



# 2024 National Fire Year Themes

## Firefighter and public safety are always the highest priority

- Wildland firefighters work to protect lives, property, and natural resources when responding to wildfires.
- With each new fire start, fire managers assess risk to identify safe and appropriate management actions. Firefighters may not engage a wildfire until risk is mitigated to an acceptable level.
- [Know before you fly](#): Use of unauthorized, uncrewed/unmanned aerial systems (UAS), or drones, in a fire area endangers the lives of pilots and firefighters. Never fly uncrewed aircraft over or near a fire.

## Wildfire activity is becoming more extreme

- Overall, wildfire activity is lasting longer throughout each year and becoming more extreme.
- Wildfires are occurring earlier in the spring, lasting longer into the fall, and are increasingly intense and complex to manage. Periods of “above normal” wildfire activity typically last 75 days longer today than 40 years ago.
- Wildfire activity over the last 10 years has been some of the most destructive and costly in U.S. history.
- Three times in the last 10 years (2015, 2017, and 2020), more than 10 million acres have burned throughout the U.S. In 2020, a record 10.1 million acres burned in the U.S., the most since accurate recording and data gathering began in the 1980s.
- Between 1983 and 1992, wildfires burned an average of 2.7 million acres per year. The current 10-year average for acres burned across the U.S. has increased to 7.2 million acres per year.

## Making investments in the wildland fire workforce

- Wildland firefighters and support personnel are the backbone of wildland fire management. Firefighting and year-round fire management activities have placed increased demands on the wildland fire workforce.
- Firefighters and wildland fire personnel are frequently called upon year-round to support national and international disaster response efforts, providing employment stability and increased opportunity for professional growth.
- The federal wildland fire agencies continue to focus on providing mental health resources, ensuring career stability and upward mobility, healthy work-life balance for all personnel, and increased pay.
- The third annual National Wildland Firefighter Day, which recognizes the vital work of wildland firefighters and support personnel, will be celebrated on July 2, 2024. The first-ever [Fireline 5K](#) will take place in person in Boise, Idaho on June 2 and run virtually until July 2.
- The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) marks significant commitment to wildland fire management. The law allocates \$5 billion for federal wildland fire management efforts to help mitigate and reduce wildfire risk, recover from wildfires, and increase recruitment and retention of the wildland firefighter workforce through supplemental pay, permanent position conversions, and improvements to health, wellbeing, and training.



## Be smoke ready

- During wildland fires, air quality can change quickly. Know the risks and plan ahead to reduce exposure. [Online air quality resources](#) provide recommended actions, as well as smoke forecasts and current information.
- Communities impacted by wildfires should remain aware of smoke advisories and conditions and take appropriate precautions.

## Recreate responsibly: The public plays a valuable role in wildfire prevention

- More than 95% of wildfires are contained in the first 24 hours of initial response, meaning tens of thousands of fires are extinguished before becoming large (100 acres in timber or 300 acres in range/grassland) wildfires.
- On average, 87% of all wildfires are caused by humans each year. Many of these wildfires occur near roads, communities, and recreation areas, threatening public safety.





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- Know before you go: Check local fire restrictions before you leave and be aware of use restrictions as well as any active fire closures.
- In addition to your emergency kit with the [ten essentials](#), carry a shovel, bucket, and extra water.
- Spending time outdoors has become increasingly popular. The [Recreate Responsibly Coalition](#) offers guidelines and tips for wildfire prevention and practicing responsible outdoor recreation.
- The longest-running public service advertising campaign, Smokey Bear, turns 80 this year! Smokey's actual birthday is August 9, but starting in January the many wildland fire partners and agencies began celebrating by hosting events across the country to continue the message of wildfire prevention.

## Fire plays a natural role in ecosystems

- Firefighters and land managers can reduce the risk of future high-intensity wildfires by reducing vegetation, or "hazardous fuels" through prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, and other treatment methods.
- Scientific data show that strategically-placed prescribed fire and mechanical treatments are essential to reducing forest fuels, lowering catastrophic wildfire risks, and slowing or stopping progression of uncontrolled wildfire.
  - » Prescribed fire is a proactive management tool and one of the most efficient ways of reducing wildfire risk. Regularly conducting low intensity prescribed fires, which mimic nature, reduces the buildup of flammable vegetation and overgrowth.
  - » When a wildfire interacts with an area previously treated with prescribed fire, it is more likely to be smaller, easier to suppress, and less destructive.
  - » Forest thinning and the safe and effective use of prescribed fire, often in conjunction, are essential tools for reducing wildfire risk and creating resilient fire-adapted landscapes.
- When safe to do so, wildland firefighter leadership will determine when to manage naturally occurring wildfires to improve habitat and restore the ecological balance of fire-adapted landscapes.
- Homeowners should take responsibility to reduce flammable material around homes and communities before a fire occurs, which can help keep the public, emergency response personnel, and property safe. Creating a buffer between homes and trees, shrubs, or other vegetation is essential to improving a home's chance of surviving a wildfire. Not only does this space help slow or stop wildfire spread, but it also reduces the amount of risk firefighters face when protecting homes. Read [tips on how to keep your home safe](#).

## Complex incident management teams allow for more flexibility

- Complex incident management teams (CIMT) are configured to respond to large, high-complexity fires and can expand or reduce staff in all functional areas as necessary to meet the needs of the incident. Current type 2 and type 1 qualified personnel and IMTs are transitioning their qualifications and typing to meet the implementation timeline of April 2024.
- This business model and cultural change requires commitment and coordination among the agencies, partners, and cooperators to align qualifications, expectations, and standards and to more efficiently manage CIMTs. It is intended to stabilize team numbers, ensure the overall availability of team members, reduce fatigue, and increase the resiliency of interagency IMTs and their members.
- All updates, correspondence, and information on implementation is available as a [story map](#) and on the [Incident Workforce Development Group](#) website.

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