



NEWS RELEASE

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Fuels Reduction Crew Program to Enhance Firefighting Efforts

San Bernardino, CA -- San Bernardino County Fire Protection District (SBCoFPD) has engaged in a partnership with San Bernardino County Probation and Sheriff Departments to develop a new fuels crew, to help mitigate hazards in our communities and provide support for public safety efforts.

The 6-month pilot program dubbed the “Endeavor Crew” (Crew-21) employs released inmates in good standing, for fuel reduction and other fire related services. The Program will enhance SBCoFPD’s ability to mitigate fires and provide work experience for skilled individuals released from custody, which may ultimately reduce recidivism and lead to gainful employment. Under close supervision and in collaboration with County Probation and Sheriff departments, the services provided will help improve the safety and health of County residents threatened by fires and other disaster related incidents.

“With fire season being year-round and the amount of fuel reduction projects, the need for additional resources in our County is more prevalent than ever. Fuels reduction crews have proven to be an invaluable resource in more ways than one,” stated Fire Chief Dan Munsey. “This crew is becoming a reality during a time where we have had a record year of fire activity, burning more than 4 million acres across the state.”

This program will in no way replace professional firefighters or the current professional hand crews but will enhance the hand crew programs already in place.

This Endeavor Fuels Crew Program started with support from the Probation Department’s allocation of \$300,000 for start-up costs funded through 2011 Realignment (AB 109) revenue. The Public Safety Realignment Act is a mandate that the state’s prisons reduce the number of inmates, as ordered by the U.S. Supreme Court, which essentially transferred responsibility for the housing and supervision of low-level offenders to be supervised at the local County level.

The SBCoFPD’s Fire Board in support of the program recently approved the agreement between County Probation and SBCoFPD to accept one-time funding in an amount not to exceed \$300,000 and other support from the County for implementation of the Endeavor Fuels Crew Program, with a term of the agreement from October 6, 2020 - June 30, 2021.

Chief Probation Officer Michelle Brown stated, “We are grateful to be a part of an innovative program that provides a critical service to the community and provides employable skills for our clients. We are very proud of this collaboration and expect to see great success for our clients.”

Facing a significant reduction to inmate crew members, the Sheriff’s Department also agreed to serve as a key partner in this program. Like Probation, the Sheriff’s Department has been working to reduce the frequency by which released inmates return to custody. Their partnership with this program allows them to refer potential candidates based on their notable work and behavior while in custody.

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In July 2013, through a partnership between County Sheriff and Fire, the first ever local government Inmate Hand Crew program was introduced, with additional hand crews, including a female hand crew, being added.

“We maintain a strong partnership with County Fire and to-date we have one inmate fire crew at Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center. We will continue to seek opportunities like the Endeavor Fuels Crew Program to assist those released from custody with full-time employment,” stated Sheriff John McMahon.

In October, the Probation Department held their first orientation for justice involved clients looking to join the newly formed SBCoFPD fuels crew. In all, 21 applicants attended the orientation in which they were provided the program’s expectations as well as the opportunity to submit necessary documents to include fuel crew certifications.

Hiring Criteria

No candidates have been, or will be, admitted to this program without a positive referral from both the Sheriff and Probation departments.

To be considered for the position, the candidate must be a low-level offender and have no documented gang affiliation. The candidate must have served on a state or inmate hand crew and been released from incarceration within the past 24 months. Candidates go through a background check and must pass a medical exam prior to employment. These individuals are being hired as a 40-hour a week County Public Service Employee.

Training

On December 7th, nine Public Service Employees started the five-week hand crew training, six more are in the employment background stage; with the goal of a 20-member fuel hand crew team.

Training is taking place at the SBCoFPD’s Richard Sewell Training Center and conducted by professional firefighters. Crew members are going through a refresher course and being trained on wildland fire behavior, the incident command system, tool techniques, chainsaw operations, safety measures, confined space awareness, CPR, first-aid, as well as small engine and facility repair. Once training has been completed, the employee will be a certified Type II Hand Crew member.

The Endeavor Crew, under supervision of a Firefighter Captain, will then go to work on hazard mitigation projects, brush clearance, chipping program, sandbagging, flood prevention projects, roadway clearance, and more. The Endeavor Crew will also assist in fuel rehabilitation and environmental recovery efforts after a fire.

The cost for training certifications, uniforms, tools and equipment are being paid for through a partnership with the San Bernardino County Workforce Development, whose mission is to promote a workforce development system that supports economic vitality by creating opportunities for businesses, employees and job seekers. Agencies are currently working with Crafton Hills Community College to offer certification and college credits.

Fire Chief Dan Munsey stated, “We are thankful for this partnership and look forward to a positive outcome of this program. As we continue to strive and look for resources to enhance services, this program is yet another tool in our arsenal of public safety resources in keeping the citizens of the County safe.”

For your use, raw interview footage can be found at <https://vimeo.com/489588153/d03443dac1>.

The San Bernardino County Fire Protection District is an all-risk/full-service fire department committed to providing the highest level of service in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. At 20,160 square miles, San Bernardino County is the largest county in the continental United States and our jurisdiction protects 19,200 square miles; with diverse environments that stretch from the Los Angeles, Riverside and Orange County borders to our south and west, the Colorado River and Arizona to the east, to the Nevada State line and Kern and Inyo counties on the north. In the middle lies the snow-capped San Bernardino mountain range. We are the local fire department for over 60 communities, from rural towns to major cities, and all the unincorporated areas of the county. San Bernardino County Fire remains committed to providing Premier Fire, Rescue and EMS Services.