



# PRESSRELEASE

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## **For Immediate Release**

**Date:** October 20, 2017  
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## **Some local Firefighters are returning from the devastating fires in the North Bay while others remain**

Eight Menlo Park Fire District Firefighters and two Fire Engines have returned from the Tubb's Fire in Northern California, part of four Strike Teams consisting of nineteen fire engines from every fire agency in San Mateo County and staffed by 84 fire personnel.

One of the Strike Teams deployed on October 9, ten days ago and the other on October 12, seven days ago. Two Menlo Fire Line Medics will remain on the fire until hand crews are finished mopping up and completely securing containment lines.

Two members of the Menlo Park Fire District's UAS/Drone Team returned late Wednesday evening after worked in partnership with Drone manufactures DJI and Intel along with the Alameda County Sheriff's department to jointly support and document Drone missions in areas devastated by the fire.

Battalion Chief Tom Calvert who recently used Drones to fly night time fire operations in Yosemite National Park for the South Fork Fire and then was sent to Florida as part of the Fire Districts Urban Search and Rescue National Taskforce deployed for Hurricane Irma said that "he was humbled by the devastation that they recorded. It's so incredibly sad, but we have an important job to do using this amazing game changing technology".

## **About the Fire:**

### **Central LNU Complex, Vegetation Fires, Sonoma & Napa Counties, Update**

#### **State/Local DPA, SRA/LRA Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit/City of Santa Rosa**

- 107,407 acres oak woodland and brush, 80% contained
- Destroyed: 4,655 residential, 100 commercial, 1036 outbuildings
- Damaged: 249 residential, 25 commercial, 56 outbuildings
- 23 confirmed fatalities
- 2,285 structures threatened and 10,503 civilians evacuated
- Significant fires in the complex include
  - Tubbs Fire – 36,432 acres, 92% contained – Calistoga-Santa Rosa
    - Unified Command CAL FIRE and Santa Rosa Fire Dept

- Destroyed: 4,184 residential, 83 commercial, 615 outbuildings
- Damaged: 180 residential, 21 commercial, 51 outbuildings
- 7,594 civilians remain evacuated

### **About the Menlo Park Fire District:**

The Menlo Park Fire District provides essential fire and emergency services to the Town of Atherton, Cities of East Palo Alto and Menlo Park, Unincorporated areas of San Mateo County and on contract to the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory.

The Fire District is strategically located in the heart of Silicon Valley and has been developing and growing its UAS/Drone Program since 2014. Earlier this year it was identified by BARD Colleges Drone Program as one of just over 350 Public Safety Agencies Nationally with a program authorized and in compliance with FAA regulations.

In June, the Fire District held a one day UAS/Drone Symposium at SLAC to promote the responsible and progressive way other Fire Agencies could start or advance a legitimate Drone Program. Over 50 other Fire Agencies and over 200 people attended.

The Fire District recently acquired its night time and over crowd operations authorizations from the FAA and is only one of a few public safety agencies nationwide that now can legitimately fly Drones at night.

The Fire District was formally authorized by the Park Service to fly Drones in Yosemite, by FEMA to fly Drones in Florida and by the Alameda and Sonoma County Sheriff's Offices to use Drones in fire ravaged areas of Santa Rosa and other parts of Sonoma County.

### **Turning the corner and changing the perception of using Drones on Emergencies:**

Menlo Park Fire District Chief Harold Schapelhouman said, "as we've seen in these recent fires, Drones operated by uninformed or misguided civilians have helped them to acquire a terrible reputation by the general public and inside the Fire Service and public safety community because they can compromise or delay normal firefighting air operations needed to support, control and suppress a wildland fire."

"We constantly promote the responsible use of Drones by public safety entities to help and assist firefighting, search, rescue, recovery and documentation operations. The types of missions flown in Sonoma County only further amplify the positive attributes of Drones used for good if allowed to be placed in the hands of responsible public safety professionals." The Chief said.

### **What are they flying and why:**

The UAS/Drone Team was using a DJI Mavic for recon, an Inspire 1 for 360 degree flight, a Phantom 4 for mapping and 360 degree imaging with a zoom and thermal camera to look for hot spots and safety hazards and the Intel Falcon Eight was used for mapping.

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