



**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION
OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL
STATE FIRE TRAINING**

P.O. Box 944246
SACRAMENTO, CA 94244-2460
(916) 902-9738
Website: www.fire.ca.gov



Date: October 11, 2024

To: Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee
State Board of Fire Services

From: Caryn Petty, Statewide Academy Coordinator

SUBJECT/AGENDA ACTION ITEM:

Merced College, Accredited Regional Training (ARTP) Conditional Accreditation

Recommended Actions:

Recommend Merced College be provided an Accredited Regional Training (ARTP) Conditional Accreditation in the State Fire Training (SFT) system for a period of one (1) year.

Background Information:

A Conditional Accreditation Site Evaluation was conducted on May 28, 2024, at the Merced College campus at 5200 North Lake Road in Merced, CA. The Evaluation was conducted by Deputy State Fire Marshal III (Specialist) Caryn Petty, State Fire Training, with Chief Donnie Roe serving as site host and representative. The Site Team consisted of Chief Peter Cacossa, Fresno City College, representing the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee (California Fire Technology Directors Association); Battalion Chief Chad Tucker, Fresno Fire Department, representing the Accredited Academies; Captain Tanisha Tucker, Oakland Fire Department, representing the Accredited Academies; and Chief Justin Chaplin, CAL FIRE, representing the Accredited Academies. Other dignitaries in attendance included Dean Valarie Albano.

The Merced College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) was reviewed and discussed, with requirements for supplemental documentation noted. Said documentation has since been received and has met the requirements as set forth by State Fire Training policies and procedures. The review of the SAR was followed by an evaluation of all classrooms and training facilities with opportunity to review training course records and equipment compliment.

Analysis/Summary of Issue:

An evaluation of the training facilities indicated sufficient classroom space with a fully functioning and compliant training facility complete with all necessary props, tools, equipment, and vehicles to accommodate a fire academy training program. The College will utilize the Fire Fighter (2019) curriculum and possesses all necessary materials for successful Certification Examination delivery. The training grounds exhibit appropriate California Fire Code-compliant classrooms equipped with enhanced audio/visual equipment and necessary learning aids. All Academy cadets will be provided sufficient study materials, devices, and equipment for applicable success within the Academy training. Several Registered Instructors and Evaluators participate in the Academy and Certification Exam delivery making the entity self-sustaining, and the College will focus on hosting additional State Fire Training courses in conjunction with cooperating and neighboring agencies. All student records will be maintained in a compliant and confidential manner in accordance with State Fire Training requirements.

The Merced College academy is to be conducted at various sites in the region with instructional delivery to be conducted at the main campus and off-site at the Merced Fire Department and Merced County/Castle Training Center.

Area(s) of focus for growth and improvement:

- Completion of all items noted in the Conditional Accreditation document [attached]
- Consistent participation at technology directors' meetings is recommended to continue fostering the growing relationships in the region for enhanced networking and partnership opportunities.
- Ongoing outreach via fire camps and community events is recommended for continued diversifications efforts.

Program coordinators recognize the underserved student and small and midsized agency populations in the region and have an expressed desire to bridge the regional fire service training and education gap. This focus on providing education for all students is indicative of the training devotion serving as the foundation of the proposed program. Coordination personnel possess an energetic approach to program development with a strong focus on maintaining diversified student populations while adhering to the standards set forth by State Fire Training. The College is proactively building cooperative relationships founded on producing strong, well-rounded fire service professionals.

In compliance with the California Code of Regulations, Title 19, and the *SFT Procedures Manual*, Accreditation Process, Section 3.1.6(E), a one-year Conditional Accreditation may be granted in lieu of a full three-year Initial Accreditation. This will provide for continued growth and development of the Merced College ARTP and fostering of necessary regional relationships. Merced College will be revisited in Fall 2025 for ARTP review and consideration for an Initial Accreditation period of three (3) years.

State Fire Training recommends continued recognition of Merced College as an Accredited Regional Training Program in the State Fire Training system for an Initial Accreditation period of one (1) year pending reevaluation in 2025.

[Attachment: Merced College ARTP Conditional Accreditation 2024]



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Recommended Actions:

Recommend Merced College be provided an Accredited Regional Training (ARTP) Conditional Accreditation in the State Fire Training (SFT) system for a period of one (1) year.

Background Information:

Per the Merced College Accredited Regional Training Program (ARTP) Site Evaluation conducted May 28, 2024, the following document details the requirements of the one-year Conditional Accreditation as set forth by State Fire Training (SFT). A thorough review of the Merced College Fire Fighter Academy served as the basis for the program review.

