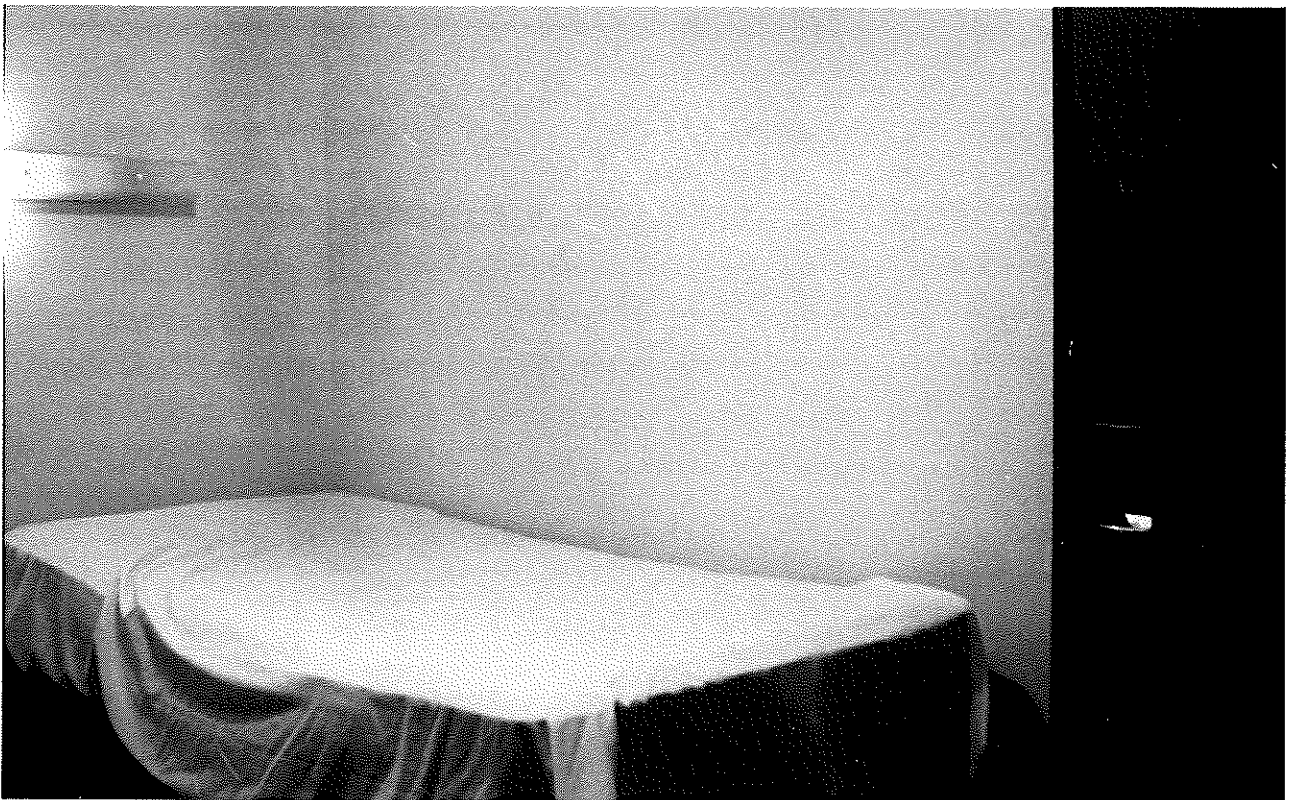


http://www.nogalesinternational.com/news/tubac-firefighters-ditch-un-permitted-bunks/article_of71e4bo-ec1e-11e7-9588-cba003e4a2bo.html

Tubac firefighters ditch un-permitted bunks

By Arielle Zionts

Nogales International Dec 29, 2017



After having to sleep in run-down FEMA trailers used during Hurricane Katrina, Tubac firefighters built two sleeping quarters that have a bed, desk, chair, telephone, shelf, locker, intercom system and recently installed fire alarm. The rooms were built without a permit and lack a fire escape.

Photo by Arielle Zionts

In just a few months, firefighters stationed at Tubac Fire Station 1 have bounced between sleeping in old trailers, to homemade living quarters, to bunks placed inside the main conference room.

The latest move comes after a governing board meeting last week, at which the district decided that the firefighters need to stop sleeping in their new DIY living quarters after the county's chief building official found they were built without a permit and lacked fire-safe features.

"We don't want the firefighters sleeping in any place that's unsafe," board chair Mike Connelly told the NI after the meeting.

The firefighters moved the beds from the new living quarters into the large, main room of the fire station on the Frontage Road in Tubac after the Dec. 20 meeting, Chief Kevin Keeley said.

"I don't think they're real happy about it, but until we can get a permanent resolution, it is what it is and it's still better than the trailers they were in," he said.

The firefighters used to sleep in outdoor trailers – once used by FEMA during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 – that were in poor condition, Keeley said.

Firefighters built and began sleeping in the two new rooms – constructed in part of the garage and accessed through the main room – in October in an effort to save money and have a nicer, safer living space. The district spent about \$7,100 on the two rooms, each of which has electricity, an HVAC system, bed, desk, chair, phone, intercom system, shelves and lockers.

But after a Dec. 8 visit, Daniel Menefee, the county's chief building official, found the district never applied for a permit and the rooms lacked safety features like smoke alarms (now installed), an outdoor fire escape route and a fire separation wall between the garage. What's more, Menefee told the NI, the firefighters shouldn't have done the construction themselves; the rooms needed to be designed by an architect and built by a licensed contractor.

After Menefee's visit, the firefighters installed smoke alarms and initially continued sleeping in the new rooms because the trailers had already been broken down, Keeley previously told the NI. He also argued that the new living quarters were safer than the trailers because firefighters don't have to scramble down stairs in the dark and run into the building when a call comes in.

The chief said he's met with the Santa Cruz County Building Department to discuss various solutions to the living quarters conundrum after Menefee's visit, but the final plan won't be ready until after the new year.

Jesse Drake, the county's community development director, confirmed that the fire district and building department are working to narrow down a final design. She said she expects the building permit to be filed by Feb. 26.

"Obviously, there will be permits and everything else this time around," Connelly said.

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DIY bunks at fire station fall short