

EAST CONTRA COSTA FIRE DISTRICT TO CUT JOBS, CLOSE STATIONS



When it comes to jobs in civil service many people have considered them to be a bit of a gold standard in the way of job security. Nowhere was this more true than in jobs that are considered to be essential to the generally health and well-being of the community at large. After all, few people would agree that we are in need of more people to file our paper work. You may have to wait a little bit longer for the things that you want to get processed, but that is not a matter of life and death. Most of us would not feel the same way if you asked them if they were alright going without a firefighter or a police officer when they were in need. After all waiting a few extra hours to have your fire put out, or for the police to respond when a stranger has broken into your home, is not really the best of plans. So, jobs in these fields have been traditionally stable work. For the most part cuts to these kinds of jobs are cuts of an absolute last resort, so in the previous economic dips that we have experienced the losses in these fields have been minimal, if not non-existent. In the current economy however the script has been flipped. Jobs that were once considered to be stable to fail, at least not in large numbers have been taking hits left and right. Why is this happening? Well, as governments at all levels are collecting less in the way of business taxes, sales taxes and personal income taxes, they have less money to pass around to the budgets of each department, which means that individual departments have to economize with the funds that they have. Add this to the fact that the federal stimulus money that was given to states and counties in need, by President Obama, has just run out. The money was given as a short-term solution to help these areas make responsible cuts, but many areas only used it to delay the inevitable. So, job cuts that might have come to essential services much sooner, had the stimulus money ever been given, are simply coming to pass now. Today the job cuts are coming from the East Contra Costa Fire District. Officials in that district have warned residents to get ready for both the layoff of firefighters and even the closure of a few station houses in the next couple of weeks. The layoff notices will go out on June 15. For the time being there is no specific information about the layoffs, because the city is considering two plans to cut the budget right now. In one plan the city would layoff 16 fire fighters and close stations in Bethel Island and Knightsen along with a pair of stations in Brentwood. In the other plan 19 workers would get the boot, but only two of the stations would be closed. 16 of its 43 firefighters pink slips and closing the Bethel Island and Knightsen stations as well as one of the two in Brentwood; the other would be to eliminate 19 jobs and shutter the first two stations only.

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