Connections

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

New Bicycle Commuter Program

Iryna Bolotina, Management Services and Shilo A. Wilson, Office of Program Accountability

"Quality is not an act, it is a habit."

-Aristotle

Did you hear the news? For the bicycle enthusiast or the casual rider, effective May 1, 2018, there is a Bicycle Commuter Program for those individuals looking for an alternative means to get to and from work. Tired of waiting for the delayed bus? Not so into the "Carpool" scene? Tired of sitting in traffic morning and night? Why not venture out and try one of the oldest forms of transportation in the world and ride your bike to work!

On May 14, 2018, the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) via the State Controller's Office released a California Automated Travel Expense program (CalATERS) Global Letter #18-003 informing State Agencies who participate in the program that there is now a new expense type available in CalATERS Global. That means if you bike to work, you can now submit a claim for the benefit of riding your bike to work!

For information on eligibility criteria, certification, and claim submissions pertaining to the new Bicycle Commuter Program, visit CalHR's Online Human Resources Manual Policy at http://hrmanual.calhr.ca.gov/Home/ManualItem/1/1425.

- Claimants must complete the CalHR 873, "Bicycle Commuter Program Quarterly Self-Certification," and submit it with the CalATERS transmittal to their manager/supervisor and Departmental Accounting Office. This certification form is considered the "receipt" in CalATERS Global.[1]
- The $20 monthly benefit is taxable. For reimbursement forms submitted through CalATERS Global, taxable income information for this expense will directly interface with the Non-United States Postal Service.[1]
- Bicycle commuter claims should be submitted on a quarterly basis. The claimant must use the non-travel form and can cover an entire three-month period. One date within each month should have one $20 expense entry (e.g. for a July 1 – September 30 form, enter $20 on July 1, $20 on August 1, and $20 on September 1).[1]

The bicycle commuter benefit may be claimed by employees who combine using transit passes for a portion of their commutes with bicycling for a portion of their commutes.[2]

For questions related to this program please contact Iryna Bolotina, Sacramento Headquarters Administration Unit; Commuter Program Coordinator at (916) 653-7158. Happy Cycling!

[1]State Controller's Office CALATERS Global Letter #18-003, May 14, 2018

[2]CAL FIRE Global E-Mail Blast Bicycle Commuter Program, June 20, 2018 Iryna Bolotina

What's Inside?

Dear Claire DeAir: How Do I Keep Track of Sensitive and State Capital Assets?

Marie Ramos, Business Services Office (BSO)

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

DEAR CLAIRE DeAIR,

I was instructed to purchase a new digital copier for our administrative office at the Training Center. When it arrived, my supervisor told me I was responsible for tracking it. I asked around and no one is aware of this requirement, and I even noticed the older copiers do not have any sort of tracking mechanisms on them. Is it true I am responsible for this piece of equipment and where it may end up?

- EAGLE EYED IRENE

Dear EAGLE EYED,

Whether you are at the Training Center, a field Unit, or Headquarters location – yes, there is a process for tracking State property! CAL FIRE has an obligation to take good care of its assets so they are not lost, stolen, or damaged; much like you would when purchasing items for your own personal use. The significant difference between personal assets and CAL FIRE assets are that items purchased for the Department (like the digital copier) are procured using State funds. Therefore, we must track these assets to be compliant with State Administrative Manual (SAM) requirements and internal CAL FIRE policy. While it may be tough to determine where the copier may end up in the future, it is undeniably clear that as the purchaser, the responsibility of initiating the first phases of asset management starts with you. Keep in mind there are varying degrees of State assets, and you will not be tracking the copier in the same manner you would the box of paper clips on your desk. Let me elaborate…

Sensitive vs. Capital Assets. There are a few qualities which elevate a purchase to the level of a State asset needing to be tracked and maintained. Some items, like your digital copier, are considered a sensitive asset. Sensitive assets are defined by Departmental policy as, "…high-risk items that are prone to theft, loss, misuse, and may contain sensitive data." Televisions, computers, cameras, global positioning system devices, tablets, digital cameras, specialty tools, audio visual equipment, printers, scanners, servers, routers, projectors, camcorders, faxes, binoculars, and personal digital assistants (cell phones) are all considered sensitive asset equipment. In addition to being classified as a sensitive asset, equipment costing \$5,000.00 or more is then considered a capital asset. Every year, CAL FIRE buys many capital assets, including appliances, vehicles, and other specialized equipment. The criteria to determine whether an item is classified as a capital asset includes: 1) property has an expected useful life of at least one year; 2) property has an original acquisition cost of \$5,000.00 per item (including costs to acquire, install, and prepare equipment, if separate from acquisition); and 3) property is used to conduct State business.

