



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 6, 2021

NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:

Katie Casey, Communications Manager
(805) 816-4330 | katie.casey@oxnard.org

Oxnard's Fire Chief Deployed to Surfside, Fla. for Behavioral Health Support to First Responders

OXNARD, Calif. – The International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) requested Oxnard's Fire Chief Alexander Hamilton to lead a team of peers from around the country to deploy to Surfside, Fla. They will provide peer and behavioral health support to the search and rescue teams who have been working around the clock since the devastating building collapse.

"It is an incredible honor to support the fire responders who are working 24/7 in response to this tragedy," said Chief Hamilton. "Our goal is to ensure these dedicated professionals have the tools they need to process their experiences working on such a large-scale incident. We know how important behavioral health support is to our own personnel. Oxnard Fire Department benefited from the same mutual aid when we lost Capt. Scott Carroll, so on some level, this is an opportunity to pay that forward."

Chief Hamilton is recognized as a national leader in the field of behavioral health services for the fire community. Since 2013 Hamilton has worked with the Oxnard Fire Department and IAFF committees to create programs that support the mental health and well-being of first responders. These programs ensure that fire personnel develop the coping skills for the many stressors associated with fire service careers.

The IAFF provided funding for Chief Hamilton to lead two peer support team members from the Oxnard Fire Department, including OFD's clinician and a peer support member, as well as peers from Boston, New York, Phoenix and Texas, to aid behavioral health support to the first responders in Florida.

This marks Chief Hamilton's third deployment providing behavioral health assistance in the wake of a tragedy. In 2019 he was deployed by the IAFF following the mass shooting in El Paso, Texas, and Albuquerque, N.M., following the suicide of a firefighter.

Due to the large-scale recovery efforts underway in Florida, Hamilton and his team are the IAFF's third group to provide peer support resources to first responders. Following Hamilton's week-long deployment, a fourth IAFF team will deploy to support the behavioral health of first responders. Rescue workers continue to endure the emotional toll of the mission, where 32 bodies have been recovered, and 113 persons remain unaccounted for.

###