



Understanding Your California Public Employees' Retirement System Membership

Erika Terrell, Personnel Transactions

"Well done is better than well said."

-Benjamin Franklin

Every payday, employees look over their payroll warrant statements and review the details of their earnings and deductions with retirement contributions being a major deduction. How many employees truly know what those contributions mean and have a reasonable understanding on how the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) retirement account works?

CalPERS offers various classes that are either instructor-led and/or online webinars:

- *Benefits Basics* is a class that provides employees a general overview of benefits and options available to maximize their financial future.
- *New CalPERS Member* is a class for new members who want to know about the retirement types and benefits offered as well as how retirement contributions are calculated and what happens to those contributions should State employment terminate.
- *Continuing CalPERS* is a class designed for mid-career employees who want to plan their financial future by gaining a broader understanding on how their retirement is calculated, how State service time is factored in when determining vesting, how a power of attorney works, etc.

To view a schedule of class dates and locations, employees should log in to their [my|CalPERS](#) account to enroll online, or contact the CalPERS Customer Contact Center at (888) 225-7377.

Additionally, CalPERS Benefits Education Events (CBEEs) are available statewide, and CalPERS members at all career stages are encouraged to attend. These events are designed to ensure that employees are well informed and prepared when planning for their financial future.

CBEEs provide employees access and information to retirement benefits and programs, tutorials on how to navigate "my CalPERS" accounts online, and one-on-one guidance with a CalPERS representatives and partner organizations.

Through the myCalPERS website, employees may view the seminar calendar and register for a CBEE. To access the information directly, click the following link: <https://www.calpers.ca.gov/page/education-center/member-education/benefits-education-events/calendar>.

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Dear Claire DeAir: How do I get a CAL-Card?

Tara Hicks, Business Services Office

Are your procurement, contract, state and federal property, or policy needs fraught with confusion? The Business Services Office (BSO) presents Claire DeAir, who will be here to offer advice and to ease all of your BSO burdens.

DEAR CLAIRE DeAIR,

I am new to CAL FIRE and would like to be able to make purchases for my unit. I know there are CAL-Card holders who do a lot of the purchasing; how can I get a CAL-Card?

-IGOT NOCARD

Dear NOCARD,

It is great to hear that you are enthusiastic about helping your unit with purchasing. However, with great spending power comes a great amount of fiscal and ethical responsibility. There are a few steps involved in the process of getting a CAL-Card, and those revolve primarily around ensuring you are ready and accountable for all the policies and procedures that come with purchasing for the State.

Before we get into the steps required to obtain a CAL-Card, it is important to understand that a CAL-Card is just one of the purchasing mechanisms utilized by CAL FIRE. The CAL-Card is a credit card used for State purposes only. Another mechanism for purchasing with State funds involves using payment documents, such as the Purchasing Authority Purchase Order (STD. 65). Payment documents get submitted with a vendor invoice to the State Controller's Office for payment via check. Regardless of what payment mechanism is being utilized, the requirements to become a purchaser are the same, and are detailed in the following four steps.

Step 1: Must Be a Permanent State Employee

To make purchases on behalf of the State, the first requirement is a basic one—that you be a permanent employee of the agency for whom you are purchasing. For CAL FIRE, that means you must be a permanent CAL FIRE employee, and that excludes Volunteers In Prevention, seasonal firefighters, pickup labor, students, contracted employees, retired annuitants, or any other non-permanent CAL FIRE employees.

Step 2: Know the Rules

There are some very important rules associated with purchasing when you are using State funds. Not just the “dos” and “don'ts” of what you can

purchase, but the “why,” “where,” and “how” of spending State funds. These are taught in the Basic Purchasing Certification (BPC) class, a three-day, in-person class which covers a wide spectrum of purchasing scenarios and rules, including:

- The purchasing process
- Policies and regulations set forth by governing
- Policies and regulations set forth by governing agencies
- How to complete payment documents
- How and when to utilize mandatory sources
- Prohibited and prior approval items
- What documentation to keep, and for how long
- How to submit payment packages for payment
- Proper maintenance and use of the CAL-Card

In addition, all students are given resources to use when purchasing for the Department.

Step 3: Become Certified

The conclusion of the BPC includes passing an exam and being assigned a Purchasing Certification Number. This number certifies that you understand the rules and responsibilities associated with spending State funds. Although this certification allows you to purchase for CAL FIRE, it does not guarantee that you receive a CAL-Card.

