

Connections



Providing resources and information from Management Services in support of the Department's mission.

Who's who in Management Services?



Kathy Doberneck
Acctg. Administrator I
(Supervisor)

Conflict of Interest and Your Duty to File

Sherry Mark, Policy and Project Services, Labor and Human Resource Management

In Plato's great classic, *The Republic*, one of the stories illustrates an ideal society that has removed potential "conflicts of interests." In the story, Socrates, Plato's primary protagonist, explains that if "rulers" are allowed to attain private property, they will eventually exploit this privilege for their own gain at the expense of the "good of society."

Now, fast forward from ancient Athens (sorry, no time to preview what came after *The Republic*) to the present, and [The Fair Political Practices Commission \(FPPC\)](#). The FPPC mandates, while not based on Athenian practice, are the direct result of the Political Reform Act of 1974. The Act was designed to assure that state and local government serve all citizens equally, without regard to status or wealth. It is not as idealized as Plato's *Republic*, but the notion is not new. Society is a democracy which generates competition, and there will always be family, political, and economic issues, and therefore, conflicts of interest.

Among its many responsibilities, the FPPC regulates financial conflicts of interest. A Conflict of Interest (COI) is defined as a situation in which a public official's decisions are influenced by the official's personal interests. In complying with FPPC regulations, CAL FIRE employees in designated COI positions must file their annual Statement of Economic Interests (FPPC Form 700) with the Policy and Projects Services Unit (PPS) in Labor and Human Resource Management by March 1 of each year.

Imagine Socrates enjoying this short dialogue with his most famous student, "Did you turn in your Form 700 yet?" Plato replies, "Oh yes, I did get that reminder notice from PPS. I'll do that now because

it's my duty to file." While not a Socratic dialogue, it does function as a reminder of the importance of filing duties and deadlines.

In addition to the annual filing requirement, all officers, employees, and consultants who are required to file an FPPC Form 700 must complete an orientation training course on ethics every two years. This requirement is a result of [Assembly Bill 3022](#), which revised Government Code, Sections 11146 (b) and 11146. 3. An ethics training course is available for CAL FIRE employees by the Attorney General's Office at www.caag.state.ca.us/ethics/. This free training is available via an interactive program developed by both the Attorney General's Office and the FPPC. Upon completion of the ethics training employees may print a certificate of completion to meet the record-keeping requirements mandated by law.

For more information on the COI Program or Ethics Training, please visit [Labor and Human Resource Management](#) on the CAL FIRE Intranet under [Conflict-of-Interest](#).

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Connecting with Karen Cohen

Tony Favro, Program Accountability

Karen Cohen has one of the more challenging jobs out there. “The day to day drama in EEO can be overwhelming at times,” says Karen, Chief of CAL FIRE’s Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program. “EEO issues are difficult and complex, and sometimes the discrimination complaints are painful, from the perspective of the complainant, respondent, and witnesses.” Add to that the changing face of CAL FIRE and the generational differences that we, like so many other departments, face, and Karen’s job can be quite daunting at times.

Despite the challenges, Karen enjoys the interaction with employees and management. And though typically no one is entirely satisfied with the outcome of investigations, that is a sign that she has maintained impartiality. “People expect EEO to be their advocate,” she says, “but our job is to act as a neutral party with complaints and investigations.” That creates a certain amount of frustration, but Karen chooses to focus on the positive. “In most cases, I believe that I have helped both the employees and CAL FIRE with addressing the problems and with resolving them,” she says. “I also work with a wonderful group of employees. I call them the dream team. They are dedicated hard workers who get the job done. It is the best group of employees that I have worked with in state service.”

The primary goal of the EEO Program is to ensure that CAL FIRE is in compliance with federal and state law and the rules of the State Personnel Board. Karen and her staff work hard to ensure compliance by developing and implementing policies and procedures, managing and conducting discrimination complaints, and providing advice and consultation to management and represented employees. The EEO Office also selects and develops EEO training, responds to discrimination complaints filed with control agencies, and prepares reports such as the Annual Workforce Analysis and the Language Survey. Throughout all of this, Karen works closely with the Legal Office, Human Resources, and Labor Relations on many of the issues that overlap between those programs and hers.

