

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION HAND CREWS

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY & FIRE PROTECTION

HAND CREW PROGRAM



In 1946, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) began a partnership with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to utilize wards and inmates to aid in its efforts to suppress wildfires throughout the state. These wards and inmates, collectively referred to as CDCR hand crews, respond to emergency incidents year-round.

The CDCR hand crew's primary responsibility while assigned to a wildfire is constructing firelines with chainsaws and hand tools. This is done by removing vegetation to bare mineral soil or burning vegetation with a drip torch ahead of the oncoming fire. CDCR hand crews are also used to defend structures during a fire.

CDCR hand crews are also available to assist in efforts to contain and mitigate any of California's major disasters, including floods, earthquakes, heavy snow, and search and rescue operations.

When not assigned to a wildfire or emergency incident, the primary mission of the CDCR hand crews is fuel reduction and vegetation management project work. CDCR hand crews also conduct labor-intensive public land work, including maintaining levees for flood prevention; maintaining local, state and federal park infrastructure; clearing debris from streams; removing roadside litter; constructing hiking trails; and providing many other important community services.

CDCR HAND CREW DETAILS

- Staffing: 1 CAL FIRE Captain, 12-17 inmate/ward firefighters.



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