



April 5, 2025

FROM: Larry Collins  
Deputy Chief, Cal OES Special Operations & Hazardous Materials  
Division, Fire & Rescue Branch, State US&R Program Manager

To: Sponsoring Agency Fire Chiefs (and designated Reps) and Program  
Managers of California-Based State/National US&R Task Forces;  
California Regional US&R Task Forces, and Cal OES Swiftwater-Flood  
S&R Teams; copied to FEMA US&R Program Reps and Program  
Office Staff, and Cal OES Special Ops Staff

SUBJECT: Welcoming New Cal OES Fire & Rescue (Special Ops & Haz Mat)  
Assistant Fire Chief Bubba Willis

Dear colleagues and partners,

On behalf of Cal OES Fire & Rescue Chief Brian Marshall, please join me in welcoming Bubba Willis as a new Coordinator in the Special Operations & Hazardous Materials Section of Cal OES Fire & Rescue. Bubba is serving with the state after having retired from a lengthy career as a highly accomplished firefighter and Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) practitioner with unique skills sets in the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD). He has joined the Special Ops staff working with California's US&R, Swiftwater-Flood S&R and associated resources, and other elements of California's Fire Service special operations community, and our partners in the National US&R Response System, EMAC, and beyond.

Bubba Willis has been instrumental in adoption of the *Search and Rescue Common Operating Platform* (SARCOP) and its ever-widening implementation by US&R and other special operations resources in California and nationwide. In addition to the systemwide adoption of SARCOP by the National US&R Response System, Willis has worked tirelessly to expand the use of SARCOP to the California Regional US&R Task Forces and the 13 Cal OES Swiftwater-Flood S&R Teams (Type I Swiftwater Rescue Teams). He works closely with our various partners to improve SARCOP's fidelity with various other avenues of intel and data gathering and sharing; helping coordinate SARCOP operational guidance and support during emergencies and disasters; and providing subject matter expertise to relevant local, state, and federal committees and work groups.



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Bubba will play a key role in helping coordinate US&R, Swiftwater-Flood, homeland security, and other training and exercises, working with CSTI (California Specialized Training Institute), State Fire Training, FEMA, and other partners. His new position also includes acting as a Cal OES representative in the Incident Command System and the California Fire & Rescue Mutual Aid System, consulting with local, state, and federal agencies, and helping to improve Cal OES's all-hazards preparedness and response strategies for the wide range of natural and manmade emergencies and disasters that confront the State of California.

Prior to joining Cal OES, Bubba served the public in a 37-year firefighting career in the LAFD, with assignments involving fieldwork, administration, training, and governmental affairs. Bubba's firefighting assignments were in the South Los Angeles, Fairfax District, and Hollywood areas of the city. In his administrative assignments at LAFD's Disaster Preparedness and special projects he helped oversee development and execution of emergency preparedness training and exercise programs for the LAFD, Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD).

Willis was a dedicated member of LAFD's California/FEMA US&R Task Force (CA-TF1) and California Regional US&R Task Force 9 (RTF9) for three decades, serving as Rescue Specialist, US&R Technical Information Specialist, and US&R Plans Team Manager, and responding to notable events that included the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, the 9/11 World Trade Center Collapse, multiple Hurricane Responses, and the Northridge Earthquake when it struck beneath the City of Los Angeles in 1994. As a longtime member of a FEMA US&R Incident Support Team (IST), Bubba has responded to large-scale disasters and National Security Special Events across the nation in various roles including US&R IST Plans and Documentation Unit Leader.

For 12 years, Willis served as the LAFD US&R Training Program Manager, ensuring that CA-TF1, RTF9, and the 6 LAFD Type I US&R Companies stayed current with advanced US&R techniques and that the cadre of Instructors maintained their instructor status by establishing an instructor and curriculum evaluation/recertification program. This position also gave him experience managing the various grants that supported the Urban Search and Rescue Training Program.

Bubba was assigned to the LAFD Incident Management Team for 10 years in the positions of Situation Unit and Deputy Plans Section Chief. He also spent time as Plans Section Chief in the City of Los Angeles Emergency Operation Center. During the covid pandemic, Willis was detailed to the LAFD's Department Operation Center (DOC) as a Plan Section Intel Manager, providing valuable

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expertise on effective operational management and strategic planning during that lengthy complex effort that included establishing major COVID testing and treatment sites, assistance to hospitals, and other tasks.

Bubba brings with him significant experience and expertise as a FEMA US&R Planning Team Training Lead Instructor who has been providing training to members of California/FEMA US&R Task Forces, FEMA US&R Task Forces from other states, and California Regional US&R Task Forces. He takes pride in empowering each student to become an effective member of their respective US&R Task Force or Swiftwater-Flood S&R Team, equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry out the roles of a Planning Team Manager and Technical Information Specialist. He is also a Planning Team Training Curriculum Developer which involved collaborating on evaluating and determining the relevancy of the material to current response procedures.

For 8 years Bubba was the FEMA US&R Exercise Coordination Sub-Group (ECG) Chair. Bubba's certification as a Master Exercise Practitioner allowed him to provide assistance and guidance to US&R Task Forces and Incident Support Teams nationwide in planning, developing, conducting, and evaluating objective-based, scenario-driven Full-Scale exercises. Additionally, Willis provides technical support with Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP) and FEMA US&R OREEP guidance.

Bubba is married and lives in the Santa Clarita Valley (from where he will be based for Cal OES).

His contact information is:

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Please join me in welcoming Bubba Willis to the Special operations and Haz Mat Section at Cal OES Fire & Rescue.

Respectfully, LC