

# Occidental Fire Public Information Meeting

Occidental Community Services District is placing a ballot measure before voters to fund fire and emergency services in the greater Occidental area. Voters who live within the 33 square miles of the Occidental Community Services District boundaries will be asked to vote on this measure in November of 2019.

Learn more about the challenges facing Occidental Fire and facts about the Ballot Measure.

**Join us on September 5th, 6-8 pm**  
at the Occidental Center for the Arts Auditorium, 3850 Doris Murphy Ct., Occidental

Light refreshments will be provided.

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Occidental Community Services District  
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Occidental, CA 95465



For more information, contact  
Chief Ron Lunardi at the fire station:  
(707) 874-3800



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# OCCIDENTAL FIRE DEPARTMENT: Challenges and Opportunities Facing Our Fire Safety System



The Occidental Fire Department has a 100+ year history of responding to local emergencies when residents and visitors need them the most. This incredible legacy of work and preparedness has been powered by a volunteer fire fighting and emergency response technician force since its inception. Times have changed, and the Occidental Fire Department Board is working to adapt to modern realities.

In 2017, the North Bay faced the most dramatic and significant wildfires in the history of our State. The Sonoma County fires alone resulted in 9,000 structures lost, including 5,800 homes and 23 of our neighbors lives. Occidental Fire responded to the 2017 Sonoma County fires with three fire trucks and 17 personnel, including the Fire Chief and his vehicle. This disaster shows us that we cannot afford to sit back in the Occidental area and wait for nature to take its course. In addition, call volumes are up, and volunteer availability, especially during the day, is down. It is critical that we enable ourselves to hire staff that can support the valiant effort of our dedicated volunteers, to ensure coverage and reduce response times to emergency calls.

## Challenges We Face:

**Staffing:** Volunteer fire companies have faced a declining volunteer base for the past 20 years, mirroring the declining enrollment of our schools. Increased cost of living, shortage of housing, jobs that increasingly demand a longer commute or a two job work schedule, and a general decline in volunteerism have contributed to the problem. Another major contributor to our volunteer decline is the lack of affordable housing for young volunteers and their families in the district.

**Regional Response:** Occidental Fire is responding to neighboring District's response calls, especially during the day when our limited, yet dedicated volunteers are at work. Monte Rio is planning to add staff with their parcel tax that was approved Fall of 2018.

**Average Age:** In our own district, our reliable volunteers are growing older, and many of the younger volunteers move elsewhere to find work. We want to better retain volunteers and prospects by using stipend programs and other incentives to ensure quality coverage into the future from our volunteer base.

**Budget:** Occidental's budget will not allow the district to hire the full time coverage needed to ensure that we can provide the services our residents have come to expect and rely upon. Occidental Fire is frugal with its dollars, as evidenced by our self funded fire station remodel and expansion ten years ago. However, without paid staffing, there are times we lack sufficient personnel to handle emergency calls promptly.

## Opportunities at Our Doorstep:

**Collaboration:** Occidental Fire Department has been increasingly working across district boundaries to share resources, realize efficiencies, and hold trainings across district boundaries. Occidental is participating in regional discussions about the future, and recognizes that we need an increased local funding source to be in the best position for future negotiations.

**Response Times:** Local fire departments are often first on the scene to extinguish brush fires – a critical component to preventing wildfires. Occidental Fire is working with the Fire Safe Occidental group to educate residents and work for things like defensible space around houses. New funding sources are needed to ensure that we can take care of our own here locally, while enhancing the safety of our community.

**Ballot Measure:** The Board of Directors of the Occidental Community Services District, charged with oversight of the Occidental Fire Department, have placed a parcel tax to fund fire and emergency response services on the ballot this Fall. With increasing needs for daytime staffing, a desire to reduce response times, a goal to launch a stipend program to ensure volunteer coverage, and an equipment and priority funding list of needs, the District is compelled to approach voters after significant internal and external research of options and needs.

A parcel tax for Occidental Fire would create a more sustainable and dedicated source of revenue to enhance public safety, decrease response times, and better serve the residents of our district. This type of community investment would allow Occidental Fire to implement a better solution for the future of our rural, forested region.

### We Want Your Input!

- ✓ Complete our survey at: [OccidentalFire.com](http://OccidentalFire.com)
- ✓ Email us at [occidentalfire@comcast.net](mailto:occidentalfire@comcast.net)
- ✓ Call Chief Ron Lunardi at (707) 874-3800

For more information, please visit [OccidentalFire.com](http://OccidentalFire.com)