“There is never a dull moment in EEO,” says Karen, and in the face some of the difficult issues that she handles, she tries to maintain a healthy perspective on EEO matters. Having a sense of humor is helpful, she explains, as is “stepping back” to avoid emotional involvement in addressing and working through EEO issues.

Prior to her current position, Karen worked in human resources, training, policy, and special projects with the Board of Equalization, the Department of Social Services, the State Personnel Board, and the City of Sacramento. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California, Berkeley, a Masters Degree in Public Administration, and a K-6 Multi-Subject Teaching Credential.

She came to CAL FIRE nine years ago and has enjoyed her time with the Department. “It is a great place to work,” she says. “The employees at CAL FIRE that I have met and worked with are a dedicated group of people. They are friendly and helpful, too.” She also points with pride to CAL FIRE’s mission.

Now that 2010 is well underway, Karen looks ahead to some of the issues that her office will face. “From an EEO perspective, the biggest issue will be the differences in the multi-generations that we have here at CAL FIRE,” she says. “What works in terms of supervision, work styles, expectations, incentives, rewards, and interpersonal relations differs for each of our generations here. That will be a big challenge, successfully meeting the needs of the employees and the needs of CAL FIRE’s programs.” Karen goes on to explain that as the Baby Boomers age, her office is seeing an increase in discrimination complaints based on age and disability. She is also seeing more discrimination complaints about the use of electronic devices in the workplace by Generation X and Y employees and the accessing and transmitting of materials that are inappropriate for the workplace.

When Karen is not at work dealing with discrimination complaints or other EEO issues, she is outdoors. “I recently acquired three backyard chickens—Blondie, Madonna and Desiree,” she explains. “I am enjoying getting acquainted with them. They are strange creatures. I view them as what is left of the dinosaurs, these feathered, little creatures that eat slugs, seeds and sand and make clucking noises and awful squawks. They raid my compost heap and steal the worms, but in exchange they provide amusement and eggs. It’s a nice arrangement.”

Karen is also an avid gardener. She raises flowers, vegetables, and herbs year round. “I try to conduct my life by the Lesson of the Garden,” she says. “Prepare the soil, plant the seeds, water and care for the plants, pull the weeds, and then enjoy the fruits of the harvest.” This year she will need to be extra vigilant. In addition to the usual garden pests (snails and earwigs), she will have to work at keeping the chickens out.



*Karen Cohen
Chief of EEO*

History of Technical Services

Don Clark, Architectural Engineering Unit, Technical Services

"In my experience, there is only one motivation, and that is desire. No reasons or principle contain it or stand against it."

-Jane Smiley

The Technical Services Section within CAL FIRE is responsible for the property, water rights, fire station replacement, and the renovation, repair, and maintenance of the Department's infrastructure. Technical Services consist of the Architectural Engineering (A&E) Unit and the Lands Unit. Following a look at the Technical Services section as a whole in the September 2009 issue of *Connections*, this article will focus on the A&E Unit and how it has developed through the years.

When CAL FIRE was known as the Division of Forestry, the Technical Services Section was structured much as it is today, with an A&E branch and a Lands branch for property acquisition. The primary focus of the A&E branch was building renovation, special repairs support, and various infrastructure upgrades within our Conservation Camp program. In the mid 90s, the Technical Services Section grew in personnel to support a developing Major and Minor Capital Outlay Program. This program addresses the Department's aging infrastructure by replacing fire stations, emergency command centers (ECCs), and air attack bases (AABs), in addition to working with regulatory agencies in order to get our camps into compliance for their water and wastewater systems.

These programs are based upon CAL FIRE attaining authority from the Administration and the Legislature. The Department has been successful in obtaining support each year by developing a five-year Capital Outlay plan which delineates CAL FIRE's programmatic needs for our facilities. The backbone of this plan is the Capital Outlay Budget Change Proposal (COBCP). The COBCP process is the only standardized mechanism in the State that initiates the process to attain project authorization and funding.

