

Upside-Down Flag Signals Protest Against Job Cuts in National Parks

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Every February, people visit Yosemite National Park in California to see the "firefall," a rare natural event. This happens when the sunset shines on Horsetail Falls, a waterfall on El Capitan, a massive 3,000-foot rock formation. The light makes the water glow orange, creating the illusion of lava flowing down the cliff. Photographers and nature lovers wait for hours to see it at the perfect moment.



But this year, visitors saw something unexpected: an upside-down American flag at the top of El Capitan. A group of Yosemite park employees put the flag there to protest job cuts made by US President Donald Trump. According to US flag rules, an upside-down flag is a sign of distress. The workers wanted to bring attention to the fact that 1,000 jobs had been cut from the National Park Service.

Many park employees were frustrated by the cuts, saying that fewer workers would mean longer lines, dirtier restrooms, and unsafe conditions for visitors who go hiking and camping. Some employees had already lost their jobs, including those responsible for search and rescue, cleaning, and park safety. Without enough staff, people who get hurt while hiking could have to wait hours for help. Park employees are not paid high salaries, but many do the work because they love nature.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What does the "firefall" look like?
 - a) A waterfall that turns to ice in winter.
 - b) A fire that burns at the base of a cliff.
 - c) A waterfall that looks like flowing lava.
 - d) A real fire set by park rangers.
2. Why did park employees put up an upside-down flag?
 - a) To celebrate a national holiday.
 - b) To show respect for fallen soldiers.
 - c) To protest job cuts in the National Park Service.
 - d) To attract more tourists to the park.
3. An upside-down US flag is a sign of distress. What does "distress" mean?
 - a) Happiness and celebration
 - b) Danger or serious trouble
 - c) A new law or rule
 - d) A friendly greeting

4. What happens when jobs are cut?
- a) More people are hired for work.
 - b) Employees lose their jobs.
 - c) Workers get a salary increase
 - d) Employees are injured while working.
5. What problem might visitors face due to the job cuts?
- a) More exciting hiking trails.
 - b) Fewer visitors in the park.
 - c) Dirtier facilities and slower emergency help.
 - d) Lower entrance fees.
6. What can we guess about the park employees who protested?
- a) They are very wealthy and don't need their jobs.
 - b) They care about the park and their work.
 - c) They dislike nature.
 - d) They don't enjoy their jobs.
7. Why did the employees believe the job cuts were dangerous?
- a) Fewer workers could mean slower emergency responses.
 - b) The park would become too crowded.
 - c) The firefall event would be canceled.
 - d) Visitors would have to pay more for tickets.
8. How might the job cuts affect the park in the future?
- a) The park will be cleaner and safer.
 - b) Visitors might have a worse experience.
 - c) More workers will be hired next year.
 - d) The park will close forever.
9. How did the flag protest help bring attention to job cuts?
- a) It was a traditional way to ask for a raise.
 - b) It helped the park make more money.
 - c) It was required by park rules.
 - d) It showed visitors and the media that employees were upset.
10. What is the main idea of the article?
- a) Yosemite National Park is famous for its "firefall" event.
 - b) The U.S. flag should never be displayed upside-down.
 - c) National parks are popular places for photographers.
 - d) A protest by park employees highlighted concerns about job cuts.

Speaking and Writing Activities:

- Discuss these questions with a partner or a small group
 - Choose one topic and write a response to it. Show your writing to a classmate or teacher.
1. Where do you like to go to enjoy nature? What do you do there?
 2. Would you like to work in a national park? Why or why not?
 3. Can you think of a time when you or someone you know protested something? What was the situation, and what did you do?

