



Kern County Fire Department
5642 Victor Street
Bakersfield, CA 93308

A message from Brian Marshall, Fire Chief, Kern County

Recently, there has been a lot of commentary about the health and effectiveness of your Kern County Fire Department. As the Fire Chief, there are few things I want you to hear directly from me to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding.

First, the warm and dry months are on their way, and with them, the official start of wildfire season. The Kern County Fire Department is well prepared and ready to keep all of our communities protected and safe. Our fire stations are fully staffed. Our hand crews are fully funded. Know this ... when you call on us this season, and at any other time, we are prepared are ready to respond. This has never been in question, even though you have heard otherwise.

It is important that everyone understand that our ability to respond is a direct result of the support we are receiving from the Board of Supervisors, as well as other County departments. Despite the County's financial challenges, necessitating across-the-board funding cuts to every department, including the Sheriff, there have been no forced funding cuts to the Fire Department the last three years. No reduction to staffing at fire stations, no salary cuts, no budget cuts, and no cuts to services for our residents, despite what you may have heard. I want to thank the Board of Supervisors for this extraordinary support over the last few years.

Even with this support, the Fire Fund, which funds all our operations, is in real financial trouble. It is projected that the Fire Fund's structural deficit will grow to \$10 million next fiscal year, almost \$1.5 million more than this time last year. We have reached a critical point where something must be done to address this growing problem. Included in this growing problem is funding necessary to replace critical infrastructure such as fire apparatus and fire stations. As I work with my leadership team to prepare the Kern County Fire Department's budget for next fiscal year I am committed to partnering with the County Administrative Office and our employee union to find a path to stability and to regain some balance in our Fire Fund, while sustaining our level of preparedness and ability to respond to emergencies.

I will close by saying that I am honored to be your Fire Chief. I have lived and worked in Kern County as a fire fighter for over 30 years. I am proud to be a part of this community, and I am very fortunate to lead such an exemplary team of firefighters every day.