Aptos fire chief facing discipline

By KEITH MURAOKA
Sentinel staff writer

APTOS — The fire chief here may be facing disciplinary action stemming from the unauthorized purchase of two fire district vehicles and an expensive piece of firefighting equipment.

Chuck Streeter, chief of the Aptos/La Selva Beach Fire District for the past 16 months, has accepted full responsibility for the financial blunders. Both incidents centered on Streeter not knowing fire district policy regarding purchases in excess of $10,000.

The purchases included two Ford Broncos at just more than $32,000 and a breathing apparatus to prevent smoke inhalation while fighting fires, for $52,708.

According to the minutes of recent Fire Board meetings, not only did Streeter make the purchases without board approval, but he also failed to follow open-bidding procedures.

Fire Board President Raymond Garcia refused to discuss details of the incidents, saying that the board is concerned and has been meeting on possible disciplinary ac-

tion. The board held a personnel session Tuesday on possible action.

Garcia said that the discussion has covered a "total range of options from termination to forgiveness."

Any disciplinary action would be announced in public at a regular Fire Board meeting, Garcia said.

"I made a mistake," Streeter said Friday. "I didn't know the policies."

Streeter said he went over fire district policies when he was hired in August, 1988. He said he read the policies on purchases of more than $10,000 and on the bidding process, "but they slipped my mind."

Streeter said that once he discovered his errors, he tried to correct them. "I didn't try to hide anything. I don't like hidden agendas. I'm as up front as anybody."

During a Dec. 20 Fire Board meeting, Fire Board President Garcia questioned a proposal by Streeter to open the bidding process for the self-contained breathing apparatus. Garcia said that since the equipment had already been received, there would be appearances of a "cover-up" should bids be opened.