

CalFire needs managers, but firefighters prefer overtime pay

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

Some of California's rank-and-file firefighters earn so much money in overtime that the state has revived pay bonuses worth thousands of dollars to lure them into management.

The problem at the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection has grown over the last decade, as the state negotiated firefighter contracts that boosted overtime pay without consistently raising supervisors' wages.

Along with the department's graying ranks and early-retirement incentives, the developments have depleted CalFire's leadership ranks.

Persuading line firefighters to take those management positions and give up the overtime money has proved difficult.

"Basically, when you're an assistant chief, you make less money, have more responsibility and work longer hours," said Dale Hutchinson, who as southern region chief hires CalFire managers for half the state. "It's been a standing issue for years."

The state is again upping pay for some managers as a result.

Most of new "recruitment and retention differential" money will go to 34 assistant chiefs in the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. It adds \$1,851 per month, about \$22,000 per year, to their base pay.

Read the whole story