A number of fire station and ECC replacements, as well as miscellaneous upgrades at AABs, helitack bases, and conservation camps were completed in the late 90s utilizing the Minor Capital Outlay program, which can group a number of projects in one budgetary line item. During this time frame the Department had the authority to construct projects up to \$500k in-house. However, if the site needed to be acquired, or if the project exceeded the funding cap, it then fell into the Major Capital

Outlay program, which assigns each individual project a specific line item in the budget and is broken down into three phases: preliminary plans, working drawings, and construction.

CAL FIRE averaged approximately \$5 million in Minor Capital Outlay projects in the 90s. With the added work load, the A&E section made adjustments in order to address the design and construction of these projects. The section is currently comprised of Architects, Civil, Mechanical, and Electrical Engineers, and Delineators that provide the design drafting support. All plans are now generated using AutoCad design software, and staff also use additional supporting software that aids in the design process.

Typically, Major Capital Outlay projects are managed by the Department of General Services (DGS), Project Management Branch (PMB). These projects are designed either in house by DGS staff or by private sector design firms. Early in the 2000 fiscal year, as building codes became more stringent in the structural detailing and construction costs started escalating, it became apparent that a number of projects typically preformed as Minor Capital Outlay could no longer be designed and constructed within the parameters of that program. This required a majority of the projects to be moved into the Major Capital Outlay category. The projects that remain within the Minor program are those that fit within the funding cap and that pose a threat to life-safety.

In addition, the Major Capital Outlay program funding shifted from the General Fund to Lease Revenue Bond funding in the early 2000s. This shift has impacted the replacement program in a number of ways. First, CAL FIRE no longer competes with other Departments for general fund dollars. Next, multiple projects have been approved to address the Department's backlog. In addition, DGS manages the majority of the projects, and additional administrative tasks have been created.

These changes resulted in escalation of project costs and completion delays. In order to counter some of these developments, CAL FIRE developed a Budget Change Proposal (BCP) for the

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Long-Term Disability Open Enrollment

Labor and Human Resource Management

Open enrollment for the Long-Term Disability (LTD) Insurance Plan for excluded employees will be held from **April 1, 2010, through April 30, 2010.**

To qualify for this benefit, an employee must be permanent or probationary, excluded from collective bargaining, have a time base of half-time or greater, and have one of the following designations: Managerial (M, E59, E79, E99), Supervisory (S, E48, E58, E68, E78, E98), Confidential (C, E97), Excluded/Exempt (E88, E89, E92), or E01 through E21, E67, or E77.

Employees appointed limited-term who otherwise meet the eligibility criteria may enroll in the LTD plan only if they have a mandatory right of return to a position that meets the above criteria. Excluded employees who are appointed to permanent-intermittent positions are not eligible. ***Rank-and-file employees are not eligible for this insurance program.***

In early March 2010, the Department of Personnel Administration (DPA) will mail a notice of the upcoming open enrollment to the homes of approximately 30,000 eligible employees. The notice will announce the upcoming open enrollment period. In late March, these employees will receive an enrollment packet with a detailed plan brochure, enrollment instructions, and an enrollment form. In mid-April, DPA will mail a final reminder post card to employees reminding them that the open enrollment period will end on April 30, 2010.

For employees currently enrolled in the LTD Program, in late March DPA will mail an enrollment packet with detailed materials announcing the open enrollment period for the plan. This packet will advise current enrollees on how to make plan option changes.

For questions or additional information about the plan, employees should contact Standard Insurance Company (The Standard) at 1-888-641-7193 or go online to www.standard.com/mybenefits/california.

A Fill and Print LTD enrollment form is now available online at The Standard's website. Employees can complete the form online, print it out, and then submit it to their unit, region, or Headquarters personnel office.

Employees with questions about how to complete the form should contact their unit, region, or Headquarters personnel office.

History (Cont'd.)

