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Harassment probe prompts some firefighter transfers

By Elizabeth Hume
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The harassment investigation at a Sacramento city fire station led to the transfer of at least one of the 30 firefighters at Station 6, officials said.

"There are seven or eight people out of Station 6 who are on the transfer list to help calm the situation that may affect a few other people," said fire spokesman Capt. David Whitt. "The investigation is not complete."

The department said it has more than 55 other firefighters on its transfer list, and about a dozen of those are seeking voluntary transfers.

Deputy City Manager Richard Ramirez said most the transfers are the result of promotional testing that occurs at this time of year and not the result of the investigation.

"To the best of management's knowledge there has not been a wholesale reallocation," said Ramirez.

But firefighters said that it's one of the largest number of transfers in memory.

"I would classify it as an unusually high number of transfers," said Brian Rice, president of the firefighters' Local 522.

The transfers come 10 months after the first reported incident of harassment at Station 6 on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Fire sources said that in June, a female firefighter on the C shift found an obscenity written on her ax handle.

A few months later a computer-generated picture of the station's A shift showed up in the station. Their faces were crossed out, and the words "orange woman" were inscribed on the photo.

Orange is the station's official color, and some city firefighters are known to call themselves "Orangemen." But fire sources said the note was confusing because there are no female firefighters assigned to the Station 6 A shift.

Firefighters said they're frustrated by how long it has taken the city to complete the harassment investigation.

"We're 10 months into this and no closer to seeing it resolved," said union president Rice. "I know the city personnel are under tremendous pressure, but I feel that the fire administration didn't act decisively enough to curtail it and come to a resolution months ago."

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