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Firehouse helping revamp Pittsburg coverage

By Paul Burgarino
Contra Costa Times

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The burning question of providing better fire service in Pittsburg is one step closer to an answer. Last week, the Contra Costa Fire District held a ceremonial opening for a new Station 85.

Before county and city leaders gathered to christen the firehouse Friday morning, firefighter Sean Nugent and paramedic Matt Depolo were already lauding its amenities.

During a tour of the \$3.43 million station last week, Nugent said the more spacious quarters were "a day-and-night change" compared with the old Station 85 near Small World Park.

Among the features: a gas valve control that lets crew members quickly stop cooking and take off to a call; two apparatus bays that can hold four firetrucks; larger rooms for three crew members and a battalion chief; and better clothing decontamination rooms.

The station opened Oct. 29 at 2331 Loveridge Road. The 5,887-square-foot station is the first of two being built in Pittsburg to accommodate sprawling growth to both the east and west.

The new station, along with Station 84 on Railroad Avenue, is designed to improve the fire district's coverage of the city, Interim Chief John Ross said. The frame of Station 84 is under construction and expected to be finished next summer, he said. It will replace the current station on 200 E. Sixth Street and balance the service load for the two stations.

Station 85 is one of the busiest in the district, though in theory, the new setup is expected to reduce the number of calls there, Ross said. The goal is to accommodate a 1.5-mile radius, but the current downtown location of Station 84 puts most of that radius in the river.

In June 2007, the Pittsburg City Council agreed to fund a loan of up to \$10 million to the fire district for the project, including a \$5 million advance in capital that would be repaid by the district through increases in developer-paid fire-protection facilities fees. Pittsburg also would receive the property adjacent to Small World Park.

County Supervisor Federal Glover and Pittsburg Mayor Sal Evola lauded the partnership on the new station, noting it was completed on time and under budget.

"As a supervisor here and a resident of Pittsburg, I'm proud to be in a community that steps up to the plate and says we want to be safe," Glover said.

The station is named after Horace "Shad" Enea, a 32-year firefighter in Pittsburg who served as chief of Pittsburg's fire district for about 20 years before retiring in 1975. A few dozen of Enea's relatives and friends were at Friday's dedication.

Richard Enea, who along with brother Sammy followed in their father's footsteps to become firefighters, said being at the fire station and having

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dinner there was an integral part of his childhood. He called his dad a "firefighter's chief."

"He loved this city and the fire service; it's a fitting and gratifying tribute," he said.

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