

- an agreement, with a local, state, or federal agency or qualified nonprofit organization (PRC § 4953).
- b) Conservation Camp inmates and wards may be utilized in the rescue of lost or injured persons, the saving of life, and the protection of property, watershed revegetation, and work necessary to prevent flood damage to land after a fire (PRC § 4957).
 - c) Conservation Camp inmates and wards may perform work to prevent flood damage to land resulting from levee breaks or overflows (PRC § 4958).
- 2) Establishes the Division of Apprenticeship Standards within the California Apprenticeship Council (Division) (Labor Code (LAB) § 3070). The Division shall issue rules and regulations which establish standards for firefighter occupations, as those occupations are submitted by the California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee (CAL-JAC) (PRC § 3071).

PROPOSED LAW

This bill would:

- 1) Establish the Formerly Incarcerated Firefighter Certificate and Employment Program:
 - a) Require the Department, on and after July 1, 2027, and in partnership with CDCR and the CCC, implement a standardized process to ensure that all eligible individuals receive official written certification, reflective of the training completed in a Department firefighting training camp while incarcerated.
 - b) Require the certificate to include information regarding the individual's training towards meeting the minimum requirements for Fire Fighter I Classification or Forestry Technician Classification.
- 2) Require the Department, on and after January 1, 2028, to award hiring preference to qualified formerly incarcerated individuals under Category Placement 2.
- 3) Specify that nothing precludes the Department from placing a formerly incarcerated person in a higher category for hiring.
- 4) Specify that nothing precludes agencies with wildland management responsibilities from establishing similar hiring pathways.
- 5) Define the term "qualified formerly incarcerated individual."
- 6) Authorize the Department, if it establishes new entry level classifications, to provide hiring preference analogous to the process described in this bill.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT

According to the author, "AB 2483 is a restorative justice measure that creates a real path to employment for formerly incarcerated individuals who trained and served in California's fire camps. Despite gaining hands-on experience fighting wildfires alongside [the Department], these individuals are often released without certification and shut out of the very workforce they helped sustain.

“By requiring [the Department] and CDCR to issue formal certification and prioritizing the hiring of qualified former fire camp participants, AB 2483 invests in rehabilitation, reduces recidivism, strengthens our firefighting workforce, and promotes equity by ensuring that those most impacted by the justice system have the opportunity to serve their communities with dignity.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

None received.

COMMENTS

This bill is double-referred. This committee is the first committee of referral. Elements of this bill under the jurisdiction of the Senate Labor, Public Employment, and Retirement Committee are included here for context and completeness only.

On-the-job training for in-demand skills... To participate in the Conservation Camp program, incarcerated individuals must pass a physical fitness test and the Department’s Firefighter Training (FFT) program – four days of classroom training and four days of field training. Program participants become certified wildland firefighters. Some prisons have partnerships with community colleges, providing correspondence courses and other opportunities. Sonora County’s Columbia College, for example, offers a fire science certification course. Fire crew members can earn a certificate that transfers their credits to a two- or four-year program after release.

...does not always transfer to callbacks. A 2003 study found that formerly incarcerated people are one-half to one-third as likely to receive callbacks from employers.¹ In 2018, California made it illegal for employers with five or more employees to inquire about the conviction history of a job candidate until a conditional job offer has been made (AB 1008 (McCarty, Chapter 789, Statutes of 2017)).

Appropriate categories for earned experience. Entry-level firefighters at the Department are granted the civil service classification of Fire Fighter I. Successful applicants to the Department’s Fire Fighter I classification are placed into one of four categories depending on their experiences:

Category 0: The applicant has returnee rights to a Department Unit.

Category 1: The applicant is considered "fully trained" and has provided an acceptable document showing completion of all of the required training.

Category 2: The applicant is considered "partially trained" and has provided an acceptable document showing completion of at least one of the required trainings, or one of the desirable trainings.

Category 3: The applicant has not provided acceptable documentation for any of the required trainings, or desirable trainings.

After AB 1008 was enacted, formerly incarcerated hand crew members struggled to demonstrate their experience without pre-emptively disclosing their conviction history.

¹ Pager, Devah. 2003. “The Mark of a Criminal Record.” American Journal of Sociology 108(5): 937–75.

By receiving a certification from the Department, they can be appropriately placed into the Category 2 placement as they were prior to AB 1008.

Nuances of civil service hiring. The Labor, Public Employment, and Retirement Committee may wish to address concerns regarding hiring preferences for permanent, civil service classifications.

Related Legislation

AB 1380 (Elhawary, 2025) would have required the Department to implement a standardized process to ensure that all individuals who complete the Department's FFT training while incarcerated receive official written certification. The bill would also require the Department to track and report the outcomes of the certification program and report annually to the Legislature. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 409 (Weber, 2023) would have required the Department to establish rules that provide eligibility priority rankings for formerly incarcerated individuals who earned certifications through the California Conservation Camp program. This bill was held in the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.

AB 1908 (Maienschein, 2022) would have required a formerly incarcerated individual who completed the California Conservation Camp program to be eligible for a firefighter certificate provided by the Department. This bill was held in the Assembly Public Safety Committee.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS: none

SUPPORT

Forestry Fire and Recruitment Program (co-sponsor)
Michelson Center for Public Policy (co-sponsor)
Prosecutors Alliance Action (co-sponsor)
California Association of Local Conservation Corps
Center for Employment Opportunities
Redefine Alliance
Vera Institute of Justice

OPPOSITION

None received

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