

Memorandum

Date: June 14, 2019
To: All Sheriff's Employees
From: Sheriff Bill Brown
Subject: Thomas Fire/1-9 Debris Flow
Incident Commendation Bar



Sheriff's Bulletin: 19-4

On January 9, 2018, the worst disaster in Santa Barbara County's history devastated the small community of Montecito. On that fateful morning at 4:00 am, torrential rains struck the hills above the community that had been stripped bare less than a month earlier by the devastating Thomas Fire. Mud and debris flowed from the hills and overpowered debris basins and waterways, spilling into the community below. The results were devastating. 202 homes were destroyed, 321 homes were damaged, over 100 vehicles were destroyed, and 23 members of our community were tragically killed.

Many Santa Barbara County public safety personnel responded during these twin disasters. The Sheriff's Office deployed personnel for 17 straight days during the Thomas Fire, maintaining evacuation zones and patrolling these and the fire ravaged areas. On the morning of the 1/9 debris flow and for weeks afterwards, the Sheriff's Office, with its wide range of resources and talent, responded. In the immediate aftermath, Sheriff's Office personnel, alongside members of other responding agencies, effected countless rescues. Acts of bravery and heroism took place throughout the event, many of which will likely never be known or formally recognized. The Sheriff's Office and the members of all the other emergency agencies came together, as a team of teams, to manage the two back-to-back, intertwined emergencies.

In recognition of this extraordinary display of exemplary public safety service, the Thomas Fire/1-9 Debris Flow Incident Commendation bar has been established. The new Commendation bar's two primary colors are red, representing the Thomas Fire and the courage of those who managed both incidents, and brown, representing the mud that flowed and carried destructive debris into the community on 1-9-2018. These two fields are bordered by black bands, representing remembrance and mourning for the 23 lives lost in the disaster.

June 14, 2019

Re: Thomas Fire/1-9 Debris Flow Incident Commendation Bar

Page 2

In addition to receiving this written award authorization, all involved public safety personnel will be provided with the "Thomas Fire/1-9 Debris Flow" incident commendation bar. All Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office personnel on the attached list are hereby authorized to wear this commendation bar on the wearer's left (badge) side of their class A and B uniform shirt. This award bar should be placed after any other Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office or H. Thomas Guerry award bars, and behind the Isla Vista 2014 Commendation Bar, if authorized.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Brown", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

BILL BROWN
Sheriff

Attachments