

# EL DORADO LAFCO

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## LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

### **The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)**

Although the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE, formerly known as CDF) is not a local entity, its activities, interaction and coordination with local agencies make it an integral partner when analyzing fire protection and emergency medical services in the county.

#### **Background**

CAL FIRE is primarily a wildland fire agency that began expanding into a multi-task force approximately 25 years ago. It is considered California's fire safety agency, providing fire prevention education, engineering and enforcement as well as coordinating fire suppression efforts with local governments. It protects all the land, property and citizens in the state, including the natural resources on 31 million acres of wildland and all of the citizens and structures within those acres. The cost of fighting fires is wholly borne by the state in areas designated as "State Responsibility Areas" (SRAs), regardless of whether these areas are also included within the service boundary of another fire suppression agency (the United States Forest Service, or USFS, is responsible for those lands deemed as FRA and local agencies are responsible for those remaining lands deemed as LRA).

The Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) routinely tasks CAL FIRE to manage and supplement the fire suppression capacities of other agencies during disasters by responding to emergencies in all 58 counties and 400 cities in California. It also regularly responds to jurisdictions outside its normal boundaries and occasionally outside the state. In addition to its fire suppression duties, it regulates and inspects timber harvesting on private lands.

#### **Mission**

CAL FIRE's website states that, "The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection protects the people of California from fires, responds to emergencies and protects and enhances forest, range and watershed values, providing social, economic, and environmental benefits to rural and urban citizens." Its strategic objectives are:

- Serve the People - Provide all hazard emergency response - fire, medical, rescue and disaster services.
- Protect California and the Public - Safeguard the public.
- Limit Impacts and Enhance California's Resources - Limit the damage caused by fires, disasters, environmental degradation, and related emergencies.

- Foster Cooperation - Cultivate mutually beneficial and cost-effective relationships with all levels of government and the private sector.
- Instill Organizational Excellence - Promote a culture of innovation, accountability, integrity, diversity, planning, workplace safety, and teamwork.

Departmental employees and equipment provide emergency response services for floods, earthquakes, and hazardous material spills, and other non-fire emergencies as part of the California Emergency Plan (last updated in 2009).

#### Fire Protection Program

The Fire Protection Program protects California's forest, brush, and grass covered wildlands from potential damages resulting from uncontrolled fire on private and state-owned lands and enhances the quality and usefulness of these resources. The program provides "basic fire protection" to SRA and other wildland areas; seeks to hold fire damage at or below the five-year average and minimize the impairment of economic, social and environmental benefits.

As noted above, CAL FIRE also provides fire protection services for some local governments on a cost reimbursement basis (referred to as "Schedule A" agreements). There are approximately 200 "Schedule A" agreements statewide, including the contract CAL FIRE has with Cameron Park CSD. "Schedule B" services for wildland fire are the backbone of the CAL FIRE and the work for which the department is most recognized.

#### Resource Management Program

California's state and private forest, range, watershed lands and urban forests provide multiple human and environmental benefits. The objective of the Resource Management Program is to maintain and enhance those benefits and to minimize damage to these resources from natural catastrophe and human misuse. Objectives are met by regulation of timber harvesting, technical assistance to non-industrial landowners, operation of state demonstration forests, operation of forest nurseries, vegetation management projects, and administration of federal forestry.

Approximately 10% of the agency's efforts are spent on range, watersheds, vegetation management, and fuels reduction. CAL FIRE uses prescribed fires and the chipper program to reduce fuels in the forest. CAL FIRE is responsible for law enforcement of timber-harvesting practices on private lands. CAL FIRE requires an approved Timber Harvesting Plan (THP) to outline tree harvest procedures on Timber Production Zone (TPZ) designated lands. Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs) are licensed to prepare the plans.

To further CAL FIRE's mission with resource management, it works with local resource conservation districts. Over the last ten years, CAL FIRE has annually treated 1,000 acres under the Vegetation Management Plan (VMP). VMP projects have been concentrated within urban interface areas due to land use patterns and increasing population densities.

