



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

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**Date:** October 10, 2025

**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) Initial Accreditation

**Recommended Actions:**

Recommend Merced College be provided an Accredited Regional Training (ARTP) Initial Accreditation in the State Fire Training (SFT) system for a period of three (3) years.

**Background Information:**

An Initial Accreditation Site Evaluation was conducted on August 21, 2025, at the Merced College campus 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 Justin Chaplin, CAL FIRE, Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee and Accredited Academies; and Chief Peter Cacossa, Fresno City College, representing the Accredited Academies and the California Fire Technology Directors Association. Other dignitaries in attendance included Dean of Allied Health and Public Safety Joe Serena and Academy Coordinator Chad Englert.

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 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 an opportunity to review training course records and equipment complement.

**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. Merced College utilizes 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

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enhanced audio/visual equipment and necessary learning aids. All academy cadets are provided with 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 program self-sustained. The College will focus on hosting additional registered SFT courses in conjunction with cooperating and neighboring agencies. All student records are maintained in a compliant and confidential manner in accordance with SFT 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:

- Consistent participation at California Fire Technology Director Association's meetings is recommended to continue fostering the growing relationships in the region for enhanced networking and partnership opportunities.
- Given the regional usage of the shared sites, improved equipment and burn logs shall be established and maintained in accordance with SFT and NFPA requirements. At no time shall the ARTP students lack site access per scheduling conflicts.
- The current staffing is at its capacity with workloads beyond the Academy delivery that would be offset with additional resources and personnel. The College has identified a specific need for dedicated personnel to offset the workload of existing staff and ensure the thorough delivery of the Academy free of peripheral assignments, tasks, and duties. Exploration of additional clerical staff designations is strongly recommended.
- The program may benefit from utilization of Distance Education delivery of SFT courses while garnering students from throughout the State. As an ARTP, this is an available option.
- The program shall continue to explore outreach and recruitment opportunities for expanded diversification of the instructor cadre roster. Ongoing outreach via fire camps and community events is recommended for continued diversifications efforts.

Program coordinators recognize the underserved student and small, mid-sized 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 *State Fire Training Procedures Manual*, Accreditation Process, Section 3.1.6(E), a one-year Conditional Accreditation was granted in 2024 in lieu of a full Initial Accreditation. Following the successful completion of program development and satisfaction of the Conditional Accreditation requirements set forth in 2024, State Fire Training recommends recognition of Merced College as an Accredited Regional Training Program for an Initial Accreditation period of three (3) years.