

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION  
DELTA FIRE CAMP  
2008-2009 Solano Grand Jury Report

## REASON FOR INSPECTION

California Penal Code section §919 Section (b) provides: "The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." Pursuant to the statute, the 2008-2009 Grand Jury inspected the Delta Fire Camp.

## GRAND JURY ACTIONS

- Interviewed management and staff
- Inspected and toured the fire camp
- Reviewed maintenance procedures of equipment
- Spoke to inmates

## BACKGROUND / SUMMARY

The Delta Fire Camp was established in 1998 and is located on 23 acres in the rural area of Solano County on Lambie Road. The camp is a collaborative effort between the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the California Department of Forestry (CDF). The camp is one of 24 in the state of California, 18 of which are located in Northern California. Delta is an all-adult male camp. The inmates are classified level one and level two, minimum security risk. The capacity is 135. At the present time, there are 132 inmates at the camp. Inmate/Workers are paid on a scale that relates to their job description; \$1.45 a day for laborers to \$3.90 a day for one lead cooks. When the inmates are employed under emergency conditions such as fire and flood, they are paid at the rate of \$1.00 an hour.

At the time of this inspection, the intersection of Highway 12 and Lambie Road, which is the main access to the Camp, had no left hand turn lane onto Lambie Road or a merge lane from Lambie Road onto Highway 12. This is a serious safety issue for the CDF trucks that come and go from the camp and an issue of safety for the public that drive on Highway 12.

The Grand Jury found the Camp to be in good condition. The grounds and buildings were well groomed under the supervision of the Correctional Lieutenant and the CAL-FIRE Division and Battalion Chiefs. The departments have formed a working relationship that is beneficial to the taxpayers of California. Inmates are taught useful skills that are transferable to employment in the community upon their release or parole. Inmates who participate in the camp program, must be physically fit, cannot have more than 7 years on their sentence, nor can they have been convicted of any capital crimes, sex crimes or domestic violence. After meeting these requirements each inmate must meet CAL-FIRES' requirement of 67 hours of training which is the same training that an entry-level fire fighter receives.

During their stay at the Camp, inmates must undergo continuous training in addition to the performance of their other duties. Continuous training helps to maintain the high standards of safety for the inmates and Cal-fire personnel. The main purpose of the Camp is to fight fires. During 2007, the average fire hours logged per fire crew was 9,121. There are 15 fire crews at Delta Camp. During 2008, the number of fire hours logged increased to approximately 9,261. Delta Camp crews maintain and repair all of their equipment.

When not assigned to emergency response or pre-fire project work, crews conduct labor-intensive work on public land. Fire crews conduct hazardous fuel reduction projects in support of the state and federal fire plan. Fire crews also perform repair and maintenance of levees for flood prevention, maintenance of local, state and federal park infrastructures, clearing debris from streams, removing roadside litter, constructing hiking trails and providing many other important community services. This service has saved Solano County in excess of \$880,000. This service is of great value to the taxpayers of the county.

While housed at this facility inmates are able to obtain their GED or continue their education and receive an AA degree from Feather River College. During 2008, one inmate has graduated and received his degree.

The correctional administration holds each inmate responsible to maintain his clothing. Appropriate action is taken if any article of clothing appears to have been intentionally destroyed. The cost of that article is taken from the inmate's earnings upon parole or release. Inmates understand that issued clothing is the property of the state and that it is the responsibility of each inmate to take care of the clothing issued to them.

Delta Camp is understaffed by two correctional staff positions. This results in only one officer being assigned between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. This single officer is responsible for the whole camp during the graveyard shift, which is a concern to administrative staff.

The issue of inmate grooming standards was addressed by administrative staff. The Grand Jury was informed that standards involving haircuts and facial hair were dropped as a result of a successful inmate lawsuit, which involved all prisons in the California system including the Fire Camps. Excessive hair length and facial hair pose a hazard when fighting fires.

Delta Camp staff has indicated that Camp security would be enhanced with the addition of cameras on the perimeter of the camp. Contraband from outside the Camp has been left along the camp perimeter for pick up by inmates.

Camp staff also expressed concern regarding the age of the equipment used by CAL- FIRE. Trucks are not routinely replaced after being in use for long periods of time nor are the trucks designed for the off-road conditions they are required to operate within.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding 1** - The shortage of correctional officers at Delta camp is an issue that can affect officer and inmate safety.

**Recommendation 1**- To enhance officer and inmate safety, Delta Camp should have the two open correctional officers positions filled as soon as possible.

**Finding 2**- The absence of security cameras around the perimeter of Delta Camp poses a serious security issue.

**Recommendation 2**-- Security cameras should be installed on the perimeters and inside the camp to discourage the introduction of contraband.

**Finding 3**- The current absence of grooming standards for inmates poses a safety hazard to inmates and staff while fighting fires.

**Recommendation 3-** CDCR and CAL-Fire should lobby the legislature to apply a separate set of regulations governing grooming standards for inmates employed at fire camps.

**Finding 4 -** The design of the intersection of Highway 12 and Lambie Road poses a serious safety problem.

**Recommendation 4-** The intersection should include a turn lane onto Lambie Road from East bound Highway 12 along with a lane to accelerate onto and merge in the West Bound Highway 12.

**Finding 5-** Fire fighting is a hazardous activity that requires modern well-maintained equipment. Much of the equipment used at Delta Camp was found to be antiquated, have excessive mileage and not designed for off-road use. These vehicles have had to operate in some very rugged terrain, as well as operating for thousands of miles on highways.

**Recommendation 5 -** When equipment used by CAL-FIRE becomes outmoded to the point that it becomes a danger for use on the fire line, it should be replaced. CAL-FIRE equipment should be designed to fit the terrain encountered by these firefighters, which includes both on and off-road conditions.

#### COMMENTS

The Grand Jury has noted that more modern equipment is required at Delta Camp. However, it should be noted that the inmate maintenance staff and supervisors are very diligent and successful in their efforts to keep the equipment in good working order.

Delta Camp is well run by the combined staff of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and Cal Fire. They have a good working relationship and are very conscientious about the welfare of each other and welfare of the inmates, but more importantly, they take seriously their duty to the citizens of the State of California and County of Solano.

#### RESPONDING AND AFFECTED AGENCIES

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation  
California Department of Forestry  
Solano Transportation Authority  
California Department of Transportation

#### COURTESY COPIES

California State 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly District  
California State 5<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District  
Solano County Board of Supervisors  
Solano County Administrator  
Benicia City Council  
Dixon City Council  
Fairfield City Council  
Suisun City City Council  
Rio Vista City Council  
Vacaville City Council  
Vallejo City Council