Most items less than \$5,000.00 (unless they are sensitive items, as discussed above), or consumable items (such as paper clips) would not be considered tracked assets. It is likely the older model copiers in your office were less than \$5,000.00 and did not contain a hard drive – making them fall into a category where it was not a requirement to track them at the time. Your new copier, however, contains a hard drive and presumably is over \$5,000.00 which means it is both a sensitive and capital asset that requires tracking.

So How Do I Track These Assets? The first step in tracking assets is to assign them a tracking number. This is most easily achieved by adhering a property decal tag bearing an asset tracking number to a piece of property or equipment. These tags are maintained by the BSO's State Property Coordinator and can be obtained by submitting a Material, Requisition, and Transfer (MRT).

After assigning property its own decal tag, complete asset information must be entered into an internal Inventory Tracking System; this is typically done by a Forestry Logistics Officer or perhaps an Administrative Officer. The Inventory Tracking System must capture the following details: fiscal year in which the asset was purchased, acquisition

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Dates to Remember

Final Filing Date(s):

Forester I
9/26/2018

Forester II (Supervisory)
9/26/2018

Forester III
9/26/2018

Forestry Assistant I
9/18/2018

Forestry Technician
10/2/2018

Employee Spotlight: Diana Valenciano, Examination Analyst

Isaiah Matthews, Workforce and Succession Planning (WFSP) Unit

"Every exit is an entry somewhere else."

-Tom Stoppard

To recognize and showcase CAL FIRE's outstanding workforce, the WFSP Unit debuted the "Employee Spotlight" series. The goal of the series is to highlight and connect Departmental employees with one another and share our accomplishments, work duties, interests, and hobbies with the CAL FIRE workforce across California.

It is likely that any of you reading this newsletter at one point or another has taken an examination with CAL FIRE to get into or promote into a civil service classification. Though the examination may have lasted two, three, possibly four hours, the planning, creation, and execution of that examination could have taken up to four months. A lot of that planning and creation comes from the staff in our Examination (Exam) Unit. One exemplary member of our Exam Unit is Diana Valenciano, an 11-year veteran of CAL FIRE whose positive attitude and hard work have resulted in many successful examinations for the Department, which in turn translates into successful hires and promotions for the candidates taking those examinations. Her contributions to the unit have added to the success of our Department, and she looks forward to implementing more examinations to support the mission and vision of CAL FIRE.

Beginning her career with CAL FIRE in November 2009, Diana came over from the Exam Unit of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. As an Associate Personnel Analyst for CAL FIRE's Exam Unit, Diana administers examinations for the Department. Though that may sound simple, administering an examination includes many steps and lots of personnel. "The examination process can take up to four months from beginning to end. The process begins with examination development, where we meet with subject matter experts in all CAL FIRE classifications," Diana explains. "The intent of examination development is to develop quality examinations for candidates to take." It is also the responsibility of the Exam Unit "to ensure examinations are developed thoroughly, fairly, and equitably so that they will produce the most qualified candidates." After an examination is developed, the Exam Unit analyst is responsible for coordinating with subject matter expert to participate in the examination, reserving an examination site, setting up facilities for the examination, coordinating employees to participate in the examination, and overseeing the overall execution of the examination, among many other duties. "A lot goes into putting an examination on, resources have to be put in place, weather, staff availability," says Diana. "All factor into examination administration." During the examination, the analyst is the contact for however many panels there might be for that particular examination, which can range from two panels to fifteen, depending on the classification. "At times, depending on the size of the examination, there could be up to 45 staff members participating on panels for one examination," Diana explains. Any issues that may arise during an examination are handled by an exam analyst like Diana, and the work does not end once the examination is finished. Reviewing score sheets, answering questions, gathering all the documentation, sorting, organizing, and submitting all the examination materials is done by the analyst as well. Between July 2017 and June 2018, the Exam Unit administered 43 examinations with approximately 7,000 candidates participating in those examinations. Though the workload can be hectic at times, especially when running multiple examinations simultaneously, Diana finds satisfaction in the chance to work with a variety of people within our Department. "What I enjoy most about my job is the opportunity to meet and work with all levels of classifications within the Department," she says. "I enjoy learning about the different job duties related to each classification."


