



ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY

P.O. Box 57115, Irvine, CA 92619-7115 • 1 Fire Authority Road, Irvine, CA 92602

Brian Fennessy, Fire Chief

(714) 573-6000

www.ocfa.org

Date: December 5, 2025

To: All OCFA Firefighters and Professional Staff

From: Brian Fennessy, Fire Chief

Subject: Retirement and Next Chapter with the United States Wildland Fire Service

After deep reflection and with immense gratitude, I will retire from the Orange County Fire Authority, effective Friday, January 2, 2026, pending the successful completion of a federal onboarding process I am undergoing to begin a new role that I have tentatively accepted: Director of the newly created (effective January 12, 2026) United States Wildland Fire Service (USWFS).

Serving alongside you has been the greatest honor of my career. Day in and day out, you have exemplified what it means to be an all-hazard, mission-driven organization — protecting lives and property with professionalism, compassion, and relentless commitment. The pride I feel in our team's operational excellence, innovation, and community partnership is immeasurable. Over the past eight years, we have earned a reputation as a national model within the fire service, and I recognize that being selected as the inaugural leader of the USWFS is a direct reflection of our collective success at the OCFA.

As I transition to the national role, my focus will remain on advancing the safety of our responders and the resilience of the communities we serve. The creation of the USWFS represents a historic opportunity to strengthen interagency coordination, modernize capabilities, and elevate the profession of wildland firefighting. I look forward to carrying the lessons learned at the OCFA into that work and ensuring the nation knows that the OCFA — and all of you — are deeply connected to the values and mission we aim to build at the USWFS.

In the weeks ahead, I will work closely with Executive Management and our Board of Directors to support a smooth leadership transition. Additional details will be shared through our established communication channels as they are finalized. In the meantime, please continue to take care of one another, uphold our standards, and keep your focus on safe, effective operations.

Thank you for your trust, your service, and your unwavering dedication to the people of Orange County. I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to have led this extraordinary organization. The OCFA principles of integrity, teamwork, and servant leadership will remain central to my approach moving forward, and the meaningful relationships we have developed will continue to motivate and inspire me.

With respect and appreciation,

Brian Fennessy
Fire Chief

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