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Río Hondo College Roadrunner Crew Re-activated to Assist in Battling California Wildfires

WHITTIER – Río Hondo College’s Roadrunner Hand Crew 77 has been activated for the second time this summer by the U.S. Forest Service, deployed first to fight the Texas Fire and then to assist efforts against the rapidly expanding Lake Fire, both in the Angeles National Forest.

The crew began its activation on Aug. 5. It was previously activated to backfill behind crews in June.

The crew, created by the College’s Wildland Fire Academy, is staffed by a team of graduates from recent cadet classes, including Victor Apodaca, Nicholas Casimiro, Nicolas Demonte, Evan Espinoza, Yulfiano Gerwynaldo, Daniel Ingelmo, Jesse Jimenez, Marcus Manty Ortiz, Ilunga Mulonga, Diego Rodriguez, Alan Perez, Eduardo Reyes, Hector Samayoa and Andrew Salinas.

“The young men and women of our Roadrunner Crew exemplify the best of Rio Hondo College,” Acting Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “They have volunteered to join the front lines in a fight on behalf of our entire state. Their dedication is inspiring.”

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. 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.

“Despite the pandemic, the Roadrunners of Crew 77 continue to aggressively move forward, protecting the residents of Southern California and the valuable resources of the Angeles National Forest,” said Chief Andy Grzywa, academy director.

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.

PHOTOS

RHC_RR_Crew_1-3: Río Hondo College's Roadrunner Hand Crew 77 was activated Aug. 5 to assist the U.S. Forest Service in fighting wildfires in the Angeles National Forest.

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