

## **DRAFT\_Wildland Fire Training Awareness Letter**

Wildland fires have had significant impacts in 2018. Nationally, a total of **52,303 fires**\* have burned a combined **8,543,463 acres**\* so far this year. That total is more than 2 million acres above the 10-year average. Even now, firefighters from multiple states are in California, working to suppress the tragic fires there.

During peak periods of national fire activity, federal, state, local, and tribal partners work closely to support one another and prioritize the protection of life, property, and valuable natural and cultural resources. Despite this commitment to mutual support, firefighting assets and fire support personnel are often stretched thin.

To help meet this challenges, managers are requested to make all qualified personnel available for fire assignments when the national wildland fire preparedness level reaches its highest level, Level 5. The preparedness level is established by the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group, which represents federal, state, local, and tribal wildland fire leadership. The preparedness level is based on actual and predicted fire activity and on resource availability.

The time to start preparing for the national wildland fire effort is now. Across the country, all levels of wildland fire training are taking place, including annual fire refresher training for those who have qualifications. Opportunities in functions other than operational firefighting abound; finance, logistics, planning, and public information are areas where expertise is needed. Incident Management Teams (IMT) need members to support firefighters and communities. Historically, IMTs have also been used to respond to hurricanes, floods, and other large-scale incidents. Local area support is also needed in dispatch centers and fire supply caches.

Managers are asked to support employee training and development in these areas in anticipation of fire season support. Fire managers have the responsibility to share training schedules and educate non-fire personnel on the opportunities available.

We equally understand the impact this has on the priority work and program goals for your office. However, support to emergencies such as wildland fire management activities may take precedence over non-emergency activities. Workforce contingency plans set priorities and shift local capabilities in order to continue critical work when incident response is necessary. Employees not qualified or otherwise unavailable to directly assist with wildland fire duties can indirectly support the effort by filling in behind their peers to ensure that the daily work of our agency continues.

Your constant leadership and commitment to your agency and your staff empowers all of us to successfully protect and enhance our public lands. Thank you for commitment to service.

*\*Statistics are valid as of 11/26/18.*