



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 20, 2016

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**ALAMEDA COUNTY SUPERVISORS HONOR WORKERS WHO PARTICIPATED
IN GHOST SHIP FIRE RECOVERY EFFORT**

The Alameda County Board of Supervisors took time Tuesday morning to recognize the tireless efforts of emergency personnel and investigators who responded to the Dec. 2 fire at a converted Oakland warehouse known as the Ghost Ship.

Thirty-six people died in the blaze in Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood. The fire triggered an extensive recovery effort in which first responders and investigative teams have worked around the clock, risking their own safety and facing extraordinary tests of composure.

On Tuesday, supervisors honored more than 300 County employees and Paramedics Plus contractors who participated in the recovery effort, bolstering the City of Oakland's response to the fire. Assistance provided by County departments in the fire response covered a wide range of areas and included:

- shoring up the damaged building so that rescue/recovery workers could perform their duties safely
- recovering and identifying those who perished, and notifying their families
- removing debris from inside the building and away from the site
- caring for the injured and assisting friends and families of those who perished

"This is a very small token of our appreciation," Scott Haggerty, President of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, told about 120 County employees who gathered for today's meeting to receive Certificates of Commendation. "Each of you should know that you have the entire community's appreciation."

The Alameda County District Attorney's Office continues to lead a Task Force investigating the possibility of criminal charges stemming from the fire. Some unsung heroes from the County's fire response included:

- more than 40 Behavioral Health Care workers who made themselves available 16 hours a day in the week following the fire to provide grief counseling and other support to the loved ones of those who perished; and
- crews from the Public Works Agency that – in addition to shoring up the damaged building to make it safe for rescue workers – used a backhoe to knock out one of the smoking building's cinderblock walls to provide safe and easy access for recovery crews.

Seven Alameda County departments were involved in the protracted response and recovery effort: The Sheriff's Office, Fire Department, District Attorney's Office, Health Care Services Agency, Public Works Agency, General Services Agency and Social Services Agency.

"The tragic fire in Oakland reminds us all to stop and appreciate the work of our County employees who deal with extraordinarily difficult situations every day," Haggerty said. "When we are met with catastrophic events such as the Ghost Ship fire, we ask these very same people to put their own lives on hold and to deal with the work that must be done – even though some of this work is unspeakably painful."

Added Susan S. Muranishi, Alameda County Administrator: "Amid the sadness and heartbreak that we all feel about the events of December 2nd, I do believe our entire team can be proud of the County's many contributions, and the effective collaboration and partnerships that were utilized in providing a first-rate response to these tragic circumstances."

The County's response involved more than 200 employees from the Alameda County Sheriff's Office alone. Sheriff's personnel were on the front lines of the effort to recover bodies from the burned building and its Coroner's Bureau conducted autopsies and notified the families of those who perished in the fire.

Among many other duties, the Sheriff's Office also set up a Family Assistance Center near the fire scene where families and loved ones from outside the area could gather and be provided with resources they needed in their time of need. Resources provided at the Center included counselors and chaplains who helped survivors with their grief and representatives from the American Red Cross who helped provide other assistance.

"I know we all worked with heavy hearts but great purpose to get the job done," said Commander Tom Madigan, who led the Sheriff's multi-faceted response.

The difficulties deputies faced in their painstaking response effort were compounded by the fact that one of those who perished in the fire was Draven McGill, 17, the son of an Alameda County Sheriff's deputy.

"This is all still very fresh and I know we are all still thinking of the families who lost loved ones in the fire," said Sheriff's Sgt. Ray Kelly. "The fact that one of our friends and colleagues lost his own son just brings it all closer to home."

As work winds down around the fire-gutted warehouse, Alameda County continues its efforts to help those directly affected by the fire. **The Alameda County Disaster Relief Fund** has been reactivated to make it easy for County employees and the community to contribute funds that will go directly to fire victims - the families of those killed and those recovering from their injuries. County employees may also have the option to donate up to 5 days of their accrued vacation time, compensatory time and/or holiday in-lieu time.

To date, more than 100 donors have contributed more than \$17,000 to the Fund to help victims of the fire and their families, Muranishi said.

To make a donation to the Alameda County Disaster Relief Fund, go to <http://acgov.org/government/news/disaster.htm>.

Information about the Disaster Relief Fund also can be found on **ACGOV Cares** (<http://acgovcares.org/>), a new website designed to engage County employees and residents about volunteerism and other opportunities to strengthen our communities.