

## STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

In 1942, the United States suffered its second most devastating fire in its history. Prior to November 28 of that year, the Coconut Grove was known as Boston's most upscale nightclub, the place to be seen enjoying an evening "out on the town". That all changed on the evening of November 28, 1942, when a fire broke out in the overcrowded establishment, causing panic as hundreds pushed their way to inadequate exits while flammable covering ignited, trapping the nightclub crowd. When the firefighters had completed the painstaking task of rescuing burn victims and extinguishing the fire, there was the devastating news that the fire had killed 492 people. That death toll was 32 persons over the building's permitted capacity. The fire shocked the nation and was the top news story replacing World War II headlines. Instead of being remembered as a premier nightclub, the Coconut Grove would be known for the second deadliest nightclub fire in U.S. history. As 1942 came to a close, the wheels of change had started moving. Fire safety professionals and community leaders evaluated the cause of the fire and its effects on the community. The fire elevated the concern for fire safety and brought about modification to codes regulating places like nightclubs and other places of assembly. There was reform in fire safety standards and major changes in the treatment and rehabilitation of burn victims. Over the last 70 years we have continued to see devastating fires. The MGM Grand, the Happy Land Social Club, and the Station nightclub are only a few of the more recent assembly venue fires. With each fire, the fire service sharpened codes and evaluated our operational procedures in order to better protect our citizens and emergency responders.



State Fire Marshal  
Tonya L. Hoover

As the City of Boston and its Fire Department did at the closure of 1942, many fire departments will use this time of the year to evaluate the impact of fire on their communities and citizens; we ask ourselves "have we helped provide a safe environment for our public and are we using all the tools in our toolbox?" Our toolbox is multi-dimensional; it includes our prevention measures, emergency responders and our public through strong public education and outreach. As we adjust to new staffing levels, longer response times, and a changing built-environment it is even more important to reach out to our citizens and make them part of our team. By combining our fire knowledge and firefighting skills with our citizens' willingness to keep their families and friends safe we can continue to be a leading state in reduced fire injuries, deaths, and losses. Fire is a natural part of our society. We cannot eliminate, nor should we expect to eliminate, fire from our environment, but as we look back over our history and this past year, have we used every tool in our toolbox to help us help our communities?

With 2012 coming to a close, let's look back on the lessons of fires like the Coconut Grove, MGM, The Station nightclub, and other fire incidents that have impacted our communities. This time of the year brings an increased demand for our services. The increased use of decorations, candles, cooking, and fossil burning heating can bring disasters if fire safety isn't part of the holiday plan. A national fire safety campaign

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF (CONTINUED)

sponsored by the United States Fire Administration will be in full force in 2013. This campaign will point to the importance of every tool in the toolbox by stressing "Fire is Everyone's Fight" and how each of us plays a necessary role in community risk reduction and fire protection. The message of "Fire is Everyone's Fight" is a call to action. It is a message that joins us together to help reduce the number of home fires, and the resulting deaths, injuries and loss of property. Everyday our citizens and visitors rely on the fire service to fight fires once they occur; however, the prevention of fires is up to all of us ... Fire is Everyone's Fight™. Now is the perfect time to use all the tools in our toolbox.

I wish you all a happy, healthy, and fire safe holiday, and I look forward to continuing our partnerships in 2013!

Be Safe,



Tonya L. Hoover  
State Fire Marshal

### **IMPORTANT**

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

[High-Rise Task Force Final Report](#) has been posted to the OSFM website

January 1, 2013 [Course Changes for State Fire Training Fire Officer Certification](#)

January 1—June 30, 2013 [Certification Name Changes for State Fire Training Fire Inspector Certification](#)

#### **MEETINGS**

December 11, 2012 Automatic Extinguishing Systems Committee, Sacramento

January 16, 2013 Fire Extinguisher Advisory Committee, Sacramento

January 17, 2013 State Board of Fire Services, Sacramento (Off site)

January 18, 2013 Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee, Sacramento

#### **CLASSES**

[Statutes and Regulations Class \(two day class\)](#)

December 11 and 12, 2012 Roseville, CA

**NOTE—Click on name for more information**