Diana Valenciano, Examination Analyst

Diana was drawn to CAL FIRE because of its positive presence within the State of California. "I am glad I made the decision to come to CAL FIRE because I have made some genuine life-long friends. The Exam Unit has a very tight knit family group," she describes. Friends and family are very important to Diana. In her free time, Diana enjoys

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Organization for a Positive Workplace

James McMillan, WFSP Unit

Previously, the WFSP Unit discussed *time management* for a positive workplace. Another skill that goes hand-in-hand with time management is *organization*. This skill often goes on the backburner in our daily work. Our desks become cluttered with papers and supplies. We have important emails that get mixed with other emails. Our documents end up all over the place, whether in a mix of paperwork on our desk or in several folders on our computer. This can create a stressful environment when we are facing massive workloads and hectic periods. However, organization can be a useful skill to turn those massive workloads and hectic periods into manageable wins.

One way to stay organized is to keep on top of your email inbox, whether it is your individual work inbox or a shared inbox for your unit or program. One thing you can do is to create folders in your inbox. Think about the emails you receive. What topics do you typically work with in your inbox? Think of these and can create folders for each of these topics. This can create wins in multiple ways. First, your inbox will be cleaner and more organized. Secondly, you can easily document or reference emails regarding specific topics. Third, if your inbox has a retention policy, important emails may be retained for a longer period. A good rule of thumb for these folders is to read the email in your inbox, respond if needed, and file the email chain into your folder right away. This will make it easier for you to keep on top of every email you receive. Getting into this habit will not only make your day-to-day emails more manageable, but any sudden increases in email workloads will be much less intimidating.

You can create similar habits for your work station. In a similar fashion to your emails, you may benefit from thinking about every assignment you have involving paperwork and thinking of the best way to organize them, whether by topic, by date, or something else. If available, use your shelf or cabinet space and drawers for specific purposes. Check if you have any organizational supplies available. For example, you may use folders labeled or color-coded for each topic for your documents. Easily accessible and labeled hanging files may be useful. For larger scale items with heavy paperwork loads, or if you are covering assignments or projects with several steps or several subtopics, binders and tabs may be helpful. If you do not have any of the above available, find creative ways to keep groups of supplies or documents together. If you have any old documents for which you do not need physical copies, you may be able to scan the document onto your computer to create an electronic copy and properly dispose of the physical copy. You may also think about methods to organize your office supplies to make them more easily accessible. Another good rule of thumb is to keep your most frequently used items within reasonable reach. This ergonomically friendly step will enable you to reach any supplies or documents you may need much more easily.

Keeping your electronic files organized can make your work much more manageable. Creating folders for each of your projects, assignments, and topics is a simple way to stay organized. It may also help to use a simple naming convention for each of your files. For example, you may use "Initials_Topic_Date_'Draft' or 'Final.'" You can also create separate subfolders to archive previous versions of your document, store any pertinent emails or any other sources you may use for your assignment, or anything you think may help you easily find what may be needed in each folder. If you are working in a team, these steps will also help your team members find your work, if needed. It may also help to think about what files are in the folder. You can sort your folder in different ways, such as by modified date and alphabetical order. You may also customize your folder to work with a specific type of file. For example, you can customize it for photos and enlarge your icons so you can see the photos before the files are open, or you can customize it for documents and have a detailed list of each document's properties.

Keeping organized is not only a skill that will help you succeed, but a way for you to more easily manage your work. You may find your job and tasks less stressful. By taking some time each day

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Risk Assessment—Identification, Analysis, and Response

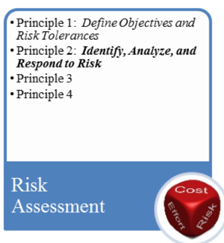
Cecilia Lau, Office of Program Accountability

"The most effective way to do it is to do it."

