

News Release

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

<http://www.nifc.gov>



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United States Wildland Fire Personnel Called to Assist with Australia Wildfires

Boise, Idaho – The United States is sending 21 wildland fire personnel from the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service to assist with ongoing wildfire suppression efforts in Australia. Australia is experiencing early and significant fire activity, particularly in the states of New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. Extended drought combined with hot and dry weather conditions have elevated wildfire risk, and fire activity is expected to continue for the next several months.

“This exchange demonstrates the value of our arrangement for mutual wildland fire support with Australia. It’s a valuable tool for both countries as we face increasingly complex and challenging fires,” **said Department of the Interior’s Office of Wildland Fire Director Jeff Rupert.** “The interagency team of professionals will share expertise from managing wildland fire under a variety of locations and conditions in the U.S., many of which are similar to what they’ll encounter in Australia.”

Based on the current situation in Australia, the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council is requesting 21 qualified U.S. fire personnel to assist with wildfire and aviation management. The BLM is sending six personnel, including two interagency resource representatives on behalf of the National Interagency Fire Center located in Boise, Idaho. The NPS is sending two people, the BIA is sending one person, the FWS is sending one person, and the USFS is sending 11 personnel. The employees, coming from Alaska, Nevada, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, Idaho, Utah, California, Oregon, Hawaii, and Virginia, will be departing for Australia from the San Francisco International Airport on Thursday, December 5.

Fires that started to burn in August have continued uninterrupted with large areas of both New South Wales and Queensland burned, multiple property losses, and, sadly, fatalities. Fire conditions continue to challenge in New South Wales and Queensland, while new fires are causing concern further south in Victoria. Fire conditions in Australia are extreme due to an extended drought, hot temperatures, and relative humidity in the single digits.

“We’re sending a contingent from several federal agencies that reflects decades of fire management

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experience,” **said U.S. Forest Service Fire Director Shawna Legarza.** “We face many of the same firefighting challenges in each country. We’ve utilized their expertise in the past and welcome the opportunity to reciprocate.”

The last fire assistance between the two countries was 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 National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group is working with the National Interagency Coordination Center to mobilize resources and distribute the request across interagency partners. The last time the U.S sent firefighters to Australia was in 2010.

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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.

