



Ventura Training Center

Firefighter Training Program



For informational purposes
Information: (916) 445-4950

Ventura Training Center Fact Sheet

Ventura Training Center Overview

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), California Conservation Corps (CCC) and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) operate an enhanced firefighter training and certification program at the Ventura Training Center (VTC) in Camarillo.

Trainees are people on parole who have recently been part of a trained firefighting workforce housed in fire camps or institutional firehouses operated by CAL FIRE and CDCR.

VTC provides advanced firefighter training, certifications and job readiness support to create a pathway for former offenders to compete for entry-level firefighting jobs with state, federal and local agencies. A maximum of 80 parolee participants are housed at VTC at any one time.

VTC participants are trained and available to assist in fire suppression, emergency incident response and to perform fire prevention and resource management work.

Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) counselors assist participants in developing the skills needed for successful reintegration into the community. Services include employment skill assessments, money management, technology training, tutoring, career planning, and searching and applying for jobs.

Training and certification is available at VTC for up to 20 traditional CCC Corpsmembers, who are housed at their camp adjacent to VTC. Training consists of Phase 2 of the program, which entails firefighter training taught by CAL FIRE, resulting in industry-recognized certifications.

In January 2020, VTC expanded eligibility to include youthful offenders (age 18-25) who served at the Pine Grove Youth Conservation Camp, a Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)/CAL FIRE program. Eligibility requirements, pay and benefits are identical to parolee participants. In the case of participants released to probation supervision, CDCR will coordinate with Probation Departments in each participant's sentencing county to obtain approval for transfer to Ventura County. Participants on probation will be supervised by Ventura County Probation with assistance from VTC's Parole Agents.

CAL FIRE and DAPO have staff on-site. ARC provides on-site supervision during off-hours. CAL FIRE contracts with a private security service to provide 24-hour site management.

Selection Criteria

Eligible participants must have served previously in a CAL FIRE/CDCR Conservation Camp, known as a fire camp, or at an institutional firehouse, while incarcerated. They will have been released to parole supervision no more than 90 days before the beginning of a VTC cohort and have at least 18

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California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)
California Conservation Corps (CCC)
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR)
Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC)*



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months remaining on their parole supervision term. Applicants are not eligible if they were convicted of sexual offenses or arson, or have any history of escape with force or violence.

Standards for selection and ongoing performance at VTC are higher than those for offenders released to traditional parole supervision. Each candidate is carefully screened and must be recommended by a CAL FIRE Division Chief in consultation with CDCR fire camp staff, or by an institutional fire chief. They must have no serious rules violations while serving at camp or in a firehouse, no conditions of parole that would restrict their participation in the program, and be in good physical and mental health to withstand the rigors of the program.

Participants will be removed at any time if CAL FIRE and CDCR believes their performance level is not acceptable. Random drug tests may be administered to participants, and evening curfews are in place. Just one rules violation can result in removal from the program and potential parole revocation.

Program

The program runs a total of 18 months and is divided into three phases of training.

- **Phase 1:** Orientation and basic training for three months, including reentry planning, life skills training, job skills readiness, any required treatment and educational programs, basic forestry, and firefighting courses.
- **Phase 2:** Three months of firefighter training, completing advanced, comprehensive industry firefighter courses and certifications not previously obtainable as a member of a Conservation Camp. Advanced life skills training, rehabilitative support services, education and reentry.
- **Phase 3:** Participants receive a Type I Fire Crew assignment for 12 months, receiving in-service training and well as fuels reduction and community service project work when not responding to fires and other types of emergencies.

Participants who successfully complete the program will be qualified to apply for entry-level firefighting jobs with local, state, and federal agencies. Employment opportunities are available through Type 1 Interagency Hand Crews used during fire suppression such as those supported by the United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other government agencies, private contractors, and contract county crews.

Cost

Participants receive a stipend of \$1,905 for each month they are fully enrolled in the program, plus Emergency Excess Time if a participant serves on an emergency response project and performs more than eight hours of covered program activities on that day.

CAL FIRE, CCC and CDCR received a total of \$7.7 million from the General Fund in Fiscal Year 2018-19 to activate VTC, and have requested \$6.3 million ongoing from the General Fund to operate VTC. Additionally, CAL FIRE received \$18.9 million from the 2018-19 General Fund for necessary improvements and new construction.

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