-Amelia Earhart

In last month's issue of *Connections*, the second of the five components of the United States Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, Risk Assessment, and its first principles, were introduced. Now let us move onto the next principle—Principle 2: *Identify, Analyze, and Respond to Risk* and its attributes.

- *Identification of Risks.* In order to assess risks, the risks need to be identified first. Management should consider both the inherent and residual risk when identifying risks. Inherent risk is the risk to the entity in the absence of management's response to the risk, and residual risk is the risk that remains after management's response to the inherent risk. Management should also consider significant internal and external factors to identify risks. Internal factors may include complex nature of an entity's program or organizational structure. External factors may include new or amended laws and regulations or potential natural disasters. Examples of risk identification methods are qualitative and quantitative ranking activities, strategic planning, deficiencies identified through audits and/or reviews.



- *Analysis of Risks.* Once risks are identified, management analyzes the risks to estimate their significance to the effect on achieving the defined objectives. Significance of a risk is estimated by the magnitude of impact (the extent of deficiency resulted), likelihood of occurrence (possibility that the risk will occur), and nature of the risk (degree of subjectivity involved and whether the risks arises from fraud or complex/unusual transaction). Specific risk analysis methodology used can vary by entity due to differences in the entities' missions and difficulty to qualitatively and quantitatively define risk tolerances.

- *Response of Risks.* Responses are designed for the analyzed risks to ensure that risks are within the defined risk tolerance to meet the objectives. Lack of response could cause deficiencies in the internal control system. Risk responses may include the following:
  - ⇒ Acceptance – no action is taken due to insignificance of the risk
  - ⇒ Avoidance – action is taken to stop the operational processes causing the risk
  - ⇒ Reduction – action is taken to reduce the likelihood of impact of the risk
  - ⇒ Sharing – action is taken to transfer the risks across the entity or with external parties

- Based on the risk response, management designs specific actions to respond to the analyzed risks. Operating within the risk tolerance provides assurance that the entity will achieve its objectives. If the risk response and action cannot ensure the entity operates within the risk tolerances, management may need to revise the risk responses, action, or tolerances. Periodic risk assessments are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of risk response and/or actions.

At CAL FIRE, the Office of Program Accountability annually facilitates a Departmentwide Risk Assessment. Usually, an online survey is developed and disseminated to all managers and supervisors complete. Management will identify their program goals, brainstorm threats that may prevent them from achieving their objectives (risks), analyze the risks by likelihood of occurrence and impact to their area and/or the Department and determine whether response/ actions (controls) are in place to mitigate those risks. In 2017, the Office of Program Accountability also facilitated several risk assessment sessions with specific internal groups within the Department (e.g., the Incident Management Team Committee, Safety Officers).

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2018 Benefit Open Enrollment Period

December Brinsfield, Personnel Transactions

Each year, the State provides an annual "Open Enrollment" period for employees to make changes to their benefits as desired. ***The dates for this year's Open Enrollment period is September 10, 2018, through October 5, 2018***. Employees interested in making changes to their benefit plans (including Medical, Dental, Vision, Flexible Reimbursement, or Cash Option) may do so during Open Enrollment. Two main health benefit changes for 2019 are:

- *Premium Changes* (percentages based upon single-party State basic health premiums)
  Increases
  Anthem HMO Traditional has a 22% increase
  Blue Shield Access+ has a 6% increase
  PERSCare has a 19% increase
  PERSChoice has a 5% increase
  Decreases
  Anthem HMO Select has 6% decrease
  Health Net SmartCare has 7% decrease
  PERS Select has 25% decrease
  UnitedHealthCare has 1% decrease

- *Service Area Changes**
  Blue Shield Access+ has <u>withdrawn</u> from eight Bay Area counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, Sonoma
  Health Net SmartCare has <u>withdrawn</u> from four Sacramento Region counties: El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Yolo
  *Employees must choose a different health plan option during Open Enrollment.

