




THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

MAY 30 2025

Memorandum

To: Solicitor
Assistant Secretaries
Bureau and Office Heads
Inspector General

From: Secretary 

Subject: Strengthening and Preparing Interior's Wildland Firefighting Force for the 2025 Fire Year

While longstanding challenges have contributed to today's wildfire crisis, the previous administration's failure to prioritize forest and wildfire resilience efforts worsened conditions—leaving the American people more vulnerable and underscoring the urgent need for immediate and decisive action. Wildfires have become a yearlong threat given the accumulation of substantial fuel loads, and they occur with greater frequency and intensity throughout the year. These wildfires put American communities, critical infrastructure, and our Nation's precious resources at serious risk. Moreover, the Federal Government and local counties spend millions of dollars fighting wildfires, which destroy millions of acres of timber and rangelands that should instead generate millions of dollars in timber revenue and stabilize the rural livestock communities for both the Federal Government and local counties.

Protecting communities, public health and safety, and our Nation's natural and cultural resources from wildfire is a top priority for this administration. The mounting threat to our lands, water sources, energy infrastructure, and heritage sites requires us to bolster our approach to wildland fire management and risk mitigation. We must persist in proactively reducing wildfire risks through fuels-mitigation efforts near vulnerable communities and infrastructure, ensuring the protection of lives, property, and the essential services that Americans depend on.

Responding to wildfires and other natural disasters is not optional. The Department of the Interior's (Department) fundamental obligation is to protect the lands and resources under our jurisdiction. Identifying and developing a supplemental wildland fire workforce before critical fire incidents is essential for the Department to meet its incident response obligations. This additional capacity is necessary to maintain strong wildfire operational response and support for our Federal, Tribal, State, and local partners.

The time to prepare is now. Capacity is needed in operational and support functions critical to incident response, including aviation, command staff, dispatch, finance, logistics,

communications, planning, risk mitigation, and post-fire recovery roles. Many of these roles closely align with existing duties and expertise held by personnel across the Department. There are meaningful ways for every employee to contribute and leverage their skills to support wildland fire operations.

To support the ongoing wildland fire mission, I am committed to ensuring that wildland firefighters and support staff have all available tools to meet the Nation's wildland fire response needs. I am directing all Bureaus with fire program responsibilities and all Departmental Offices that support wildland fire to take the following actions within 15 days:

- Identify and eliminate all barriers and unnecessary procedures; use all needed waivers to ensure rapid resource mobilization when there are imminent threats to life and property.
- Perform an assessment detailing firefighting and support capabilities, identifying any operational gaps and proposing actionable solutions. At the end of the calendar year, each Bureau with fire program responsibilities should provide an evaluation of overall capacity effectiveness and prioritize critical gaps requiring remediation for 2026.
- Maximize exclusive-use aviation contracts and extend mandatory availability periods to match expected utilization with any available funding for the remainder of the 2025 fire year, provide an evaluation of overall capacity effectiveness, and prioritize critical gaps requiring remediation for 2026.

At preparedness level (PL) 3 and above, I hereby direct all Bureaus and Offices to prioritize deploying the non-fire workforce, as necessary and appropriate given mission requirements, to support response efforts as wildland fire activity increases. Managers are encouraged to develop workforce contingency plans for these periods.

Throughout the year, all Bureau and Office leadership should engage in the following actions:

- Prioritize wildland fire risk reduction efforts in and around communities at risk of wildland fire and, where possible, continue to offer timber volume consistent with Executive Order 14225, titled "Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production."
- Take all necessary actions to support employees who express interest in obtaining wildland fire qualifications and participating in response efforts. This includes facilitating access to qualification pathways necessary for participation in operational response roles, incident management teams, or other support roles. Employees are encouraged to coordinate with their respective Bureau fire programs or the Office of Wildland Fire, which will assist in determining the appropriate processes for identifying and obtaining necessary qualifications and training opportunities. Managers should support participation to the degree it does not affect work deemed essential to executing law enforcement operations or protecting national security. Local units should provide support to non-fire Departmental personnel in meeting training and qualification requirements.

- Prioritize review and approval of wildland fire-related contracts and identify any additional capacity available to assist with wildfire response during peak wildfire activity.
- Utilize all available authorities to expand the use of livestock grazing as a strategy for reducing wildland fire risk and supporting post-fire restoration. This includes targeted grazing, temporary permits where appropriate, and grazing on vacant allotments during natural disasters that displace permitted use. Where suitable, and in alignment with best available science and local expertise, grazing should also be incorporated into post-fire recovery efforts. Analyze all vacant allotments and prioritize offering term grazing permits and leases in those allotments to keep fuel loads from expanding.
- Use all available emergency authorities and categorical exclusions to prioritize post-fire hazard tree removal and salvage activities, as appropriate.
- Leverage all available authorities to build on and strengthen existing partnerships with Tribal, State, local, and nongovernmental organizations to boost robust community-level wildland fire response and risk mitigation capabilities. Identify opportunities for new partnerships, prioritizing capacity building, resource sharing, and response coordination in high-risk wildland-urban interface areas.
- Employ all available authorities and resources to ensure reimbursement for wildland fire related expenses incurred by Tribal, State, and local partners within 90 days of receiving an invoice or meeting the terms of the agreements.
- Ensure personnel are prepared to respond to hurricanes, earthquakes, and other natural hazards in accordance with the requirements of 900 Departmental Manual, chapter 1, “Emergency Management Program Policy, Responsibilities, and Requirements.” Personnel should be available for training and incident response as needed.

The Department is committed to working alongside our interagency partners and State and local governments to protect American communities, essential infrastructure, public health and safety, and irreplaceable natural resources, and to fulfill our trust responsibilities to Tribal nations. The American people are counting on us to meet this moment with urgency and determination.

Thank you for your service, leadership, and commitment to the American people and to our Nation’s public lands.