Department to expand in-house staff to design and construct prototypical Fire Stations. The Department's request was granted based on our demonstrated efficiency and ability to design and construct fire stations. The BCP approval was also predicated on the Department's ability to construct approximately six fire stations per year. The staffing modifications included augmenting the A&E design section, contracts, surveying, and project management. This change has evolved the A&E design branch in Technical Services from a basic design oversight unit to a full design production unit for the Department.

In order to gain Department of Finance support for our fire station replacement program, Technical Services has developed a standard prototypical plan that delineates all programmatic needs along with the layout and square footage. This prototypical plan has allowed the Department to gain approval without having to justify square footage needs or programmatic components for each and every structure within the COBCP process. Upon the success of the fire station plans, this same concept was applied to dozer sheds, battalion chief offices, administration offices, along with structures within the conservation camp program. These standard prototypical plans are now compiled into a booklet on file with the Department of Finance, and is known as the Department's Facilities Policy and Programming Guideline (FPPG).

Today the A&E Unit provides all of the design and construction support for various projects throughout the State that are managed internally. The Unit also provides completed designs and provides review oversight for projects managed by DGS. When called upon, the A&E Unit has also provided AutoCad support for accident and incident investigations. This support typically includes detail generation, site map generation, and drawing assistance to the applicable Department staff.

EEO Matters: Women Making History (or not) at the 2010 Winter Olympics

Michele Villados, Equal Employment Opportunity Program

“Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it.”

-Dwight Eisenhower

In conjunction with Women’s History Month (March) and on the heels of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, it seems appropriate to consider the accomplishments of women athletes, particularly those in the ski jumping competition. Keep in mind that prior to the Olympics (and possibly still) American skiing phenom Lindsey Van (not to be confused with Lindsey Vonn in the downhill competition) held the record for the longest jump ever made at Whistler—by a man or woman—on the ski jump built for the 2010 Winter Games. Since Van is the reigning world champion in women’s ski jumping, winter sports enthusiasts were looking forward to watching her compete and possibly bring home a gold for the U.S. team.

There was just one small problem: The International Olympic Committee (IOC), the governing board of the Olympics, decided women would not be allowed to compete in ski jumping. “But why?” you ask. That is a good question.

Officially, the IOC announced they were excluding women from the competition for “technical” reasons, citing an insufficient number of competitors and an insufficient history of international competition. However, shortly after that decision, the IOC announced they were adding ski cross as an event, despite the fact that it is a much newer sport with fewer participants from fewer countries than women’s ski jumping. When a petition to the IOC failed to produce results, a group of women ski jumpers filed an EEO lawsuit in Canada’s federal court. The judge in that case ruled that the IOC’s decision was, in fact, discriminatory but that the court had no jurisdiction over the committee.

Although the IOC continues to insist its decision was not based on gender discrimination, there is some history that indicates it was. In 2005, IOC member Gian Franco Casper, who is also the President of the International Ski Federation (FIS) stated, “Ski jumping is just too dangerous for women,” adding that it “seems not to be appropriate for ladies from a medical point of view.” Quite apart from how offensive such a paternalistic attitude is in this day and age, the safety issue is a moot point; according to its own [survey](#), the FIS

determined that among competitive snow sports within its purview, ski jumping is the second safest: Only cross country skiing is safer. Conversely, snowboarding—in which women participate—has a much higher rate of injuries.

“So what,” you may now be asking, “does this have to do with CAL FIRE?” Another good question!

Like Olympic ski jumping, the fire service has a long and illustrious history in which men have received more public recognition. And like members of the IOC, higher-ranking personnel in the fire service may be inclined to be protective of those they view as particularly vulnerable. In the cases of novice firefighters, that instinct may be an appropriate response to *quantifiable* safety concerns resulting from inexperience. If, however, that inclination is related to anything other than measurable risk associated with training, experience and/or ability, it may be a violation of CAL FIRE’s EEO policy. Good intentions and the perception of potential danger (as opposed to actual danger) do not change this. And keep in mind that even well intended actions sometimes have unintended consequences.

