



RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN FILE PHOTO

Salinas rural Fire Capt. Paul Pilotte, left, and Lt. Frank Savinon investigate the scene of a late-night fire that gutted a residential home in November 2002 on Third Street in Soledad.

Salinas Rural Fire District will add a fourth station

Plan is to expand into Fort Ord area, which will have 1,400 homes

By ZACHARY STAHL
The Salinas Californian

The Salinas Rural Fire Protection District has plans to grow beyond serving the southern outskirts of Salinas and expand into Fort Ord.

In about four years, the district plans to add a fourth fire station and nine additional firefighters to serve the East Garrison development area along Reservation Road near Blanco Road, said Chief Steve Negro.

Not only will this provide fire protection for East Garrison residents but it also will improve response time to Marina and north Monterey

County, where the district has mutual aid agreements, Negro said.

"We'd be able to respond in their direction a lot quicker," he said.

In October, the district annexed the East Garrison area, which eventually will become a community of 1,400 homes.

Salinas Rural Fire now serves the unincorporated area surrounding the southern end of Salinas, down the Salinas Valley to Gonzales, and along the Highway 68 corridor.

The total area is approximately 240 square miles with a population of about 30,000 residents.

Negro said it's a challenge to cover such a large area. The district has 30 full-time firefighters and 25 volunteers.

Firefighters have to monitor wildland area near communities such as San Benancio and Corral de Tierra, as well as

SALINAS RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

n **CHIEF:** Steve Negro

n **STAFFING:** 30 full-time firefighters and 25 volunteer firefighters.

n **LOCATIONS:** Toro Station, 1990 Portola Drive in Toro Park Estates; Chualar Station, corner of Jackson and Washington streets in Chualar; Laureles Station, intersection of Highway 68 and Laureles Grade Road.

n **HISTORY:** Founded in 1934; first fire station was built in Alisal — now the eastern portion of Salinas — in 1950.

n **ONLINE:**
www.salinasruralfire.com.

industrial facilities and agricultural fields.

"We have to be prepared for everything," Negro said. Vehicle accidents and med-

ical calls make up the majority of the about 1,300 calls the district receives a year, he said.

In addition to extinguishing blazes, the rural fire district coordinates programs aimed at preventing fires.

Using props and costumes, the district's Characters Program educates children about smoke detectors, how to escape a burning house and the stop, drop and roll technique.

"The focus is to get public education into our community and try to keep the occurrence of fires and injuries down," Negro said.

The district's operating budget this year is \$6.3 million, he said.

In March, the district was expected to receive a new fire engine at a cost of about \$409,000 to replace a 1985 fire truck, Negro said.

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