

News Release

National Interagency Fire Center
3833 S. Development Ave.
Boise, ID 83705

<http://www.nifc.gov>



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Contact: Carrie Bilbao, cbilbao@blm.gov, 208-387-5457
Kari Cobb, kjcobb@blm.gov, 208-387-5508

United States Continues to Support Australian Wildfire Suppression Efforts

Boise, Idaho - As wildfires continue to burn in Australia, the United States is sending additional U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) wildfire personnel to assist with ongoing wildfire suppression efforts in Australia. On December 30, 2019, 44 U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Department of the Interior personnel departed for Australia, and an additional 21 personnel will mobilize on January 4, 2020, to replace a previous group of U.S. fire personnel mobilized in early December.

"Our thoughts and prayers, with our deepest condolences, are with the Australia firefighters and public who have lost their lives and homes, said U.S. Forest Service Fire Director Shawna Legarza. "We are proud to provide personnel from the United States and will continue to support Australia with the resources needed during this unprecedented fire situation."

Based on requests from the Australian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council, the U.S. has intermittently deployed more than 74 wildland USFS and DOI fire personnel throughout December with another 21 USFS and DOI personnel departing for Australia on January 4. The Council has also requested a fifth group of personnel and the DOI and USFS are currently working to send those individuals as soon as possible. The U.S. firefighters are filling critical wildfire and aviation management roles in New South Wales and Victoria.

"As the extreme fire danger continues across Australia, the Department of the Interior will continue to do all that we can to support requests for assistance," said Department of the Interior's Office of Wildland Fire Deputy Director Craig Leff. "Our focus remains on helping the people of Australia and keeping people safe in these unprecedented conditions."

The U.S., Australia and New Zealand have been exchanging fire assistance for more than 15 years. The most recent exchange occurred in August of 2018, when 138 Australian and New Zealand wildfire management personnel were sent to the U.S. for almost 30 days to assist with wildfire suppression efforts in Northern California and the Northwest. The Australian and New Zealand personnel filled critical needs during the peak of the western fire season for mid-level fireline management, heavy equipment, helicopter operations, and structure protection. The last time the U.S sent firefighters to Australia was in 2010.

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The National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group, comprised of federal and state wildland fire representatives, works with the National Interagency Coordination Center based at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, to mobilize resources and distribute Australian assistance requests across interagency partners.

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The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), located in Boise, Idaho, is the nation's support center for wildland firefighting. Eight different agencies and organizations are part of NIFC including, the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, National Weather Service, U.S. Fire Administration, and the National Association of State Foresters.

