



Perris News

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

Fire Chief Accepts New Position in Northern California

Don Cockrum was more than a little nervous his first day on the job as Perris Fire Chief.

The assignment was a new one for Cockrum, who until taking over in Perris had never worked as the top guy anywhere in his nearly 20 years with CalFire, the state agency that provides fire services under a contract with the City.

Cockrum said City staff and Council members made the transition easy, going out of their way to make him feel comfortable as he took the reins of a department responsible for responding to medical aids, traffic collisions and structure fires in Perris and wild land blazes outside the City limits. Cockrum is leaving Perris this week.

He is moving to Northern California, where he will eventually take command of an air attack base, supervising helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft as they battle fires in the Ponderosa Pine forests north of Sacramento. It's his dream job. But Cockrum said he's still got mixed feelings as he leaves Perris.

"It's a great place to work," Cockrum said. "As a firefighter, you want to take the skills you have and use them. This City allows you to do that. There are an aggressive bunch of go-getters. I'll miss them."

Cockrum was honored this week at the Perris City Council meeting. He received a plaque and proclamation read by Mayor Daryl Busch thanking for his work in the City.

In an interview on his last day on the job, Cockrum said firefighters assigned to Perris stations responded to about 6,000 calls within the City last year.

Add in the surrounding unincorporated communities like Nuevo, Good Hope and Homeland, and that number rises to about 10,000. Those numbers will no doubt rise in coming years as the City continues expanding its residential and commercial base.

"There's still a lot of dirt to turn in Perris," he said.

"The staff is very pro-active about attracting new businesses and drawing them to the City. Once this downturn ends, things will really pick up here once again."

Before his stint in Perris, Cockrum worked elsewhere in Riverside County and in Northern California. He spent time in the 1990s in Temecula. He supervised an inmate fire crew in Northern California. His new posting takes him to Grass Valley, where he'll be in charge of firefighting operations in Nevada, Yuba and Placer counties.

Those counties tally about 20 fire stations; Riverside County alone has 96.

Cockrum's replacement will be named in the next few months.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch presents Cockrum with a proclamation of thanks from the City.



Outgoing Perris Fire Chief Don Cockrum inside Station 91 on Placentia Avenue in Perris. Cockrum is leaving to take a new assignment in Northern California.