Analysis/Summary of Issue:

Conditional Accreditation requires the following items be complete by September 1, 2025, to ensure compliance with State Fire Training regulatory statute and established procedures (California Code of Regulations, Title 19, and the *SFT Procedures Manual*, Accreditation Process, Section 3.1.6(E)).

- ❑ An updated Self-Assessment Report (SAR) shall be drafted and submitted to SFT no later than September 1, 2025, detailing program progress with the items noted during the May 28, 2024, Site Evaluation. This may build upon the previously submitted SAR but should clearly identify any/all changes, progress, issues, challenges, or other items necessary for complete review of the proposed ARTP.

- ❑ SFT requires a complete list of procured academy program design items including, but not limited to, equipment, apparatus, tools, instructional materials, etc. This shall comply with the Fire Fighter 1 Academy equipment and supplies list(s) in adherence with the *SFT Procedures Manual*, IFSAC/Pro Board, and the CCR, Title 19.
- ❑ Merced College shall provide SFT with a complete training budget and business plan including current and projected expenditures, allotted program funding, grant funding, etc. The provided documentation shall detail the projected budget for 2025-2028 accreditation cycle as well as the program development funding to date.
- ❑ Merced College shall provide SFT the complete and finalized ARTP Fire Fighter 1 Academy curriculum. This shall include complete course outlines, student and instructor manuals, and all supplemental student materials.
 - This shall include any/all amendments to the provided 2024 SAR including prerequisite course(s) and application/selection processes.
- ❑ Merced College shall host or co-host no less than two (2) SFT courses by August 2025. This shall include, at minimum, one (1) California Fire Service Training and Education System (CFSTES) and one (1) Fire Service Training and Education Program (FSTEP). These courses may draw from the larger SFT course catalog and need not be restricted to the entry-level Fire Fighter 1 curriculum. It is proposed that Merced College coordinate with neighboring ARTPs and agencies to identify curriculum that is needed by the region (Company Officer, Driver/Operator, Instructor 1/2, etc.).
- ❑ Merced College shall demonstrate active recruitment of diversified Registered Instructors and Lead/Skills Evaluators that is reflective of the region and the College's neighboring fire agencies.
- ❑ Merced College shall increase its current Confined Space Rescue Awareness (CSRA) Registered Instructor pool to no less than three (3) instructors.
- ❑ Merced College shall provide a complete report detailing the staffing and administrative support necessary program success. Any deficiencies shall be identified with a notated plan for correction.
 - Detail appropriate and adequate clerical and administrative personnel necessary to support complete delivery of the Fire Fighter Academy. Because the current clerical staff member may be assigned to other programs, the College shall detail the means in which appropriate clerical and administrative support will be attained for the ARTP. Provide details regarding succession planning, hiring of additional support staff, etc.
 - Detail appropriate and adequate full-time Fire Science Technology and Academy coordination personnel. Individual roles and responsibilities shall be identified with information supportive of the complete oversight of the programs. Full-time instructors, interim or adjunct assignments, and/or part-time personnel are not an appropriate means of ARTP oversight.
 - Detail current Fire Science Technology Program instructional staff, full- and part-time. The ARTP will be operating separately from the Fire Science program and appropriate and adequate staffing shall be designated for each. While some crossover is permitted, and encouraged, it is not the intent of the ARTP to serve in multiple College instructional roles.

- Merced College shall provide a complete list of Fire Fighter Academy instructors and their SFT Registered Instructor qualifications. The list shall identify adequate staffing for Academy curriculum delivery with contingency plans for substitute instructors and/or schedule flexibility should there be an absence, vacancy, etc.
- Merced College shall provide a complete list of Registered Lead and Skills Evaluators. This list shall designate adequate staffing for capstone IFSAC/Pro Board Fire Fighter Certification Exam with a contingency plan should there be an absence, vacancy, etc.
- Merced College shall convene a Fire Advisory Committee meeting bi-annually during the Conditional Accreditation period and provide documented meeting minutes to SFT upon Site Re-Evaluation. This Committee shall be comprised of college administration/management and other appropriate staff, Program staff and instructors, regional entities, and others as appropriate, to identify the training and educational needs within the Fire Science Program, Fire Fighter Academy, and any/all collaborative training ventures.
- Merced College shall demonstrate active participation in the greater SFT system by maintaining active correspondence with SFT personnel and its designated liaison(s), attend regional training officer and CFTDA quarterly meetings, and work to diligently adhere to the requirements.

The Merced College Fire Fighter Academy will be recommended for a one-year Conditional Accreditation to the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee (STEAC) in October 2024 and the Statewide Board of Fire Service in November 2024. Upon review and approval by these governing bodies, continued recognition of Merced College in the SFT system is contingent upon compliance with the requirements. Any failure to comply may result in revocation of the Conditional Accreditation.