

Memorandum

To: Dan Sendek
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Sacramento Headquarters

Date: February 14, 2019

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From: Justin Sanders
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California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

Subject: Emergency Fire Pay - Fire Crew Members

ISSUE:

The statewide shortage of inmate firefighters is over **1000** fire crew members.

BACKGROUND:

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) in cooperation with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) operates 39 conservation camps that can house 196 fire crews. The CAL FIRE crews respond to wildfires, floods, weather events, search and rescue operations, earthquakes and other emergency incidents. When not responding to emergency incidents, the fire crews are engaged in conservation and community service work projects for state, federal, and local government agencies.

The Conservation Camps Program is a voluntary program. The CDCR offenders that are assigned to minimum security facilities (MSF) and are eligible by passing the medical examination and the offender criteria process, still must volunteer for the camps program. The Conservation Camps Program is currently experiencing extremely low numbers of volunteers. Out of the 39 Conservation Camps that can house 4100 offenders, the maximum amount of fire crew members is 3332 (196 fire crews X 17 fire crew members per crew). The current statewide shortage of inmate firefighters is over **1000** fire crew members.

The offenders that are not volunteering for the camps program are instead choosing other CDCR alternative custody programs (ACP). All offenders that are assigned to MSF's are now receiving two for one sentencing credits that use to be an exclusive credit to only the conservation camp program. Now with all of the MSF population receiving these same sentencing credits, the availability of offenders volunteering for the conservation camp program is extremely low.

One MSF incentive that still remains exclusive only to the conservation camp program is emergency fire pay. The current emergency fire pay rate is \$1.00 per hour while assigned

to a wildland fire. The \$1.00 per hour has been the same rate of pay for over 40 years. If CAL FIRE would raise the emergency fire pay then more conservation camp eligible offenders would volunteer.

DISCUSSION:

An average of \$3.3 million dollars is paid annually to fire crew members @ \$1.00 per hour.

- 2012 – 3.8 million emergency hours
- 2013 – 2.7 million emergency hours
- 2014 – 3.6 million emergency hours
- 2015 – 2.7 million emergency hours
- 2016 – 3.3 million emergency hours
- 2017 – 3.9 million emergency hours
- 2018 – 4.5 million emergency hours

If the emergency fire pay rate for offenders were raised to \$2.00 per hour the average increased amount would be \$3.5 million annually.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Increase the emergency pay rate to \$2.00 per hour for fire crew members.
 - Positive factors
 - Additional offenders would volunteer for the camps program
 - The camps receiving center population would increase
 - Additional fire crew member vacancies would be filled
 - Negative factor
 - Additional costs
2. Do not increase the emergency pay rate
 - Positive factor
 - No addition costs
 - Negative factors
 - Offenders continue to not volunteer for the camps program
 - The camps receiving center population would remain low
 - Down staffing of fire crews due to lack of volunteers

IMPACTS

Some potential consequences related to the reduction of offenders volunteering for the camps program:

- ✓ Fiscal – Additional cost to replace fire crews down staffed due to the lack of offenders volunteering for the camps program.
- ✓ Operational – Less fire crews available due to lack of offenders volunteering for the camps program.
- ✓ Legal – N/A
- ✓ Labor – N/A
- ✓ Sociopolitical - Less fire crews are engaged in conservation and community service work projects for state, federal, and local government agencies.

- ✓ Policy – N/A
- ✓ Health and safety – Less fire crews respond to wildfires, floods, weather events, search and rescue operations, earthquakes and other emergencies incidents.
- ✓ Environmental – Less fuel reduction projects are completed.
- ✓ Interagency – Reduction of fire crews utilizing CDCR offenders.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the recommendation of the conservation camps program to increase the emergency fire pay rate for fire crew members assigned to a wildland fire to \$2.00 per hour.

APPROVED:

_____ Date

CONCUR:

_____ Date