



## Behind the Scenes of Emergency Responses

by Fire Chief Shane Warner  
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Over the past several months I have had inquiries about emergency response procedures around the Groveland/Big Oak Flat area. Concerns were voiced about the number of personnel sent to an emergency incident. Specifically, why is a fire engine (or even two fire engines) and an ambulance sent in response to a 911 call.

Back in the early eighties foothill fire department personnel did not respond to medical calls because they were not trained to handle medical related emergencies. The problem then as it is today is that there were not enough ambulances strategically placed to be able to respond in some of the rural areas. As the population grew it triggered a rise in emergency incidents. Every foothill fire department member was brought up to a basic level of training and became, at the very least, CPR certified with basic first aid training. This led to the First Responder Program which puts rural fire department personnel, who are closer to the emergency calls, on the scene with a faster response time.

The Groveland Fire Department full-time staff is currently trained to a minimum level of EMT (Emergency Medical Technician). Volunteers and reserve firefighters are currently trained to the minimum level of First Responder. We are also very fortunate to have a full-time firefighter who is also trained as a Paramedic.

So, when you see a fire engine and an ambulance at an emergency scene you can feel very fortunate to have the system we have in place, especially living in Groveland forty-five minutes away from a hospital. The First Responder system has proven to be an effective tool in pre-hospital care, especially when the ambulance is off of the hill transporting a patient and we receive back-to-back emergency calls. The Fire Department is able to stabilize the patient prior to the arrival of the ambulance. On several occasions Fire Department personnel have been able to keep a patient alive while waiting for an ambulance to transport them to the hospital.

Recently during the Telegraph Fire the Groveland Fire Department was able to staff an engine for a county wide strike team. This strike team was originally formed to head out to the Telegraph Fire but was then told to hold in Tuolumne County when the Serpentine Fire broke out just outside of Coulterville on Highway 49. Since the county was stripped of resources fighting these two fires, the strike team was told to hold in Tuolumne County to be available for emergency incidents within Tuolumne County.

This is the first time in several years that the Groveland Fire Department had the staffing to offer assistance outside of our response area. So, if you see fire engines and personnel around town they all have a purpose and are all needed based on current emergency incidents and the condition of county resources. Our first responsibility is always to Big Oak Flat and Groveland but if we are able to staff a second engine we can offer mutual aid to the Tuolumne County Fire Department, The California Department of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service.