Employees can use the following tools and resources to evaluate financial impacts and for assistance with benefit enrollment changes:

- CalHR provides online resources to educate and encourage employees to review their benefit elections and understand the upcoming changes and impact to their paycheck. Within the toolkit, CalHR also provided the Benefits Calculator to help employees identify the impact to their paycheck based on the various benefit options selected. Visit CalHR's website for more information as it becomes available: www.calhr.ca.gov/benefits/Pages/open-enrollment.aspx.
- California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) has released a new mobile tool for employees to access customized Open Enrollment resources. Available by smartphone or tablet, employees can visit mobile.my.calpers.ca.gov to discover their benefit options.

  Starting August 27, 2018, employees can access open enrollment information through their myCalPERS account. Employee myCalPERS accounts offer instant 24/7 and up-to-date access to health benefit information, as well as resources that will assist employees with health benefit decision-making immediately prior to and during the Open Enrollment period.

  In addition to the traditional resources available through CalPERS, quick 30-second benefit-related videos are available to help employees understand the types of changes and how to request them. Employees can find various health benefit information, including:
  - ⇒ Health Benefit Summaries and Rates
  - ⇒ Health Plan Summary of Benefits and Coverage
  - ⇒ Health Program Guides
  - ⇒ Evidence of Coverage documents
  - ⇒ Medicare Enrollment Guide

To access this information and all other State benefit information, please visit CalPERS's website at www.calpers.ca.gov or CalHR's website at www.calhr.ca.gov.

Employees should contact their assigned Personnel Specialist for assistance or questions with Open Enrollment benefit changes or document submission.

September is the Month for Preparedness

Lynnette Round, Communications Office

As you drop your kids off to college, and the younger kids head back to school, now is the perfect time to get prepared for any disaster. When you prepare a disaster plan, one of the key components is a disaster supply kit. We always talk about a kit, but are you truly ready? We cannot be complacent; being proactive is the best way to alleviate stress, worry, and concern.

Think about it, we are always touting having an emergency supply kit – so, do you really have one? What you need in your kit varies greatly and is completely different for each family. Think about you and your family, what do you need to survive on your own for a week? One of the most important is water, one gallon of water per person per day. If you have pets, you need water for them as well. You need at least a week's worth of non-perishable food that is not disgusting. Who wants to eat an MRE (Ready-to-eat meals) after day three? Not me! Try comfort and non-stress foods including peanut butter or non-nut spread, crackers, tuna fish, protein/granola bars, dried fruit, dry cereal, juices, and infant formula if you have a baby. Choose foods your family will eat; remember any special dietary needs. Avoid foods that will make you thirsty as well.

Being prepared is crucial, and preparing your kids is even more critical, that way if you are not around during a disaster they can "think on their feet" and help themselves. Living in a new "home away from home" not only gives young adults more freedom to make their own choices, but it also provides them an increased level of personal responsibility. When they go off to school, whether on or off-campus living, it is important for students and parents to keep fire safety at the top of your mind.

Fires in dormitories are more common during the evening hours, between 5:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m., and on weekends. Furthermore, cooking equipment was involved in nearly nine out of ten reported fires in dormitory- type properties (87%). Roughly six out of seven fires in dormitories are started by cooking. According to the United States Fire Administration, 94% of fatal campus fires occurred off-campus.

So, when you are choosing a dorm or off-campus housing, look for sprinklered units, if possible. If your kid lives in a dormitory, make sure the sleeping room has a smoke alarm, or the dormitory suite has a smoke alarm in each living area as well as the sleeping room. Make sure your kid can hear the building alarm system when he or she is in the dorm room. Make sure your kid learn the building's evacuation plan and practice all drills as if they were the real thing. Student's should check the school's rules before using electrical appliances in their rooms and always watch what they are cooking.

For apartments or houses, make sure smoke alarms are installed in each sleeping room, outside every sleeping area, and on each level of the apartment unit or house. Smoke alarms should be tested once a month, and students should have a fire escape plan with two ways out of every room. Never remove batteries or disable the alarm. When the smoke alarm or fire alarm sounds, get out of the building quickly and stay out.

"To begin, begin."

-William Woodsworth

Risk *(Cont'd.)*

Afterward, risk information was compiled and shared with Executive Team and the 3-Star Committee for analysis. If controls are determined to be non-exist or inadequate for high-risk items, management may respond by reevaluating current response/actions and/or implementing additional actions. If the risks are low, management may elect to accept the risks based on the risk tolerance.

