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City Council Member Blais Selected to Serve as Chair of the OCFA Board of Directors

The Orange County Fire Authority Board of Directors are charged with protecting more than 1.3 million residents across 22 cities and unincorporated county areas.

Rancho Santa Margarita, CA – After serving on the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) Board of Directors since 2004, Rancho Santa Margarita City Council Member Neil Blais was recently appointed Chair of the Board. Blais brings a wealth of emergency management experience and knowledge of local and regional government to the Board.

Within the emergency management field, Councilman Blais became a national expert on sustainable community development and hazard mitigation planning. Prior to running his own business, the Councilman served as a Commissioner for the Emergency Management Accreditation Program, and maintained active membership in the National Emergency Management Association, International Association of Emergency Managers, and Association of State Flood Plain Managers. He has published several papers discussing state-of-the-art floodplain management and risk assessment.

After joining the OCFA Board of Directors, Councilman Blais served on the Budget and Finance Committee since 2006. Blais chaired the B&F Committee in 2007 and again in 2008. Blais participated in the selection of Fire Chief, Keith Richter, after Chief Prather's retirement. Blais was selected Vice Chairman in July 2009.

Faced with looming budget deficits, Councilman Blais sat on an ad-hoc committee that identified over \$3 million in reductions while increasing service through the implementation of a hand crew. The ad-hoc committee was reconstituted and expanded with the goal of determining the best approach to close a nearly \$14 million deficit in the 2-year budget forecast. This effort is on-going. Blais' leadership has been acknowledged by his colleagues on the OCFA Board of Directors.

"I am honored to have been selected to chair the OCFA. This year will be a pivotal year for the agency as we determine how to do more with less. I look forward to working with labor, management, and the OCFA Board of Directors to chart this future," shares Blais. "Be assured, the OCFA will continue to provide the highest quality, regional emergency response, safety, and support services."

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