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3600 Workman Mill Road / Whittier, CA 90601

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Río Hondo College Roadrunner Crew Activated to Assist with U.S. Forest Service Wildfire Battles

WHITTIER – Río Hondo College’s Roadrunner Hand Crew 77 has been activated by the U.S. Forest Service to assist with national wildfire needs, backfilling behind “hot shot” crews normally assigned to the Angeles National Forest.

The crew began its 14-day minimum activation cycle on June 26 and could be assigned almost anywhere needed.

The crew, created by the College’s Wildland Fire Academy, is staffed by a team of graduates from recent cadet classes, including Victor Apodaca, Aaron Arraiga, Nicholas Casimiro, Nicolas Demonte, Evan Espenoza, Yulfiano Gerwynaldo, Daniel Ingelmo, Jimenez Jesse, Marcus Ortiz Matney, Ilunga Mulongo, Diego Rodriguez, Alan Perez and Jesus Barbosa.

“We are proud of the young men and women of our Wildland Fire Academy, who deliberately place themselves on the front lines to assist with one of our state’s most critical needs,” Superintendent/President Dr. Arturo Reyes said. “Their dedication to community and their craft is an example for all of us.”

A Type II hand crew, the team assists with all aspects of fire monitoring, suppression and control, including digging fire containment lines. In past years, the crew has been called up multiple times a year to assist with firefighting across California, but rarely has it been activated this year. The crew has battled fires in Yosemite National Park and helped fight the devastating Ferguson Fire.

Each crew member must meet or exceed U.S. Forest Service requirements for seasonal wildland firefighters. Students also must pass an arduous physical fitness regime. Río Hondo College, which has fielded the crew since 2002, is well known for its Wildland Fire Academy, which typically places every graduate from every class.

MORE

Río Hondo College, located in Whittier, California, is committed to the success of its diverse students and communities by providing dynamic educational opportunities and resources that lead to degrees, certificates, transfer, career and technical pathways, basic skills proficiency, and lifelong learning. For information on the College or its programs, please call 562-692-0921 or visit www.riohondo.edu.

“As with all our California institutions, Río Hondo College’s Fire Academy and Wildland Fire Academy are battling the challenges of COVID-19. But, despite these challenges, our highly trained firefighters continue to step up to support our community,” said Chief Andy Grzywa, academy director. “Their actions instill pride in us all.”

PHOTOS

RHC_HAND CREW_1: Rio Hondo College’s Roadrunners Crew 77 has been activated to assist the U.S. Forest Service with wildfire needs.

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