



NEWS



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Aviation Rescues Roll-Over Victim, Paraglider

Staff Writer, Mountain News

Posted: October 4, 2018



San Bernardino County Fire Department's AR 306

San Bernardino County Fire Department and Sheriff's Aviation Division personnel rescued a 59-year-old resident of Banning after a roll-over accident sent her vehicle over the side at Forest Service Road 3N59 north of Lake Arrowhead.

On Friday, Sept, 28, at approximately 1:06 p.m., San Bernardino County Fire requested assistance from sheriff's helicopter AR306. Sheriff's patrol helicopter 40King3 responded ahead of the rescue helicopter to assist in finding the location. 40King3 discovered the vehicle on its side with one victim, Marvel Montgomery, on the ground outside of the vehicle.

The crew of 40King3 relayed the information to AR306 as that crew arrived near the area. Due to the terrain and location of the vehicle, AR306 landed approximately 100 yards away. Medic B. Horak and Medic J. Centeno hiked from the helicopter to the victim and began to treat her. The crew decided the safest and most efficient way to get the victim to a hospital would be to conduct a hoist rescue.

AR306 went airborne and waited for Horak and Centeno to be ready for pick up. Once the medics had the victim stable and in the rescue basket, AR306 hoisted the victim and the medics back to the helicopter. The victim was transported to a hospital for further treatment.

In addition to the two medics, the crew of AR306 included Pilot Deputy R. Pepler and Crew Chief Deputy L. Scott. The 40King3 crew consisted of Pilot Sgt. M. Gilley and Flight Officer Corporal E. Leon.

PARAGLIDER SAVED

The crew of a sheriff's helicopter conducted a 165-foot hoist rescue after receiving a report of an injured paraglider in the Lytle Creek area. On Saturday, Sept, 22, at approximately 5:20 p.m., San Bernardino County Sheriff's Aviation responded when the victim, who suffered extensive injuries, managed to call 911 for help. Violeta Jimenez, 32 of Seattle, Washington, reportedly launched her glider from the ridgeline and immediately experienced strong, gusty winds, which caused one side of her glider to collapse. Jimenez lost control of the glider and she ended up colliding into the hillside, not far from the departure site.

When sheriff's personnel assigned to the aviation unit made phone contact with Jimenez, she provided the GPS location using her cellular device. A patrol helicopter crew responded and immediately located Jimenez in tall brush at the exact coordinates.

Due to the remote location and extent of injuries, it was determined a hoist was necessary to rescue Jimenez from the hillside. Sheriff 's rescue helicopter Air Rescue 6 responded to the location and rigged up for a hoist rescue.

A rescue medic was lowered 165 feet from the helicopter to the ground. The medic assessed Jimenez for injuries, which were extensive, and secured her into a rescue basket. Jimenez was hoisted up and into the helicopter, followed by the medic. Jimenez was then flown to a local trauma center for treatment.

https://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/mountain-news.com/content/tncms/eedition/merged/210c8a96-b493-50b4-a235-c4b269f098f8-merged.pdf?_dc=1538610298

New Fire Tax Notices

ZAC MORAN, Mountain News

Posted: October 4, 2018

As a reminder, notices for the proposed fire tax have been mailed out to all affected landowners. The tax is labeled as Service Zone FP5 Expansion and will cost landowners \$157 per parcel of land.

For those who own contiguous parcels, there's a form online which can be filled out and taken to the County Assessor. After submitting the form and paying a onetime fee of \$108, the county treats the property as a single parcel for the purpose of this tax. The form can be found at <http://www.sbcounty.gov/uploads/arc/Forms/aos047.pdf>.

For those who wish to protest the tax, the deadline is Oct. 16.

Though it was originally stated that protest forms would be mailed along with the notices, this has not occurred for everyone and the protest deadline is not stated on the notice itself. However, the notice lists a meeting on Oct. 16.

In order to obtain instructions on how to submit a protest, navigate to www.sbcfire.org/ServiceZoneFP-5.aspx, print out the form on page three, and submit it as directed by the instructions included with the form.

https://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/mountain-news.com/content/tncms/eedition/merged/210c8a96-b493-50b4-a235-c4b269f098f8-merged.pdf?_dc=1538610298

STILL TIME TO PROTEST THE FP-5 FIRE TAX

Staff Writer, Z107.7 News

Posted: October 4, 2018

The deadline is fast approaching for property owners to protest the proposal to expand Fire Protection District FP-5 to cover most of the county. Reporter Mike Lipsitz has this report on the proposal and the process to protest it...

If passed, the proposal means property owners will see an additional \$157 per parcel added to their property tax bill starting next year. Community opposition to the fee has been widespread because it disproportionately affects property owners on fixed and lower incomes, and because of a convoluted process required to protest the proposal. That process requires property owners to print and complete an online protest form and mail it to the county for receipt by 5 p.m. Monday, October 15. And despite county information that the form would be available through the toll-free 211 assistance line, operators at the service have little to no information on the issue. Be that as it may, county supervisors are expected to vote on the proposal at the conclusion of a public hearing set for 10 a.m. October 16.

