

CALPIA PARTNERS with STATE AGENCIES for REENTRY SUCCESS

Incarcerated Individuals Obtain State Jobs Before Leaving Prison

By **Michele Kane**, Assistant General Manager, External Affairs, CALPIA

Incarcerated individuals are seeing first-hand the reality of prison to employment by receiving job offers before returning to their communities. A civil service exam and hiring event organized by multiple state agencies including the **California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA)** proved successful at the California State Prison, Solano.

Representatives from CALPIA, along with the **California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR)**, the **California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)**, the **California Government Operations Agency (GovOps)**, the **California Department of Human Resources (CalHR)**, and the **California Workforce Development Board** were all participants in a civil service workgroup. Through this workgroup, one of these agencies, Caltrans, reached out for assistance in filling entry-level highway maintenance worker positions.

In July 2019, at the California State Prison, Solano, representatives from the partnering agencies provided support to a total of 39 incarcerated individuals as they took the highway maintenance worker civil service examination. At the end of the effort, all 39 exam takers successfully passed the exam. In September 2019, a hiring event was held for

Our goal is to ensure a CALPIA graduate is successful when they leave prison and never return

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This event which was held two years ago is still proving partnerships work and it is rewarding to see how people come together to improve the lives of others.

CALPIA Acting General Manager
Bill Davidson

those job candidates to interview for 10 available positions.

Former CALPIA Graduate **Terry Billingsley** was one of those candidates. He has since left prison and now is employed by Caltrans as a bridge maintenance worker.

“CALPIA honed my welding skills, and I was able to receive my apprenticeship certification, along with the other certifications,” said

Billingsley. “It was a great process and I have a career today with Caltrans welding and repairing drawbridges in Northern California.”

The hiring event was part of the Prison to Employment Initiative which seeks to improve labor market outcomes of the state’s formerly incarcerated populations.



California Governor **Gavin Newsom** thanks CALPIA graduate **Terry Billingsley** for his work with Caltrans.

CDCR and CALPIA support this aspect of the civil service examination component of the Prison to Employment Initiative which tracks successful outcomes and establishes a process that can serve as a model at all California prisons.

Former CALPIA graduate **Maynard Walker** also secured a job with Caltrans as an equipment operator in Southern California. Walker is also working on his college

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CALPIA graduate **Terry Billingsley** appears at Governor’s Clean California Day of Action event.

degree in Civil Engineering. The father of two graduated from CALPIA’s Commercial Diving program where he learned underwater welding, physics, blueprint reading, along with other valuable job training.

Besides Walker, other incarcerated individuals saw first-hand the reality of prison to employment with the help of Caltrans.

“We are fortunate to have such quality people as part of our Caltrans team,” said Caltrans Director **Toks Omishakin**. “Caltrans is pleased to partner with CALPIA to help provide career opportunities to dedicated, aspiring individuals.”

CALPIA provides job skills to approximately 7,000 incarcerated individuals at every California State prison and its Career Technical Education programs have some of the lowest recidivism rates in the country.

“Employment is a major part of recidivism reduction,” added Davidson. “We need to have those partnerships to help with smooth transitions.” ●

“*I got the skills and technical training I needed to make it on the outside* *CALPIA gave me the foundation of hard work and perseverance.*”

CALPIA Graduate
Maynard Walker

CALPIA Graduate **Maynard Walker** operates equipment for Caltrans and is also studying for his civil engineering degree.