Step 4: Unit Need Assessment

Once the student obtains his or her Purchasing Certification Number, it is up to that individual's unit to determine whether he or she be issued a CAL-Card. If the unit wishes the Certified Purchaser to have a CAL-Card, it will route the request to BSO by the Unit CAL-Card Coordinator. The Unit CAL-Card Coordinator acts as the liaison between the unit and BSO. The CAL-Card Coordinator will send requests for new CAL-Cards, account changes, cancellation of cards, and the raising and lowering of card limits to CALCARD@fire.ca.gov. Only BSO can make account changes with the bank.

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Dates to Remember

Final Filing Date(s):

Arson and Bomb Investigator
Continuous Filing

Communications Operator
Continuous Filing

Deputy State Fire Marshal
Continuous Filing

Deputy State Fire Marshal III (Spec.)
Continuous Filing

Fire Fighter II (Paramedic)
Continuous Filing

Forestry Assistant II
Continuous Filing

State Fire Marshal Trainee
7/27/2017

A Reminder to be Summer Safe

Lynnette Round, Communications Office

"It always seems impossible until it is done."

-Nelson Mandella

As we move into the hotter part of the year, now more than ever is a great time to go over several things about summer that we might forget. Grilling is always popular this time of year and the following tips can help protect you and your family:

- Propane and charcoal barbeque grills should only be used outdoors. The grill should be placed well away from your home, deck railings, and out from under eaves and overhanging branches. Make sure to keep children and pets at least three feet away from the grill area so they do not get burned.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
- Never leave your grill unattended.
- Always make sure your gas grill lid is open before lighting it. If you are using a charcoal grill, there are several ways to get the charcoal ready to use. Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start the charcoal using newspaper as a fuel. If you use starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire; that is a good way to get burned. Keep charcoal fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources. There are also electric charcoal starters, which do not use fire. When you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.
- If you are rolling out your propane grill for the first time this year, check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it. You can apply a light soap and water solution to the hose—a propane leak will release bubbles. If your grill has a gas leak, by smell or the soapy bubble test, and there is no flame, turn off both the gas tank and the grill and have the grill serviced. If the flame goes out, turn the grill and gas off and wait at least five minutes before re-lighting it.
- If the family is swimming while you are grilling, make sure to always keep your eyes on little ones, especially those that are not strong swimmers. If a child is missing or unaccounted for, always check the pool or spa first. Always watch your child in and around the water and do not assume that someone is watching your child—only you can do that.
- Install and maintain proper barriers around your pool or spa to isolate your swimming area from the home and play area. Use multiple layers of protection such as safety covers, gate alarms, door alarms, and motion-detection devices. Make sure all gates are self-closing, self-latching, and open outward away from the pool.
- Learn CPR, first aid, and rescue techniques. Those precious moments can save a life!
- If you know that a child or even an adult cannot swim, or is not a strong swimmer, have them wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket. "Water wings" or "floaties," inflatable water rings, and other pool toys are NOT safety devices. Please do not use flotation devices as a substitute for supervision! It is always a good idea to "swim with a friend," regardless of age and ability of the swimmer.
- If you plan to be at the beach, make sure you are careful around fire pits. After a barbeque at the beach, many picnickers cover red-hot coals with sand thinking it will extinguish the hot briquettes. Instead, the sand acts as an insulator making the coals even hotter. The result of this action can lead to children walking over the covered fire pit several hours later and severely burning their feet. Every year, six to 12 youngsters suffer very deep burns on their hands and feet, which require skin grafts and months of recuperation.

There are so many ways to have an incredible summer; just make sure to not become complacent with daily endeavors.

A Quick Connect: LMU and BTU

Don Gordon, Lassen Modoc Unit and Darren Read, Butte Unit

The Quick Connect feature provides snapshots of the 21 units located out of the Northern and Southern Regions. Provided by staff at these locations, these articles give readers a glance of unit facts, including unique characteristics.

Unit Information:

Northern Region
Lassen-Modoc Unit (LMU)
697-345 Highway 26
Susanville, California 96130



Unit Chief Don Gordon

County/Counties Serving:

Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, and portions of Shasta and Siskiyou counties.

Geography:

There are a total of 1.6 million acres within the Direct Protection Area of the Unit with an average elevation of 5,000 feet. Vegetation consists of Ponderosa Pine, Lodgepole Pine, and other mixed conifers and hardwoods along the west side of the Unit to sage brush, oaks, and annual grasses mixed with juniper in the high elevation desert to the east.

