
CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



Tulare Unit

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CAL FIRE Increases Firefighter Staffing in Tulare County *Drought Conditions Lead to Increase in Wildfires*

Visalia – Prolonged drought conditions and an increase in wildfire activity have prompted CAL FIRE to hire additional firefighters in Tulare County. The hiring of nearly two dozen seasonal firefighters allows 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. In addition to the seasonal firefighters, CAL FIRE has also reopened its air base in Porterville to allow for the reloading of airtankers as needed.

“In January we experienced a substantial rise in the number of wildfires across California compared with last year, so the additional seasonal firefighters in Tulare County will help us meet our current need,” said Chief Ken Pimlott, director of CAL FIRE. “Governor Brown’s drought State of Emergency authorized us to increase our staffing due to drought conditions.”

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.

“We are continuously monitoring weather conditions to make sure we are staffed appropriately to meet the local and statewide fire potential,” said Unit Chief Paul Marquez, CAL FIRE Tulare Unit. “It’s critical our residents do their part during this drought not only to prepare for wildfires by maintaining 100 feet of Defensible Space, but also to help prevent wildfires from sparking in the first place.”

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 spoke with President Obama last week about crucial federal support during the ongoing drought, and the state [continues](#) to work with [federal partners](#) to ensure a [coordinated](#) drought response.

In January, the state took [action to conserve](#) water in numerous Northern California reservoirs to meet minimum needs for operations that impact the environment and the economy. 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. Last month, CAL FIRE hired 125 [additional firefighters](#) to help address the increased fire threat due to drought conditions, the California Department of Public Health identified and offered [assistance](#)

to communities at risk of severe drinking water shortages and 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. Also last month, the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency and CDFA 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. 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: <http://www.readyforwildfire.org/>

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