In the case of the U.S. women’s ski jumping team, those consequences have been brutal. Not only were the athletes denied a chance to compete in the Vancouver Olympics, but with no guarantee of inclusion in 2014, the U.S. Ski Team withdrew all funding for the women’s sport, citing the state of the economy and limited financial resources. Jessica Jerome, three time women’s national champion, puts it this way: “It feels like I’m walking down the street in the rain, and all my friends are warm and dry inside, and I’m not allowed in. It feels like a party I wasn’t invited to.”

Want to learn more? Check out the following articles:

[“Why Women Can’t Ski Jump,” *Time Magazine*](#)

[“Women Ski Jumpers Left Out in the Cold,” *SI.com*](#)

Group Legal Services Insurance Plan Open Enrollment

Labor and Human Resource Management

The annual open enrollment for the State's Group Legal Services Insurance Plan (GLSIP) is March 1 through April 30, 2010. During this enrollment period, eligible employees may enroll in the Plan, and current enrollees can change their coverage from single to family, family to single, and add or delete eligible dependents.

The GLSIP is a voluntary employee-paid benefit that provides comprehensive legal coverage and gives employees the peace of mind that they and their families will be taken care of if unexpected legal problems arise.

The real value of this plan is its strong financial protection – saving employees hundreds of dollars or more for protection from expensive attorney fees. You never know when a legal issue or situation will create serious problems in your life or threaten your home, your income, or your assets. The GLSIP can be a lifesaver and can help preserve those assets, providing 100% paid-in-full coverage for in-office consultation with a network of attorneys for a variety of legal services, including (but not limited to) legal disputes with neighbors, adoption, bankruptcy, creation of a standard will, consumer protection, credit issues, child support/custody issues, or real estate transactions.

Other legal services at no additional cost include telephone legal services, a reduced fee of at least 25% by participating Network Attorneys for legal needs not covered in the State's plan, reduced contingency fees, and online legal services 24 hours a day.

The Plan is available to all permanent or probationary employees with a time base of half-time or

more, who are designated rank and file, managerial, supervisory, confidential, and excluded/exempt; and permanent-intermittent employees who have worked a minimum of 480 paid hours during the last control period ending December 31. The monthly premium is **\$9.84** for individual coverage and **\$17.39** for family coverage (employee and one or more eligible dependents). Employees with questions on eligible dependents should check with their unit, region, or headquarters Personnel Specialist.

Employees already enrolled in the Plan are not required to re-enroll each year in order to continue coverage. Employees off work or on some type of leave cannot enroll in the program until they return to active status. Employees may cancel at any time by completing an enrollment form indicating the desire to cancel and giving it to their unit, region, or headquarters Personnel Specialist.

A spouse or domestic partner (with power of attorney) is eligible to enroll in the plan during the annual open enrollment period on behalf of an employee who is serving active duty and not available during the specified enrollment period. Eligible dependents are defined as a lawful spouse or domestic partner or any unmarried, dependent child under the age of 23 who has never been married.

Domestic partner coverage is available to same sex partners (those registered with the Secretary of State or same-sex marriages entered into prior to November 5, 2008) or opposite sex partners if the state employee and/or the domestic partner are age 62 or older and eligible for Social Security benefits.

Children include natural, stepchildren, adopted children, and children for whom the employee is the legal guardian, and children of either domestic partner; and any economically dependent child, 23 years of age or over if he or she is incapable of self-support because of a physical disability or mental incapacity who has never been married and is chiefly dependent

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Issuance Updates

Policy

1000 Personnel Procedures Handbook; **updates** Section 1037 and Section 1164

2600 Material Management Handbook; **revises** Section 2677

6700 Mobile Equipment Handbook; **updates** Section 6768.1

8500 Cooperative Fire Services Handbook; **adds** Exhibits

Electronic Form(s)

[Camp Division Chief-Conservation Camp Orientation and Training Program \(FC-212A\)](#)

S.A.F.E. Sneak Peek: Understanding Encryption

Tony Favro, Program Accountability

Encrypting data is a good way to protect sensitive information. It ensures that the data can only be read by the person who is authorized to have access to it.