Infrastructure:

8 Fire Stations, 1 Helibase (Bieber), 1 Emergency Command Center (Susanville Interagency Fire Center), and 3 Camps (Antelope, Intermountain, Devils Garden).

Cooperative Agreement(s):

LMU provides dispatch services for SEMSA Ambulance as well as local fire departments and districts that are part of the Firenet Lassen cooperative. Through a contract with Lassen County, a CAL FIRE Battalion Chief acts as the Emergency Services Chief for the Lassen County Office of Emergency Services.

Employees:

Roughly 200, including seasonals.

Unique Characteristic(s) of the Unit:

- The Unit's Forestry Training Program at the California Correctional Center supplies trained inmates to conservation camps in the Northern Region.
- The Unit shares a border with two states (Oregon and Nevada).

Check Them Out:

Twitter – [@calfire_lmu](https://twitter.com/calfire_lmu)

Unit Information:

Northern Region
Butte Unit (BTU)
176 Nelson Avenue
Oroville, California 95965



Unit Chief Darren Read

County/Counties Serving:

Butte.

Geography:

BTU spans for 1,677 square miles. The State Responsibility Area within Butte County is the foothill and mountainous areas located east of Highway 99, north of Highway 149 and east of highway 70. All other areas of the Unit are Local Responsibility Area. Most response areas are rural except for the Town of Paradise, City of Gridley, and the County areas surrounding the City of Chico, parts of Magalia and parts Thermalito, which are urban.

Infrastructure:

23 Career Fire Stations, 14 Volunteer Fire Stations, 1 Air Attack Base (Chico), 1 Emergency Command Center (Oroville), and 1 CAL FIRE/California Conservation Corps Camp (Butte Fire Center).

Cooperative Agreement(s):

BTU has cooperative agreements with Butte County, the Cities of Biggs, Gridley, and the Town of Paradise. BTU provides integrated, cooperative, regional fire protection that provides fire, EMS, technical rescue, and hazardous materials response to approximately 118,841 residents. All hazard emergency response services are provided from 23 career fire stations, 14 volunteer fire stations, and 14 Automatic Aid agreements from surrounding fire departments. BTU ran 19,964 calls in 2016.

Employees:

Roughly 306.5, including seasonals and 179 volunteers.

Unique Characteristic(s) of the Unit:

- The Unit's Technical Rescue Team is made up of personnel from all the Butte County fire agencies through an agreement with the Sheriff's department

(Cont'd. on Page 7)

Understanding the Internet of Things

Ron Ralph, Information Technology Services

"You cannot cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water."

-Rabindranath Tagore

The world will never be the same after the advent of the Internet. An enormous amount of business investment has continued to take place utilizing the Internet as a backbone, but one thing is for sure... the next big technology to come along will shape society over the next the next few years, much like smart phone technology has already done.

The Internet of things, or IoT, is the interconnection via the Internet of computing devices embedded in everyday objects, enabling them to send and receive data. You may have seen products of this type that allow you to create a smart home, which is the beginning of something much, much bigger. Billions in investments are now occurring globally to connect all kinds of devices to the Internet, and it will create an ability for all of us to perceive the world in brand new ways.

How you live your life is never going to be quite the same when the physical environment around us gets lively and starts communicating. There is no doubt that all of us will witness a shift in the number of connected devices soon. Within five years it is estimated that 50 billion devices will be online. Personal computers, laptops, and smart devices which dominate the Internet at present will be dwarfed by these physical objects.

To put things simply, any object that can be connected will be connected by the IoT. This might not make sense for you on the forefront of this revolution, but it is critical to understand the long term impacts. With interconnected devices you can better arrange your life and be more productive, safer, smarter, and informed than ever before.

For instance, how easy will it be for you to start your day if your alarm clock is not only able to wake you up, but also able to communicate with your coffee maker to inform it that you are awake? You may have also seen products like the Amazon Alexa or Google Home, which allow you to communicate and control things on the Internet by just speaking. These are just few examples, but applications of IoT are numerous. On a large scale; transportation, healthcare, defense, environment monitoring, manufacturing, and every other field you can imagine of can be benefited from IoT.

At CAL FIRE, the IoT will present many opportunities for us to leverage these technologies. However, it is clear that many of these products are still emerging, and they will present issues for us that are significant. The first is one of security, as the security models for many of these devices are quite weak. This presents a significant security exposure for the Department. Secondly, every device requires

an Internet address to function. When we designed our network in the late 90s, the Internet was in its infancy and no one considered the impact of billions if not trillions of devices one could connect to. Getting this to work will require a good deal of engineering, so it is not as simple to connect devices as it might seem.

