

**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION****Santa Clara Unit**

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September 16, 2020

To Whom it may concern:

As many of you know, the SCU Lightning Complex wildfires burned into Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties as a result of a lightning siege on August 16, 2020. Many other wildfires began simultaneously in other parts of the State from the same weather system. Within a matter of days after this event, all available wildland firefighting resources throughout the State were severely taxed.

The Santa Clara Unit of CAL FIRE (SCU) requested and received assistance from CAL FIRE's Incident Management Team #6 (IMT #6) very early in the SCU Lightning Complex. IMT #6 provided SCU with strong command and control functions needed to control what would become the 3rd largest wildfire in California's recent history.

At its peak, the SCU Lightning Complex was staffed with a total of 2,025 personnel, including 253 fire engines, 41 bulldozers, 41 water tenders, 25 hand crews, 9 helicopters, and overhead and command staff. As containment of the fire improved, some of these resources were re-assigned within the incident from fire suppression to fire suppression repair.

CAL FIRE commonly performs Fire suppression repair (FSR) on areas of a wildfire where damage or disturbance was caused by fire suppression forces. This work is intended to minimize potential long term impacts from disturbed soils, and to repair to the extent practical, any damage to infrastructure. See <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/post-wildfire/after-a-wildfire/> for more information.

On September 9 2020, a difficult and unprecedented decision was made to suspend all FSR work on the SCU Lightning Complex and a few other major fires nearing containment. The numerous private contractors and agency personnel assigned to FSR were desperately needed to assist with fire suppression on several new and ongoing fires elsewhere in the State where lives and property were under significant threat.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of that decision and to assure you that CAL FIRE and SCU do intend to resume FSR work when the necessary resources become available again. We recognize that the abrupt stoppage may have caused concern for many landowners and land managers. For that we apologize. In the meanwhile, the SCU Resource Management staff will continue to review areas of damage and disturbance to refine the plan for when operations resume. The SCU Lightning Complex has approximately 310 miles of fire perimeter lines and many miles of roads to review. To date, there are over 220 miles of dozer line and 305 repair points identified for treatment. If you have an urgent need or believe an issue may be overlooked, please contact my Unit Forester Ed Orre at edgar.orre@fire.ca.gov or submit any situations to scu.lightning.fsr@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Jake Hess
Unit Chief

CAL FIRE / Santa Clara Unit
South Santa Clara County Fire Dist.
Morgan Hill City Fire Dept.