For more details, please visit the CAL FIRE Information Security Office's Security Awareness For Employees (S.A.F.E.) On-Line newsletter at <http://cdfweb/informationsecurity/ISOnewsletters.html>.

Additionally, if you have any burning issues regarding information security, please email Tony Favro at tony.favro@fire.ca.gov.

Remember, there is no SEC_RITY without U!

"It's kind of fun to do the impossible."

-Walt Disney

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Completed Staff Work - Step 6

Cindy Oreb, Policy and Project Services, Labor and Human Resource Management

Previous *Connections* articles have covered the first five steps in the seven step process of Completed Staff Work. Step One described, recognized, and defined the problem, and Step Two discussed gathering or compiling information about the problem. Step Three involved organizing information for review and consideration, and Step Four began the analysis by assessing and evaluating the data. Finally, in Step Five, we developed, compiled, or generated alternative solutions.

You are now ready for Step Six, which involves developing the recommendations for the problem. Foremost in your mind when preparing your report should be your audience and the purpose of your recommendations. You will be expected to provide a recommendation which includes what you plan to do, how and when you plan to do it, and how much it will cost. It is important to keep in mind that your report may be reviewed by various levels of management with varying degrees of expertise. So, you will need to ensure that in preparing your recommendation your proposal takes each of the levels of technical knowledge into consideration so that no matter who is reading your report he or she will understand the problem and what you are recommending.

The Department uses the *Issue Paper* as the format for providing recommendations. To begin, you must state the *Issue*, which is the question that the issue paper is being written to decide. You must ensure that you are asking the correct question, since this sets up the structure of the paper. Next you need to provide the *Background*, which sets the stage for the issue. This should include a brief, concise history as well as information that the reader needs to know to understand why this issue is being presented.

Third, focus on each of the alternatives that you want to present. You must provide pros and cons as to the impact of each of these alternatives. What are the implications? Will they or will they not work to the degree required? The alternative may not provide you with everything you need, but is it at least viable? Be sure to prioritize the alternative solutions and explain your rationale. You will also need to provide the fiscal impact of each of your alternatives. Finally, provide your recommendation and state the reasons for you decision.

Once the recommendations have been developed it is time to move to Step 7, the "*Implementation*." Look for this article on the final step in the Completed Staff Work process in the April issue of *Connections*.

Legal (Cont'd.)

on the eligible employee for support and maintenance.

Family members who are not eligible include the eligible employee's parents and grandparents, children under the age of 23 who are married, or who have been married, and children over age 23, unless disabled as specified above. Employees are responsible for notifying their unit, region or headquarters Personnel Specialist and completing the necessary paperwork when a dependent child loses eligibility.

The plan administrator, ARAG® Insurance Company, is a leader in the industry, providing high quality service and access to professional legal advice for State employees. To date, more than 34,000 State employees have enrolled in this program.

To get additional information, please contact ARAG's Customer Care Center toll-free at 866-762-0972, TTY (800) 383-4184, or 711 for to reach a relay operator (Monday – Friday, 5:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Pacific Standard Time). Employees can also access the ARAG web site at <http://members.ARAGgroup.com/california> or visit the [Group Legal Services Insurance Plan](#) section of the Department of Personnel Administration's website.

Eligible State employees not yet enrolled in the plan should receive open enrollment materials in late March. Employees who do not receive these materials should contact their unit, region, or headquarters Personnel Specialist or the ARAG Customer Service Center toll-free at 866-762-0972.

To enroll or make changes, employees must submit a completed enrollment form to their unit, region, or headquarters Personnel Specialist by April 30, 2010. Coverage begins on the first day of the pay period following an employee's first payroll deduction. For example, if the State Controller's Office receives an enrollment form by April 10, 2010, coverage will be effective May 1, 2010; if SCO receives an enrollment form by April 30, 2010, coverage will be effective June 1, 2010.