We clearly cannot just start connecting things and expect it to go well. Many of you will see these products and find a solution to a problem, but it may be some time before we can begin to truly leverage this technology down the road. If you have an idea, please contact your Information Technology Coordinator, and he or she will escalate the idea up to our systems engineering folks, and we will determine if it can be done.

Congrats SHU!

Ryan Burns, Occupational Health and Wellness Program

The Shasta-Trinity Unit (SHU) has been doing its part to promote physical fitness. SHU has participated in the local Shasta Bike Challenge since May of 2013. SHU rides under the name "CAL FIRE Smoke Chasers." The local challenge also participates in the National Bike Challenge. For about three weeks every May, Shasta County and local businesses sponsor a competitive cycling event throughout the city and county. Also competing are local and state agencies, businesses and schools. The SHU team has done very well over the years and has expanded to include CAL FIRE riders from Sacramento, Northern Region, and retired employees, as well as friends and family of employees. The participation has grown from 11 riders at its inception in 2013 from 11 riders to 62 riders this year. For 2017's challenge, SHU ranked 2nd behind the City of Redding for top scoring workplaces.

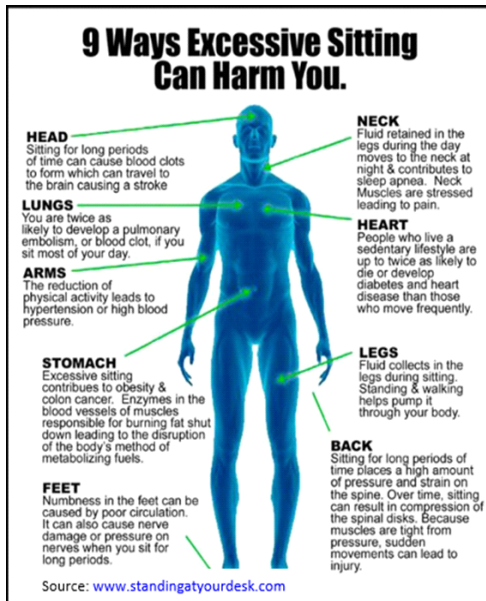
This year, the 62 Smoke Chasers riders combined to ride over 12,000 miles in 31 days! What an amazing effort! Provided are the results of the 2017 Shasta Bike Challenge.

Exercise can be a fun and enjoyable activity, so find something you will continue to do on a regular basis, which will provide you with positive outcomes. For additional health and wellness resources, go to [CAL FIRE's Wellness Unit Intranet page](#). From the homepage, you can navigate two sections: firefighter wellness and staff wellness.

Get Up and Move

Ryan Burns, Occupational Health and Wellness Program

It is hot outside, that is a fact. Do not let the heat beat you or your exercise goals. There are exercises that can be done at your desk to keep you active that take as little as 15 minutes of your day. Research has linked sitting for long periods of time with several health concerns, including obesity, increased blood pressure, and excess body fat around the waist. Do not be a statistic; get up and get your body moving!



Listed below are sample exercises that can be done at your desk/cubicle space permitting. An example of each exercise can be viewed by clicking on the provided link. The video links will provide you proper instruction on how to perform each movement. Add some resistance to the exercises by adding 2.5-5 pound weights. I want to emphasize, before starting any exercise program seek the advice of a physician to discuss any pre-existing injuries that may affect your ability to work out.

Sample Desk Exercises:

- [Overhead Triceps \(20 reps\)](#)
- [Bicep Curls \(20 reps\)](#)
- [Shoulder Press \(20 reps\)](#)
- [Hamstring curls \(20 reps\)](#)
- [Knee lift/ High Knees \(20 reps\)](#)
- [Push-up/ Modified Push-up \(10 reps\)](#)
- [Side Lunge \(10 per side\)](#)
- [Air Squats \(10 reps\)](#)

Walk! Additional information regarding ways excessive sitting can harm you can be found at www.standingatyourdesk.com.

Mind Mapping

Cecilia Lau, Office of Program Accountability

Mind mapping is a way of capturing information and ideas. It is a diagram used to visualize ideas. It can also be used during brainstorming, note taking, planning, visual thinking, or organizing overwhelming amounts of information. It is hierarchical and shows relationships among pieces of the whole.

