



**For Immediate Release**

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**TRIBAL FIRE DEPARTMENT CHIEF APPOINTED TO CALIFORNIA STATE  
BOARD OF FIRE SERVICES**

*Appointment outgrowth of cooperative efforts between San Manuel Band of Mission  
Indians and State to Safeguard Lives across California*

**San Manuel Indian Reservation (Near San Bernardino, Calif.) July 16 2013**– San Manuel Fire Chief Michael J. Smith was appointed by Governor Jerry Brown to the California State Board of Fire Services, a body that addresses fire protection and prevention issues on a statewide level. The State Board of Fire Services is a 17-member advisory board to the California State Fire Marshal. The Board is comprised of representatives of fire service labor, fire chiefs, fire districts, volunteer firefighters, city and county government, Office of Emergency Services, and the insurance industry.

This appointment is the product of the emergent role that California Tribal Governments have come to play in the broader emergency service response network across the state. Chief Smith has been fire service professional with the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians since 2000 and was instrumental in working with Tribal leadership to establish the San Manuel Fire Department in 2003. A key and ongoing aspect of organizing San Manuel Fire Department is the development and maintenance of interoperability agreements, standards and procedures between San Manuel Fire and all levels of fire services in the state of California through San Manuel Fire’s participation in mutual and automatic aid agreements and cooperative training with fire agencies.

“In our view, this appointment is further confirmation that San Manuel and Tribal Governments statewide have become critical partners in preparing for and responding to emergencies,” said San Manuel Tribal Chairperson Carla Rodriguez. “Chief Smith represents someone who has forged strong reciprocal relationships with other jurisdictions enabling San Manuel to be part of a unified response when life and property are threatened.”

This new role is being commemorated and celebrated as a shared milestone for San Manuel Chief Smith, San Manuel Fire, and the San Manuel Tribal Community. Chief Smith was recruited to the tribe from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and manages its day-to-day response to emergencies both on and off the reservation. Moreover, San Manuel Fire has

made it a priority to reach out to Tribal fire departments to cooperatively evaluate strategies and tactics employed in emergency services response on Tribal lands that are prone to wildfire and have been historically underserved. Chief Smith is a member of numerous professional and distinguished organizations that work to develop the fire service capacity of American Indian tribes across the nation including: National Fire Protection Association, President of the California Tribal Fire Chiefs Association and the National Native American Fire Chiefs Association.

“This is more than a personal appointment, this is a seat at the table for Tribal Governments to assure that statewide fire policy comprehensively addresses all lands in California including its more than one hundred reservations and rancherias,” said San Manuel Fire Chief Michael J. Smith of the four-year appointment. “I wish to express my gratitude to the San Manuel community for their support of the department’s ongoing outreach to advocate for tribal fire services and develop policies that address the needs of these communities.”

### **About the San Manuel Fire Department**

The San Manuel Fire Department's mandate is to provide emergency and non-emergency services to protect the lives and property of tribal citizens, employees, patrons, and guests of the San Manuel reservation as well as to safeguard environmental, cultural and economic resources. The department is called upon to ensure fire safety on the reservation and to protect the lives of those within the community. Also critical in the San Manuel Fire Department's mission is to develop, implement and maintain innovative prevention programs and strategies, life saving and safety education and training to the San Manuel Band of Serrano Mission Indians community. The department fosters partnerships with other tribal departments, as well as outside public safety agencies, to promote a dynamic emergency response capability for the region.

The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians maintains a mutual aid agreement with the state and San Bernardino County, the tribe’s department has automatic aid agreements with the cities of San Bernardino and Highland and the U.S. Forest Service. The department provides a multistory ladder truck to the city of Highland which currently contracts with the Tribe to provide as need arises. Additionally, the tribe also has a contractual agreement with the city of San Bernardino for training support, vehicle and equipment maintenance, dispatching and other essential services.

The department operates from a state of the art fire station that has been in service since June 2004. This facility serves as the headquarters, training center and a firehouse and will encompass approximately 14,000 square feet. The San Manuel Fire Chief heads the department with 32 full-time employees including administrative staff.

### **About the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians**

The San Manuel Band of Serrano Mission Indians is a federally recognized American Indian tribe located near the city of Highland, Calif. The Serrano Indians are the indigenous people of the San Bernardino highlands, passes, valleys and mountains who share a common language and culture. The San Manuel reservation was established in 1891 and recognized as a sovereign nation with the right of self-government. Since time immemorial, the San Manuel tribal community has endured change and hardship. Amidst these challenges the tribe continued to maintain its unique form of governance. Like other governments it seeks to provide a better quality of life for its citizens by building infrastructure, maintaining civil services and promoting social, economic and cultural development. Today San Manuel tribal government oversees many governmental units including the departments of fire, public safety, education and environment.

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