

What is CAL FIRE?

Mission: The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection serves and safeguards the people and protects the property and resources of California.



The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is an emergency response and resource protection department. CAL FIRE protects lives, property and natural resources from fire; responds to emergencies of all types, and protects and preserves timberlands, wildlands, and urban forests. The department's varied programs work together using ongoing assessments of the condition of natural resources and challenges of an increasing population to plan protection strategies for California. Department personnel and equipment are a familiar sight throughout the state with responsibility for protecting over 31 million acres of California's privately owned wildlands, as well as provide some type of emergency service under cooperative agreement with 150, counties, cities & districts.

Fire and Emergency Response

CAL FIRE responds to more than 5,400 wildland fires that burn an average of over 156,00 acres each year. In addition, Department personnel answer the call over 450,000 times for other emergencies including structure fires; automobile accidents; medical aids; swift water rescues; civil disturbances; search and rescues; hazardous material spills; train wrecks; floods; and earthquakes. Because of CAL FIRE's size and major incident command experience, the Department is often asked to assist or take the lead in disasters, including the Northern and Central California floods 1997, 1998, and 2006; the 1994 Northridge earthquake in Southern California; the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake in the Bay Area; the 1991 Tunnel Fire in the Oakland/Berkeley Hills; the 2003 and 2007 Southern California Fire Sieges; N1H1 pandemic in 2009 and the San Bruno pipeline explosion in 2010.



The Best Personnel and Equipment - CAL FIRE covers the state with 21 operational units, 812 fire stations (237 state and 575 local government), 39 conservation camps, 12 air attack, and 10 helitack bases. The heart of CAL FIRE's emergency response and resource protection capability is a force of over 5,300 full-time fire professionals, foresters, and administrative employees; 1,783 seasonal firefighters; 2,750 local government volunteer firefighters; 600 Volunteers In Prevention; and 3,500 inmates and wards. To transport and support these forces, CAL FIRE operates nearly 1,000 fire engines (343 state and 624 local government); 184 rescue squads; 63 paramedic units; 28 aerial ladder trucks; 59 bulldozers;

6 mobile communication centers; and 11 mobile kitchen units. The department funds, via contract, an additional 82 engines and 12 bulldozers in six counties – Kern, Los Angeles, Marin, Orange, Santa Barbara, and Ventura. From the air, CAL FIRE operates 22 1,200-gallon airtankers, 12 helicopters, and 17 airtactical planes.



Cooperation Among Agencies - In a state as large and populated as California, cooperative efforts via contracts and agreements between state, federal, and local agencies are essential to respond to emergencies like wildland and structure fires, floods, earthquakes, hazardous material spills, medical aids, and even terrorist attacks. Because of these types of cooperative efforts fire engines and crews from many different agencies may respond at the scene of an emergency.



Training

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM), State Fire Training, and CAL FIRE Academy programs provide training education and certification programs to the California Fire Service. Through practical training exercises and classroom courses, every California firefighter is exposed to training standards that have been approved by CAL FIRE and the OSFM, among the best institutions in the nation for fire training education. Offering more than 1,000 classes annually, State Fire Training programs reach over 50,000 students each year and have issued more than 100,000 certifications to members of the more than 900 California fire departments, including

CAL FIRE. Each year over 2,000 CAL FIRE personnel attend the CAL FIRE Academy in Ione, participating in classes ranging from basic fire control to forest practice enforcement.

Fire Prevention

Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM)- A part of the CAL FIRE team since 1995, the OSFM supports the protection of life and property through engineering, enforcement and education. The CAL FIRE-OSFM provides for fire safety where people live, work and congregate. Deputy State Fire Marshals enforces fire-related laws and codes in state-owned or operated buildings; adopts minimum building and fire safety regulations for use in all occupancies throughout the state; oversees the California fire service training and certification system; licenses those who inspect and service fire extinguishers; regulates the use of flame retardants; evaluates building materials against fire safety standards; approves fireworks devices; licenses pyrotechnicians, operates the California All Incident Reporting System, (CAIRS); regulates hazardous liquid pipelines that run throughout the state, investigate fires and explosions; assist local fire departments with regulation interpretation and licensing investigations. The Planning and Risk Analysis Program within the CAL FIRE-OSFM oversee the California Fire Plan, Wildland Fire Prevention, Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP).



Prevention and Planning

A large part of CAL FIRE's mission is in prevention. The Unit Fire Prevention Bureaus consist of multiple different programs including fire engineering, vegetation management, fire planning, education and law enforcement. Common projects include fire break construction and other fire fuel reduction activities that lessen the risk of wildfire to communities and evacuation routes. This may include brush clearance around communities, along roadways and evacuation routes. Other activities include defensible space inspections, emergency evacuation planning, fire prevention/education in schools, fire hazard severity mapping, implementation of the State and Unit Fire Plans and fire-related law enforcement activities such as arson investigation.

Enforcing the Laws

To enforce state fire and forest laws, CAL FIRE investigators determine fire causes, interview witnesses, issue citations and set up surveillance operations. CAL FIRE-OSFM arson and bomb investigators and Deputy State Fire Marshals provide services to state-owned facilities, and local government fire and law enforcement agencies. Department investigators have a very successful conviction rate.

Resource Management and Forestry

CAL FIRE's mission emphasizes the management and protection of California's natural resources: This goal is accomplished through ongoing assessment and study of the state's natural resources and a variety of resource management programs.

Managing Timber and Fuels

CAL FIRE oversees enforcement of California's forest practice regulations which guide timber harvesting on state and private lands. On average, department foresters review 200-300 Timber Harvesting Plans (THPs) and conducts over 4,000 site inspections each year. THPs are submitted by timber landowners who want to harvest trees. The reviews and inspections ensure protection of watershed and wildlife as well as renewal of timber resources. Department foresters and fire personnel work closely to encourage and implement fuels management projects to reduce the threat of uncontrolled wildfires. Vegetation management projects such as "controlled burns" take teamwork between foresters, firefighters, landowners, and local communities. CAL FIRE manages eight Demonstration State Forests that provide commercial timber production, public recreation, forest research, and demonstration of good forest management practices. CAL FIRE foresters can be found in urban areas working to increase the number of trees planted in our cities or preventing the spread of disease by identifying and removing infected trees. A



Native American burial ground in the path of a logging operation or fire may be verified and saved due to a CAL FIRE archeologist's review of the area.