California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection

CAL FIRE MOBILE KITCHEN UNITS (MKU)

USE

CAL FIRE Mobile Kitchen Units (MKU) are used to support feeding operations at emergency incidents such as fires, floods, hazardous materials spills, and earthquakes. The MKUs are a common site at fire camps each California fire season. The mobile kitchens were also on scene at the 1989 Loma Prieta and 1994 Northridge earthquakes, as well as during the riots in Southern California in 1992. The kitchens prepare hot meals to those providing emergency response, and have also been called upon to feed communities displaced by disaster.

CAL FIRE has 11 MKUs located statewide. The MKUs are fully equipped kitchens that can be set up and ready to serve within four hours. They are fitted with convection and conventional ovens, and steam and tilt skillets. The kitchens come with a support trailer that carries tables, chairs, salad bar set-up, and extra serving utensils. The kitchens serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and normally store enough food to serve 500 meals upon arrival and set-up. One MKU can feed up to 2,000 people a day.

CAL FIRE works with local vendors to purchase the food prepared by MKU crews. Potable water tenders, generators, and scullery for dishwashing are also hired at times to support the MKUs.

STAFFING

The MKUs are staffed by a crew of 17 conservation camp inmates. The inmates are broken into day and night shifts of eight members each, with an additional crew member providing equipment maintenance and repair. The crew is managed by two CAL FIRE fire captains and is responsible for preparing, cooking, serving and cleaning up after meals. Two California Department of Corrections officers are responsible for the crew when they are not working the kitchen.