Protest forms are available by following this link:

https://www.sbcfire.org/Portals/58/Documents/FP-5/ServiceZoneFP-5Expansion_ProtestForm_Update2.pdf

<http://z1077fm.com/still-time-to-protest-the-fp-5-fire-tax/>

California inmate volunteer firefighters ‘like the special forces’

Richard K. DeAtley, Press Enterprise

Posted: October 3, 2018, 4:05 pm



Inmate firefighter crews return to camp, after helping fight the Fork fire in the San Gabriel Mountains, as they arrive back at Prado Conservation Camp #28 in Chino on Monday, September 10, 2018. (Photo by Jennifer Cappuccio Maher, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

As the flames picked up on a hillside over a McVicker Canyon Park neighborhood of Lake Elsinore during the Holy fire in August, a crew in bright orange protective clothing with “CDCR Prisoner” in black letters across their backs lugged chainsaws and hand tools up a steep hillside.

Above the threatened homes along High Ridge Drive, the La Cima Fire Crew went to work, creating a firebreak between the dry, untreated brush on the upper part of the hill and an area below layered with bright fire retardant, dropped the night before.

The neighborhood escaped the flames.

The La Cima crew, based in Julian in San Diego County, is among the 2,519 volunteers from California's prison system, along with some county jail inmates, who fight fires on the front lines.

Other inmates provide support, such as staffing mobile kitchens. When those numbers are included, there are more than 3,641 currently in the program, based in camps throughout the state.

The work is dangerous: Six inmate firefighters from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation have died in action since 1983. They work 24-hour cycles when fighting fires, under the direction of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – CalFire, the statewide firefighting agency.

The hand crew assignments include tackling steep hillsides where bulldozers can't go to create the firebreaks that often stop a fire's advance into neighborhoods, roadways or infrastructure.

"They are like the special forces," said CalFire Capt. Steve Elenburg said after returning with his crew from an overnight assignment at the Fork fire above Glendora and Azusa last month. The inmate firefighters joined the battle against the destructive blazes up and down the state this summer.

CDCR officials say the work done by the inmates saves California taxpayers between \$80 million and \$100 million annually. Applicants are admitted to the program after their records are reviewed, and those accepted undergo firefighting training and physical fitness conditioning.

And when there are no fires, the crews work hillsides to reduce brush, or clear flood control channels and do conservation work. The inmates are based at a string of Conservation Camps throughout California, minimum security facilities overseen by CDCR.

"It's the best rehab program we have, because it deals with life," CDCR Capt. Tracy Snyder said. "They have to work as a team, have each other's backs – this is something new to them."

"We're a big part of CalFire ... they need us," said Robert Vazquez, 42, who is stationed at Prado Conservation Camp No. 28 in Chino. "Being out there, you've got to be mentally ready, because it's hard work. It's some of the hardest work I've ever done. You've got to somehow enjoy it, or it's not going to be for you. We're sleeping out on the ground, animals and bugs and stuff crawling on you, so it may not be for everybody."

Vazquez, serving a DUI sentence, spoke after spending much of the previous day, and some of that early morning, helping to battle the Fork fire. Shortly before talking, he and other weary-looking, soot-covered fellow inmate firefighters had stepped out of their transport trucks at Prado.

Challenges to longtime system

The decades-old program faces issues, including critics of the pay for inmate firefighters – \$2 a day, plus \$1 an hour when battling blazes. There had been a drop in eligible candidates as fewer inmates with non-violent records are sent to state prisons. And certification restrictions for emergency medical technicians limit the firefighting jobs inmates might pursue after their release.

The hourly wage for a CalFire emergency worker I classification, which includes fire crew members, is \$11 hourly, \$16.50 an hour for overtime.

The pay for inmate firefighters “can be better, I think. For the amount of work we do, we should get more,” said Derick McGruder, 33, also stationed at the Prado camp. He said inmates discuss the pay “among ourselves, but that’s as far as it goes.”

But “it’s a matter of perspective,” said Juan Torres, 43, who said he is on his 21st consecutive year in prison and like other inmates accepted into the firefighting program, had his parole date moved up after he qualified.

“For me, it’s just,” he said of the low pay, “because for me, liberty has no price. For me to be able to go home faster to my family, about 17 months sooner, it’s priceless,” he said. “To me, I’m overpaid, because I am being paid back with freedom.”

Vazquez said a lot of inmates are paroled with no money saved, but ones in the firefighter program often have \$2,000 to \$3,000 for a start on the outside. “And if you spend that wisely, that will get you on your feet,” he said.

Torres, Vazquez, and McGruder were interviewed last month in a shaded picnic table area of the Prado camp, where inmates can visit with family.

That’s one of the rewards of Prado, which is near the 60 Freeway and more accessible than other camps in rural outposts. The conservation camps are minimum security, and much of Prado inside the security fence around its perimeter looks like a school campus.