**Amador-El Dorado Unit**

CAL FIRE is divided into two regions and 21 operational units and the Amador-El Dorado Unit (AEU) includes the counties of Amador, El Dorado, Alpine, Sacramento and portions of San Joaquin County. The entire AEU encompasses over 2.6 million acres, of which 1.05 million acres are classified SRA by the legislature. Under a Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement between CAL FIRE and USFS, the AEU has responsibility for 903,860 acres of Direct Protection Area (DPA) in all five counties. CAL FIRE's AEU DPA ranges from the low lying areas of Sacramento and San Joaquin counties to well above the 4,500-foot elevation in Amador and El Dorado Counties; the approximate resident population in this area is 2.3 million people.

Within El Dorado County, approximately 565,087 acres have an SRA designation. As noted earlier, the designation is important because the agency having jurisdiction for wildland fires is fiscally and operationally responsible for fires on its lands. Although the bulk of El Dorado County is either SRA or FRA, all fire agencies in El Dorado County work cooperatively together to suppress wildland fires. Reciprocal assistance provided by CAL FIRE would be to respond to non-wildland emergencies such as auto accidents, medical emergencies, rescues, hazardous materials emergencies and structure fires. Other services and programs offered locally by CAL FIRE are included in Appendix A.

**Infrastructure and Facilities**

The Amador-El Dorado Unit manages eight fire stations, the Cameron Park Fire Department, two conservation camps, two lookouts and three Amador Plan stations (during winter months) for the Amador County Fire Protection District. During the peak fire season, CAL FIRE staffs 13 State-funded fire engines, two Cameron Park Advanced Life Support (ALS) fire engines with one ALS Medic Unit, two fire-dozers, which require specially trained operators, and nine fire crews.

**Table 1: The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE): Infrastructure and Facilities**

Existing Facility	Address	Characteristics / County
Mt. Danaher Station	2840 Mt. Danaher Rd. Camino, CA 95709	Headquarters/Dispatch; El Dorado County
El Dorado Station	Pleasant Valley Road near Mother Lode Dr.	Station and auto shop; El Dorado County
Garden Valley Station	15061 Marshall Road Garden Valley, CA 95663	El Dorado County
Pilot Hill Station	4731 Pedro Hill Road Pilot Hill, CA 95664	El Dorado County
Zion Station	19597 Highway 88 Pine Grove, CA 95665	Amador County
Dew Drop Station		Amador County
Sutter Hill Station	11600 Highway 49 Sutter Creek, CA 95685	Warehouse and Service Center; Amador County
Pine Lodge Station	15035 Highway E-16 (Mt. Aukum Road) River Pines, CA 95675	Amador County
Station 89	2961 Alhambra Drive Cameron Park, CA 95682	Cameron Park CSD; El Dorado County
Station 88	3200 Country Club Drive Cameron Park, CA 95682	Cameron Park CSD; El Dorado County
Growlersburg Camp	15440 Longview Lane Georgetown, CA 95634	El Dorado County
Pine Grove Camp	13630 Aqueduct-Volcano Road, Pine Grove, 95665	Amador County
Emergency Command Center	2840 Mt. Danaher Rd. Camino, CA 95709	El Dorado County

All CAL FIRE stations in El Dorado County are closed in winter. If funding was allocated by local agencies or the County, CAL FIRE stations could remain open all year.

The statewide CAL FIRE training academy is located in the AEU Station at Ione. The CAL FIRE State Fire Training and Education Program is a statewide training program that emphasizes basic fire control, search and rescue, driving and engine maintenance, structure firefighting, auto extrication, communication and problem solving. Training for battalion chiefs, fire captains, fire apparatus engineers and fire fighters is performed in-house. CAL FIRE also participates in collaborative training efforts inside and outside the State.

CAL FIRE and the Eldorado National Forest operate a joint agency command center located at AEU's Camino Headquarters. In addition to dispatching all CAL FIRE, Eldorado National Forest and Tahoe Management Unit emergency incidents, this center provides emergency dispatch services to six local fire agencies in Amador County and ten of the west slope fire agencies and medic units in El Dorado County.

**Equipment and Vehicles**

CAL FIRE operates 13 engine companies, two “fire dozers,” nine fire crews, a mobile kitchen unit (MKU) and one mobile communications unit within AEU. Engines are staffed during fire season with a minimum of three firefighters.

