTZ RANCHO S

TOKE REDDING  
NNS FRESNO  
GHES USNPS  
MINTO CITY  
OTTI CONTRA COSTA COUNTY  
CAL FIRE  
CHICO

MODESTO  
OOD CAL OES  
AN LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
SS CONTRA COSTA COUNTY  
E LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
ERNANDEZ KINGS COUNTY  
ADOS CAL FIRE  
LAIRD USES

VEHNERA COUNTY  
HAMMER JR. FORBARD VALLEY  
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CALIFORNIA



## MIGUEL CERVANTES

*Fire Engineer,  
Rancho Cucamonga  
Fire District  
February 8, 2023*

Miguel Cervantes served the citizens of Rancho Cucamonga with pride and honor for 17 years. He began his fire service career in 2000 with Norco Fire Department.

Miguel was promoted to the position of Engineer, and served on the Rancho Cucamonga Fire District Honor Guard, Technical Rescue Team, and as a Recruit Academy Instructor in multiple disciplines. Miguel will be remembered as a compassionate, kind-hearted, and devoted father. Miguel passed away in February following a courageous battle with job-related cancer and is survived by his wife and their three children.



## STEVEN PADGETT

*Lieutenant, Oakland  
Fire Department  
February 19, 2023*

Steven Padgett joined Oakland Fire Department in 1990 and was promoted to Lieutenant on September 28, 2002. Steven served the citizens of the City of Oakland with honor and distinction for 28 years. He passed away from job-related cancer in February 2023, and is survived by his wife and two children.



## TIMOTHY D. STRACK

*Captain, City of  
Riverside Fire  
Department  
April 1, 2023*

Tim Strack joined the City of Riverside Fire Department in 1995 and served with honor for 28 years, 20 of those years as a Captain. During his 36 years in the fire service, Tim received numerous awards and accolades during his career, including CPF 1st District Vice President Emeritus and President of RCFA Local 1067 for 21 years. Tim loved spending time with his family and friends at the hockey rink, on the river, or traveling the world. He passed away from a job-related illness in April 2023. Tim is survived by his wife and three children.







1780 Creekside Oaks • Sacramento, CA 95833  
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