Prado has a weightlifting shed, a feature removed years ago from state prisons but present at the conservation camps because of the physical fitness demands of the work.

There’s also an outdoor basketball court, a baseball/softball diamond, a dirt running track, dormitory sleeping arrangements rather than cells, a small library, a TV room and a cafeteria that inmates say has better food than regular prisons. In addition to firefighters, Prado also has a mobile kitchen unit and staff, about 91 inmates total, during a recent visit.

“It’s good here. I get visits often” from his five daughters, said McGruder, who is serving a burglary sentence. “I really didn’t allow my kids to come visit me behind the wall,” the term for a high-security prison, “because of all the stuff they go through to actually get inside there. Here, they come straight in, they check in, and it’s a better environment, no gates and fences and checks and strip searches. I tell them about the work I do, and they’re happy about that I’m actually making a difference.”

And the location makes Prado a prized camp in the system. “You have to abide by certain rules to be here, or you won’t be here,” McGruder said.

Prado’s Camp Commander, Lt. Armando Espinoza, said there are some walk-aways in the inmate firefighter system, but they are rare.

Crew candidates reduced

There has been a reduction in candidates for the program after realignment in 2011, which sent felons with non-violent crime convictions to county jails instead of state prison, and after passage in 2016 of Proposition 57, which allowed felons serving terms for non-violent crimes to seek earlier parole.

“We took a hard hit on that,” Prado camp commander Espinoza said.

There were 4,334 inmate firefighters and support staff in California in 2008, and this year there are 3,641. CDCR officials said numbers have fluctuated but have been steady the past few years. The last year they topped 4,000 was in 2014.

In recent years, CDCR started a program that allows county jail inmates to apply for the program. Twelve counties participate, including Riverside, Los Angeles and Orange counties. As of Oct. 1, 211 of the firefighters in the volunteer force were from county jails.

San Bernardino County chose to create its own inmate firefighter program, modeled after CDCR’s, said San Bernardino County Fire Department Superintendent Shane Glaze, who oversees the camp at Glen Helen. The 40 inmate firefighters only respond to San Bernardino County fires.

And at one time only those serving for a non-violent conviction were considered for the state conservation camps, but since last year some inmates with a minimum of seven years since their last violent offense can apply to the program and have their security status revised, based on a review of their record.

Inmates with convictions for sex offenses or arson, or any history of escape with force or violence are ineligible for the fire camp program, even if they have minimum custody status, CDCR spokeswoman Alexandra Powell said in an email.

Other disqualifiers include medical issues, active warrants, and inmates with high-notoriety cases, she wrote.

If inmates with a violent-crime conviction are found eligible for minimum-security detention, they can be considered for more opportunities in the system, including fire camp.

Juan Torres is one of those. He said he was originally sentenced in 1997 to 26 years and 4 months for two counts of attempted murder.

He said he believed he got his chance through Proposition 57, but CDCR spokeswoman Vicky Waters said later it was due to the CDCR’s change in its assessment process.

“I’m here for a violent crime, but if you have been programming” – taking part in training and treatment programs – “and you have a consistent program record as an inmate, then you are given an opportunity to come to fire camp,” Torres said. “But you do have to be programming for at least seven years, with no disciplinary reports whatsoever,” he said. “I met the criteria.”

For Vazquez, a swamper at Prado who is the go-between for the CalFire captain at the scene and the CDCR crew, the numbers aren’t what he is taking away from his experience, other than the two-year sentence reduction that will send him home in July 2019 instead of 2021.

He recalled working in Montecito after the mudflows in January that followed the Thomas fire. “Walk into these people’s homes that were destroyed and pull out the mud, just to be able to see the expression on their faces ... these people were really very thankful and appreciated what we did for them, and then they see the ‘CDCR Prisoner’ and their hearts really go out to us, and that’s a good feeling.”

Getting a “thank you” from people “who always looked at us as felons – that means a lot,” he said

“These guys that have been down for so long, this is a big part of them getting back into the world,” he said.

<https://www.pe.com/2018/10/03/california-inmate-volunteer-firefighters-like-the-special-forces/>

EDITORIALS/OPINIONS/LETTERS

PROTEST FIRE TAX

Gary Ellis, Lake Arrowhead, Mountain News

Posted: October 4, 2018

There is still time to protest the outrageous **San Bernardino County Fire** proposal to assess a minimum \$157 annually to each parcel owner.

The County did not mail the Protest Letters but rather the fire organization claimed to mail more than 100,000 letters. This author did not receive one but there are still two methods to protest.

One is by attending the County Supervisor’s hearing on Oct. 16 at 10 a.m. in the County building.

The other is to download a protest letter by accessing the web page of San Bernardino County Fire: SBCFire.org > Home; then Service Zone FP-5 and in the download box on the upper right, select option #4 to print out the protest form found on page 3.

Don’t be confused by the plea for new equipment, etc., because 64 percent of the current budget is spent servicing EMPLOYEE PENSIONS. That’s right: only 36 percent is used for fire suppression, equipment, etc.

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