A mind map is a tool that can literally map ideas out and create connections. It helps identify relationships among different data, information, and ideas. A mind map enables sorting and organizing thoughts, and it provides the freedom during a brainstorming session as the flow of ideas is not blocked or hampered.

A mind map is built around a single main concept from the center. Primary themes flow from the main ideas as “branches” and connect to the central point, and associated secondary ideas and facts are shown as “twigs” of the branches. All the branches and twigs are linked together.

There are different ways to create a mind map. The simplest way is to draw it by hand with a pen on paper, including utilization of different colors and images. It can also be done in Microsoft Word by inserting a “Radial List” under “SmartArt.” In addition, there are many software programs and mobile applications available to create a mind map. Some even have the ability to organize the thoughts and then automatically export them to an easy-to-read list.

An example of mind map was created using Microsoft Word and is illustrated here.

For more audit or business practice related articles, templates, and tools, please visit the Office of Program Accountability’s “[Articles, Presentations, and Publications](#)” page on the CAL FIRE Intranet.



Think S.M.A.R.T. or SMARTER

George Alves, Office of Program Accountability

Every successful business has clearly set and articulated goals to attain specific objectives. Yet, in the world of small business, many businesses lack a focused goal. Whether you have a 50-employee company or an empire of one, your business success depends on your ability to set and achieve goals. Put your business on the fast-track by applying the principles of S.M.A.R.T. goal setting.

S.M.A.R.T. goals are a relatively new idea. In 1981, George T. Doran, a consultant and former director of corporate planning for Washington Water Power Company, published a paper called, "There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives." In the document, he introduces S.M.A.R.T. goals as a tool to create criteria to help improve the chances of succeeding in accomplishing a goal.

The acronym stands for:

S – Specific. When setting a goal, be specific about what you want to accomplish. Think about this as the mission statement for your goal. This is not a detailed list of how you are going to meet a goal, but it should include an answer to the popular 'w' questions (i.e., who, what, when, where, which, why).

M – Measurable. What metrics are you going to use to determine if you meet the goal? This makes a goal more tangible because it provides a way to measure progress. If it is a project that is going to take a few months to complete, then set some milestones by considering specific tasks to accomplish.

A – Achievable. This focuses on how important a goal is to you and what you can do to make it attainable, and it may require developing new skills and changing attitudes. The goal is meant to inspire motivation, not discouragement. Think about how to accomplish the goal and if you have the tools/skills needed. If you do not currently possess those tools/skills, consider what it would take to attain them.

R – Relevant. Relevance refers to focusing on something that makes sense with the broader business goals. For example, if the goal is to launch a new product, it should be something that is in alignment with the overall business objectives.

T – Time-Bound. Anyone can set a goal, but if it lacks realistic timing, chances are you are not going to succeed. Providing a target date for

deliverables is imperative. Ask specific questions about the goal deadline and what can be accomplished within that time period. If the goal will take three months to complete, it is useful to define what should be achieved half-way through the process. Providing time constraints also creates a sense of urgency.

Just like everything else in business, S.M.A.R.T. goals can change. Someone might ask you to write a SMARTER Goal. This acronym adds **E – Evaluate** and **R – Re-Do**. The idea behind this is you should constantly be evaluating your goals and re-setting them as needed. Company directions change, personal goals evolve, so maybe a goal you set six months ago no longer makes sense.

Whether you write S.M.A.R.T. or SMARTER goals, you will find that having some clarity about what you want to achieve can make all the difference between success and failure.

Check out our simple S.M.A.R.T. goal template available on the CAL FIRE Intranet on the [OPA Articles, Presentations, and Publications](#) page.

Sources: 5 Elements of a SMART Business Goal, Darrell Zahorsky and The Essential Guide to Writing S.M.A.R.T. Goals, Emily Esposito

DeAir (Cont'd.)

We hope this information is helpful to you, and, more importantly, that you are still enthusiastic about helping your unit with purchasing!

Connect (Cont'd.)

and is called the Butte Interagency Rescue Group.

- The Units Hazardous Materials Response Team is funded and made up of personnel from all the Butte County fire agencies through a Joint Powers Agreement.
- Butte Fire Center is a CAL FIRE facility using CAL FIRE and CCC personnel to staff and operate three type 1 fire crews

Check Them Out:

<http://www.buttecounty.net/fire/Home.aspx> (Website), https://twitter.com/CALFIRE_ButteCo (Twitter), <http://btutrain.org/> (Training Website)

*"I know not age,
nor weariness,
nor defeat."*

-Rose Kennedy

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Special thanks to all
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