Organization *(Cont'd.)*

to prioritize organization, you can start developing these habits and turning your organization skills into wins.

If you have any thoughts, comments, or ideas that you would like to share with the WFSP Unit, please connect with us at WorkforcePlanningandSuccession@fire.ca.gov.

Spotlight *(Cont'd.)*

taking family vacations and traveling with her closest friends. She frequents Hawaii and loves going to Disneyland. "I recently came back from Hawaii celebrating my 50th birthday and renewed my wedding vows with my husband, where we celebrated 25 years of marriage on the beach with family." Diana is the mother of two children, both of whom have received their black belts in Karate. Her son just completed his first year of college at Consumnes River College, and her daughter graduated from California State University Fullerton. She is proud of her children's accomplishments and how hard they worked or are working to further their education. In addition to spending time with her husband and children and their miniature schnauzer, Lucky, Diana is also a sports memorabilia collector. She has an impressive collection of signed memorabilia from many of the greats from different sports: a Joe Montana and Dwight Clark signed football, a signature from NBA Spurs great David "The Admiral" Robinson (and his successor Tim Duncan), a signed piece by NBA legend and current Lakers General Manager Magic Johnson, among many others. She and her husband love watching all types of sports and rarely miss a chance to attend any sporting event they can make it to from college football, professional football, basketball, baseball, and even NASCAR events. With such excitement and entertainment to look forward to outside of work, one might wonder what has kept Diana here at CAL FIRE in the Exam Unit for the past 10+ years. "In my time with CAL FIRE," she thoughtfully reflects, "I have made some life-long friendships. I have experienced weddings, births, birthdays, anniversaries, and even illnesses unfortunately. We are genuinely a family here and support each other immensely." With all her experience and connections with CAL FIRE employees throughout California, Diana looks forward to continuing her excellent work with the Exam Unit by successfully and effectively implementing examinations that support the Department.

The WFSP Unit would like to thank Diana for her participation with the article and for her long-time service in CAL FIRE's Exam Unit. If you would like to nominate someone for the Employee Spotlight article, please send us an email at WorkforcePlanningandSuccession@fire.ca.gov with the employee's name, position and title, and a brief description on why you think they should be featured in the article.

DeAir *(Cont'd.)*

cost, asset description, decal tag tracking number, manufacturer serial/model number, and assigned employee and/or location. When the time comes for the asset to be disposed, the disposition stage must also be identified (e.g., surveyed, transferred, damaged, lost). It is crucial that this information is regularly maintained as it is compiled annually into one Departmental report by the BSO State Property Coordinator.

Future Projections in the Financial Information System for California (FI$Cal). When CAL FIRE is transacting live in FI$Cal, the same information above must be entered or coded into the database, starting from the time the asset is purchased, and maintained until the asset completes its life cycle. Once we begin tracking assets this way, the purchaser's role in asset management becomes even more clear, as the item is tagged as an asset at the generation of the purchase order. That asset will be maintained in the Asset Management module in FI$Cal until it reaches its life expectancy, in which case the disposal will also be tracked within FI$Cal! Hopefully you are met with the same sense of relief as I am knowing that all asset management functions will soon be under one roof (or database)!

Why Track Assets? Why is complete documentation of a State property's life cycle important? Compliance, compliance, compliance! In addition to the SAM and CAL FIRE policy, the State Leadership Accountability Act calls for the oversight of State resources to ensure they are adequately safeguarded, monitored, and administered. But more importantly, we want to ensure the image of purchasing responsibly is maintained by following through and tracking assets to avoid duplication of purchases and ensure appropriate use of procured products. Timely, complete, and accurate documentation of State property is essential for CAL FIRE to demonstrate this accountability.

For more information about asset management, refer to the State Property Program's section on BSO's Intranet page and the 2800 Handbook for precise details on property control procedures. Additionally, Nicole Kociemba in Property and Local Services within the BSO (nicole.kociemba@fire.ca.gov) would be happy to answer any asset management questions!

"The power of imagination makes us infinite."

-John Muir

Provided by Management Services

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Special thanks to all contributors!