



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Contact: David Houttekier: 434.220.9065 or david.houttekier@dof.virginia.gov

Department of Forestry Sends Help to Battle Western Fires

Charlottesville, VA: As wildfire ravages many areas of the West this summer, Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) personnel from across the Commonwealth have accepted assignments to assist with fire suppression efforts. The Department has deployed thirty-nine people to serve as ground forces on fire line crews or as support staff in fire management roles throughout the west. VDOF personnel are joining other Virginia firefighters from the USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

“Virginia is fortunate to have employees at the Virginia Department of Forestry who have both the ability and expertise necessary to provide professional assistance to agencies in the West responsible for fire control efforts,” said Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring. “Conditions are very physically demanding, but these are some of Virginia’s most experienced wildland firefighters. Their extensive training makes Virginia a leader in efforts to support other states in times of critical need.”

An important part of the process of responding to western states’ need for wildfire control assistance is the Virginia Interagency Coordination Center, staffed with USDA Forest Service professionals led by Center Manager Carrie Powell. According to State Forester Rob Farrell, “A key component to our agency’s ability to assist states in need is our relationship with the Forest Service Dispatch Center. Through this collaborative effort, our firefighters have made a significant contribution by teaming up with our federal partners.”

The firefighters from Virginia will be fighting blazes in remote locations, under adverse weather conditions. Assignments are normally for a fourteen-day period, not counting travel. John Miller, director of fire and emergency response with the Department of Forestry, said, “These assignments help Department of Forestry firefighters gain experience at the national level, which makes them better prepared to deal with the management of emergency incidents here in the Commonwealth.”

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