



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **San Bernardino County Fire Hosts Interagency Dozer Academy**

Over the past two weeks, San Bernardino County Fire Protection District (SBCoFD) hosted an Interagency Dozer Academy. Students from SBCoFD, Orange County Fire Authority, Los Angeles Fire Department, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) came together to hone their skills in operating one of the most unique machines in the wildland firefighting arsenal, the bulldozer.

Forty-five students completed the academy which incorporated classroom and hands-on training. Candidates fell into one of two classifications: Dozer Operator and Swamper. A Swamper is an individual who works on foot out ahead of the dozer assessing terrain, conditions and potential hazards which may lie in the blind spots of the bulldozer.

Week One involved operation of the large transport trucks which bring the dozers to the scene. This included required DMV pre-trip inspections, CHP requirements for securing heavy equipment to trailers, Code 3 laws and operation, and safety considerations. Students also received classroom training to become Heavy Equipment Boss trainees, a California State Fire Marshal and National Wildfire Coordinating Group rating that certifies competency in heavy equipment operations.

Week Two incorporated operational skill building. Training took place at SBCoFD's fire camp located near Glen Helen Regional Park. Operators and Swampers practiced blade work, learning limits of their equipment, operating on slopes, road construction and winching operations.

The final phase of training incorporated an opportunity unique to this academy: Live fire training. This is the only dozer academy in the country which incorporates actual fire into its dozer training. From May 4th through May 6th, SBCoFD conducted a prescribed burn north of Lake Silverwood to reduce approximately 500 acres of annual fuels. Throughout this project, academy attendees had the chance to practice "initial attack" strategies including line construction, radio communications, resource requests, interacting with handcrews and helicopters as well as contingency operations such as building fire breaks to stop the progress of the approaching flames.

When it comes to constructing fire line nothing compares to the power and capabilities of a bulldozer. As is common in the fire service, the benefit comes with associated risks. It takes approximately 500 hours of training and experience to become a fully qualified dozer operator. This academy is an excellent component of these hours and ensures that when wildfire threatens our region, dozens of firefighters will be ready with their dozers to protect our communities and environment.

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