

## KEY CONTACTS PROGRAM

0510.2

(No. 5 October 2012)

The Department recognizes the importance of maintaining good working relationships with elected officials. It is essential that elected officials be kept informed on issues facing the Department and also have easily available avenues to access information on incidents and other issues that affect their constituents. The Office of Legislation remains responsible for interfacing with elected officials and their staff. However, the Key Contacts Program is intended to augment the activities in Sacramento with direct contact at the Unit level. Specifically the key contact program will:

- Enhance, where necessary, the frequency of contact between elected officials or their staff and the Units.
- Identify areas of interest in the Department's activities for elected officials.
- Enhance the dialogue between the Department and elected officials on all issues faced by the Department, such as the impact of the State budget, and changes in key policy areas, such as timber harvesting.
- Improve the information flow between the Office of Legislation and Units.
- Build upon existing local networks between Units and local elected officials to improve information flow during major incidents or significant policy changes (such as the implementation of new legislation).

### Legislative Activity Reporting

- The Office of Legislation is responsible for coordinating the Key Contact Program. Each unit will designate one person to be the Key Contact Coordinator for their Unit.
- Unit chiefs (or their designated key contact person) will provide quarterly updates on contacts with State elected officials or their staff to the Office of Legislation.
- The Office of Legislation will provide support as needed for (1) information on key issues in the State Legislature, (2) statewide issues for the Department, and (3) guidance on key legislation. The Deputy Director, or other staff members, will be available to support the efforts in the Unit as needed.

### Contact with Legislators and Staff

- State Elected Officials. Each Unit Coordinator for the Key Contact Program will make contact with each of the district offices for their Assembly and Senate member in their Unit. Where an elected official's district crosses more than one Unit, the Key Contact Coordinators should work together to effectively and efficiently manage the district between the Units. The Office of Legislation can assist with identifying representatives for each Unit.

- Federal / Local Officials. Units are encouraged to include local elected officials, as well as federal elected officials, in their Key Contact Program.
- Contacting Elected Officials and Their District Offices. The Key Contact Program Coordinator will make contact with each district office at least once a quarter.
  - If a meeting is scheduled with a State or federal elected official, the Office of Legislation should be informed in advance. This is to keep the Natural Resources Agency and the Governor's Office abreast of meetings.
  - Every effort should be made to respond to concerns and questions raised by the officials and their staff during the contact. If appropriate, assistance in responding to constituent concerns regarding Department operations should be provided.
  - Visits to facilities, exercises, incidents, and other opportunities to education officials and their staff are encouraged. However, Unit Chiefs should exercise discretion, particularly during election periods, to ensure that State facilities and employees are not perceived to be endorsing any candidate or position. Where concerns arise, contact the Office of Legislation for guidance.
- Discussions Concerning State Level-Legislation. Field personnel may be approached and asked to provide professional expertise on proposed State legislation. In general, all requests of this nature should be forwarded to the Office of Legislation for response. The Department does not publically comment on bills unless specifically authorized by the Governor's Office.
  - Nothing in this policy precludes an employee from exercising his/her right as a private citizen to contact an elected official to discuss legislation. However, the employee shall make it clear, should they make such an individual contact, that they are not representing the Department or the Department's position on a legislative issue. **See Section 0510.1, Legislative Activity and Representation.**
- Reporting. As discussed above, any meeting with a State elected official will be reported in advance to the deputy director.
  - At the end of each quarter, each unit Key Contact Coordinator will submit a short report of key visits or significant contacts. Meet and greet contacts do not need to be reported.
  - Significant issues or concerns should be immediately reported to the Office of Legislation.

## Cooperative Agreements

For units in which there are local government cooperative agreements in place, coordination between the Office of Legislation and the Key Contact Coordinator will include some activities related to the local government agreement. In order to manage

the dual role of these CAL FIRE employees as it relates to State elected officials, the following should be observed:

- When visiting a State elected official on behalf of a local government entity, discretion should be used on issues that may overlap or conflict with the Administration, particularly when in CAL FIRE uniform.
- Meetings with State elected officials should be reported through the above process to keep the Deputy Director of Legislation informed.

The Office of Legislation is available to provide support and guidance on any issue or concern for a Unit Chief with a local government agreement.

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