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# CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

## California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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### **CAL FIRE Increases Firefighter Staffing in Central Valley** *Recent Rain Not Enough to Combat Drought Conditions*

**Sacramento** – Despite recent rain, California has not received enough rainfall to make up for this winter’s dry weather pattern and the third dry year in a row. As a result, continued drought conditions and wildfires have required CAL FIRE to hire several dozen seasonal firefighters earlier than normal across the Central Valley and Central Sierra.

“The recent rainfall is not enough for us to let our guard down,” said Chief Dale Hutchinson, CAL FIRE Southern Region Chief. “Though the rain is great in the short term, even if it rained straight for several months, we wouldn’t catch up to the amount of rainfall we need.”

The additional seasonal firefighter hiring includes 15 firefighters in CAL FIRE's Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit, 14 in the Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit, and 12 in the Fresno-Kings Unit. The additional firefighters come just one week after nearly two dozen seasonal firefighters were hired in Tulare County.

Many parts of California, including Sacramento and Los Angeles, marked calendar year 2013 as the driest on record. These extremely dry conditions follow two previous dry years statewide. Already this year, CAL FIRE crews have responded to over 500 wildfires that have charred over 1,130 acres. In a normal year the department would responded to fewer than 130 small wildfires. The additional seasonal firefighters allow CAL FIRE to augment its staffing of fire engines and equipment that the department’s permanent firefighters have been doing for the past several months throughout the Central Valley and Sierra.

The Governor’s [drought State of Emergency](#) directed CAL FIRE to “hire additional seasonal firefighters to suppress wildfires and take other needed actions to protect public safety during this time of elevated fire risk.” The increased staffing levels follow a series of actions from the administration to ensure that California is prepared for record dry conditions.

With California facing its driest year on record, Governor Brown declared a [drought State of Emergency](#) last month and directed state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for water shortages. Governor Brown has spoken with President Obama about crucial federal support during the ongoing drought, and the state [continues](#) to work with [federal partners](#) to ensure a [coordinated](#) drought response.

Across state government, action is being taken. The Department of General Services is leading

water [conservation efforts](#) at state facilities, and the Department of Transportation is cutting water usage along California's roadways by 50 percent.

In January, the state took [action to conserve](#) water in numerous Northern California reservoirs to meet minimum needs for operations impacting the environment and the economy. The State Water Resources Control Board announced it would work with hydropower generators and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to [preserve water](#) in California reservoirs. Recently the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the California Fish and Game Commission [restricted fishing](#) on [some waterways](#) due to low water flows worsened by the drought.

The state is working to protect local communities from the dangers of extreme drought. The California Department of Public Health [identified](#) and offered [assistance](#) to communities at risk of severe drinking water shortages and is working with other state and local agencies to develop solutions for vulnerable communities. CAL FIRE hired [additional firefighters](#) and is continuously [adjusting staffing](#) throughout the state to help address the increased fire threat due to drought conditions. The California Department of Food and Agriculture launched a [drought website](#) to help farmers, ranchers and farmworkers find resources and assistance programs that may be available to them during the drought.

Even as the state deals with the immediate impacts of the drought, it's also planning for the future. Recently, the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency and CDFG released the [California Water Action Plan](#), which will guide state efforts to enhance water supply reliability, restore damaged and destroyed ecosystems and improve the resilience of our infrastructure.

Governor Brown has called on all Californians to voluntarily reduce their water usage by 20 percent, and the [Save Our Water](#) campaign launched four [public service announcements](#) encouraging residents to conserve and has resources available in [Spanish](#). Last December, the Governor formed a [Drought Task Force](#) to review expected water allocations and California's preparedness for water scarcity. In May 2013, Governor Brown issued an [Executive Order](#) to direct state water officials to expedite the review and processing of voluntary transfers of water and water rights.

For more information on the increased fire threat and for steps to prepare for wildfires visit: [www.ReadyForWildfire.org](http://www.ReadyForWildfire.org).

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