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**SHERIFF LOU VALLARIO
GARFIELD COUNTY, COLORADO**

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 13, 2010

Sheriff Vallario Succeeds in Persuading CSU to Lower Fire Fees

GARFIELD COUNTY, Colo. – In a recent meeting with Sheriff Lou Vallario and other members of the County Sheriffs of Colorado and the State Fire Chiefs' Association, Colorado State University officials agreed to reduce the administrative fee the school charges to process invoices related to wild land firefighting.

For the next two years, CSU has agreed to slash its bill processing fee nearly in half, from 23 percent of overall firefighting costs to 13 percent, while a task force determines what the appropriate parameters should be. The lower fees go into effect July 1 to coincide with the start of the university's fiscal year.

Sheriff Vallario's heartburn has been that CSU charges an exorbitant rate for simply handling the billing when another agency comes to the firefighting aid of an overwhelmed jurisdiction during a wildfire. The method is this: after helping fight the fire, the agency providing aid submits a bill to the Colorado State Forest Service, which then forwards the paperwork on to its parent agency, CSU, for processing. CSU then bills the responsible jurisdiction after adding the 23 percent administrative fee on top of the total cost.

The Sheriff's main contention was that not only were the fees exceptionally high, but they were set between CSU and the federal Department of Health and Human Services without any representation or input from the affected counties. Sheriff Vallario's feelings were confirmed by other sheriffs, county commissioners and fire chiefs who felt the charges were imposed upon them "without any voice at the table."

The recent fee reduction could potentially save county fire agencies throughout the state thousands of dollars in processing fees each fire season. Due to the efforts of Sheriff Vallario and like-minded county and fire officials, CSU not only heard their concerns; but the university more importantly *listened* to the synchronized chorus.

The mission of the Garfield County Sheriff's Office is to provide solutions for the people by utilizing and employing strong morals, good character, untarnished integrity, technical knowledge and fiscal responsibility through professional, ethical and equitable conduct.

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