



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Female Inmate Hand Crew Ready to Respond

Today San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon and Deputy Fire Chief Jim Johnstone announced the graduation of the first County Female Inmate Hand Crew, also known as Glen Helen Crew 15-9. In May of 2013 the first male hand crew began their academy with 15 members ready to respond in July of 2013. Since that time, the male inmates total has grown to 34 and, with the addition of 13 females graduating today, the inmate hand crews available to serve the citizens of the County of San Bernardino total 47.

The 13 member female inmate hand crew began their training in July, with a curriculum consisting of 8 weeks of initial training in wildland fire suppression techniques, along with the basic Incident Command System, first-aid, CPR, confined space awareness, chainsaw operations, and small engine and facility repair.

"I am very proud of the accomplishments made by each and every one of the women sitting before you this afternoon," stated Sheriff John McMahon. "Our goal is to assist them in turning their lives around and send them back into mainstream society rehabilitated, educated and ready for employment."

"The hand crew's main objective is to assist with local fuels reduction programs and chipping operations; assisting other county departments in meeting their mission in a cost effective manner, saving the county an estimated one-million dollars per year. The crew also responds to fire suppression incidents, as well as other types of emergency operations such as sandbagging," stated Deputy Fire Chief Jim Johnstone.

Since completing the academy, the female inmate hand crew has been deployed to assist in a vegetation fire in Victorville, with several upcoming assignments to include preparation for El Nino. Fire Crews have proven to be an invaluable resource in more ways than one.

With the implementation of AB109 (inmate realignment), many inmates are receiving longer sentences and are good candidates for this program. This program teaches the crew member skills that they can use to gain future employment.

"To be considered for the crew, the inmate must be a low-level offender (no criminal history of violence, sexual or serious violations); must have 15-18 months sentence left to serve; no documented gang affiliation; no prior discipline; and must not be a flight risk," stated Sheriff John McMahon.

San Bernardino County Fire and County Sheriff are committed to protecting the communities we serve with safety first. Residents are encouraged to be prepared for any natural disaster, whether it is a wildland fire or flooding, and know what to do when asked to evacuate. The READY! SET! GO! Program provides important preparation information. To learn more, visit www.sbcfire.org.

Photos of today's event can be found at www.sbcfire.org under latest news.

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