**Personnel and Staffing**

The Amador-El Dorado Unit consists of 138 permanent and 48 seasonal employees. All stations are staffed with firefighters with a minimum EMT certification. The unit is further divided into two divisions and five battalions.

**Administration, Management, and Operations**

**Board of Directors**

The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection is a state-appointed body within the Department of Natural Resources. The Board is generally composed of nine members: five from the general public, three from the forest products industry, and one from the range-livestock industry. The Governor appoints all Board Members, and selects a Chairman. All appointments are subject to State Senate confirmation. Members generally serve four-year staggered terms.

The Board is responsible for developing the general forest policy of the State, determining the guidance policies of the Division of Forestry and Fire Protection, and representing the State's interest in federal forestland in California.

The “California State Firefighters Association” union represents most CAL FIRE employees.

**Funding and Budget**

The Amador-El Dorado Unit receives approximately \$18 million in state funds for normal operating expenditures and no additional funding due to emergencies, such as large fires similar to Angora in 2007. CAL FIRE is principally funded by the Legislature through the State's General Fund and partially funded through grants. According to previous AEU Chief Bill Holmes, CAL FIRE has little discretion over its budget. Timber harvests in state forests historically generate revenue for CAL FIRE, but that has not happened for years because of environmental issues.

CAL FIRE is the only state agency which has an emergency fund that is controlled by the State Department of Finance. The fund pays for extraordinary costs for wildland fire control such as aircraft costs, rental of private equipment and charges submitted to CAL FIRE by local fire protection agencies for providing fire fighting resources. Reimbursement to local agencies is made under the California Fire Assistance Agreement.

Budget decreases and loss of CAL FIRE firefighting resources have a significant impact on CAL FIRE services which thus impact local fire protection districts, especially local fire agencies that rely on CAL FIRE

support services and equipment. For Fiscal Year 2011-2012, Governor Brown had proposed realigning services by having more wildfires being handled by local agencies and distributing additional funds to offset the costs. This plan has been subsequently dropped, but it may resurface in subsequent years.

**Cooperative Agreements**

The California Master Mutual Aid Agreement and the California Master Mutual Aid Agreement Addendum outline the local mutual aid agreement in Amador and El Dorado Counties. Mutual aid includes CAL FIRE requesting resource and overhead assistance from other agencies during the initial period of any incident or CAL FIRE providing such assistance to another agency. There is no exchange of funds between departments.

A local agreement with AEU and local agencies allows for a six-hour free service period on wildland fires. This is a one-way agreement where CAL FIRE promises to pay local government fire agencies for their services. This is not normal procedure state wide, as CAL FIRE would not normally pay for resources and overhead from the local agency having jurisdiction when used on wildfires within their district. In addition, while Placerville would normally be an LRA, it is considered SRA since any fires within the city limits that get out of control would threaten the surrounding wildlands.

The California Fire Assistance Agreement (CFAA) specifies reimbursement for personnel, apparatus, and support equipment used for fire suppression assistance. The agreement includes CAL FIRE; OES; USFS, Pacific Southwest Region; United States Department of the Interior (USDI) Bureau of Land Management, California State Office; USDI National Park Service, Pacific West Region; and USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, California-Nevada Operations.

CAL FIRE has the ability, through Public Resources Code §§4142 and 4144, to contract with a local entity to provide their full fire, emergency medical services (EMS) and rescue services. CAL FIRE has several hundred of these cooperative agreements statewide. A local example of these is the Cameron Park Fire Department, the Amador Fire Protection District and the dispatch contracts for both El Dorado and Amador Counties where CAL FIRE provides a full range of services. CAL FIRE, as a division of the State, does not solicit "Schedule A" agreements, but responds to local agencies' requests for services. Cooperative agreements in which CAL FIRE decides to participate must be found to benefit CAL FIRE and meet their wildland fire protection mission standards. CAL FIRE evaluates fire suppression capabilities, equipment, and efficacy before entering into an agreement with another agency.

**Community Outreach and Involvement**

CAL FIRE participates in numerous local community groups and organizations as detailed above, including El Dorado County Fire Chiefs' Association, and its sub-committees, Tahoe Chief's Association, the various fire safe councils, TRPA, the EMS JPA for the Western Slope along with California Forest Stewardship Program CAL FIRE and UC Cooperative Extension.