



This has been a challenging past year – our decision-makers, our responders, and our communities were faced with responding to the COVID pandemic while managing a record setting wildfire year. We commend the interagency approach to both disasters. As your national representatives on wildland fire through the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC), we wanted to reach out to our fellow members, communities, and all those that work with state, tribal and local governments. WFLC is an intergovernmental committee of federal, state, tribal, and local officials dedicated to promoting consistent wildland fire policies, goals, and management activities and implementing the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. The members of WFLC understand the commitment it takes to achieve success and join the efforts with our partners to promote another safe and effective wildland fire year.

To our responders – we respect you to the fullest. In addition to your normal responsibilities, state, tribal, and local responders make up much of the surge and reserve capacity of this country, for both wildland fire and all emergency response. You make yourselves available in every way possible to protect our communities against catastrophic loss due to wildfire at the national level. We support your physical and mental health and safety and promote a positive work and interagency environment with our federal, state, tribal and local partners.

Communities – we are in it with you. You have encountered many challenges across the country relating to wildland and wildland urban interface fires. From helping to create resilient landscapes to building fire adapted communities including seeking opportunities for additional fuels mitigation, you have worked hard to help your communities live with wildland fire. Wildland fire will always be a part of many of our communities, but how we deal with it has created challenges. We stand together to continue strengthening our communities and protecting our states and communities from loss.

Along with our federal partners, we continue to utilize the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy as the framework to addresses these challenges. By closely coordinating and assisting one another for a seamless wildfire response network, regardless of who owns the land, we strive to keep our firefighters and communities safe. We work in and with communities through programs intended to help them live with fire, through home hardening and reducing risk from wildland fire. And we work across governmental boundaries throughout the landscape to help build resiliency that not only minimizes hazards, but enhances benefits coming from forests and rangelands.

As a collective, we will continue to work together to help build fire adapted communities, contribute to resilient landscapes, and collectively work to protect communities through efficient and effective wildfire response. But above all else, we are committed to doing all we can to promote responder and public safety, despite all the challenges that come our way. For more on existing and future efforts by members of WFLC and other partners, visit the following:

International Association of Fire Chiefs

National Association of State Foresters

Intertribal Timber Council

National League of Cities

National Association of Counties

Governor from the West

ARE YOU PREPARED?

Do your emergency management and response agencies engage in pre-season planning?

Implement or review your [Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) (CWPP) to be sure it includes:

- Identifying wildland fire response capabilities
- Planning for evacuation and shelters for people and animals
- Establishing Joint Information Centers
- Identifying stakeholders for unified command
- Understanding and identifying values to be protected

For more information on wildland fire preparedness, visit the [Federal Emergency Management Agency's](#) website.

Do your response agencies have mutual aid agreements for "closest response" resources?

This type of agreement among emergency response agencies allows responders to lend assistance across jurisdictional boundaries and may occur by request or on a continuing basis. They are critical to ensuring as many resources as possible are available to combat wildfire when it starts.

Local government officials can ensure agreements are in place by requesting documentation from their city or county emergency services director, local fire chief, police chief or sheriff.

Are the necessary processes in place to declare local emergencies and request assistance from state and federal resources?

Be sure all stakeholders aware of their respective role after an emergency declaration? Ensuring your city or county knows who to call for additional support when the response to a disaster exceeds local capabilities can save precious time. Many state emergency management agencies provide sample emergency declaration codes and may be able to provide technical assistance in updating your city or county's code. [Find the contact information for your state's emergency management agency here.](#)

Do your residents have access to, and participate in, wildfire preparedness and education activities?

Are your emergency planning and response agencies conducting outreach to community members and promoting personal and community preparedness and risk reduction programs such as [Ready, Set, Go!](#) and [Firewise USA](#)®?

You can learn about your area's risk profile at the [Wildfire Risk to Communities](#) website. Understanding the risk of a wildfire in your community is an important step in preparing for wildfire and considering steps to reduce wildfire risk.

Readying for disaster such as wildfire is a community-wide endeavor that requires careful planning and consistency on the part of first responders and residents alike. Ensuring that families are informed about evacuation routes and procedures, know how to prepare and maintain their property to best defend it against wildfire and have a personal action plan in place can improve the outcome of a wildland fire event.

Has your community considered the steps it can take to reduce wildfire risk and implemented wildfire mitigation measures?

There are multiple activities both individuals and communities can take before wildfires occur to reduce their risk of the wildfire as well as the intensity and size of the fire. As a community, understanding risk is important and taking action even more. Mitigation opportunities exist through FEMA, state emergency management, state forestry agencies and local government.

In addition to government programs, not-for-profit groups as well as local community organizations often create opportunities for community members to be active in mitigation activities. Additionally, at the homeowner and businessowner level, individual activities are important to help protect those properties.

MORE INFORMATION

More information on how best to prepare for fires season may be found at the following websites:

- [IAFC.org/wildland](https://iafc.org/wildland)
- [WildlandFireRSG.org](https://wildlandfireRSG.org)
- [Firewise.org](https://firewise.org)
- [FireAdaptedNetwork.org](https://fireadaptednetwork.org)
- [NACo.org/CountyWildfirePlaybook](https://naco.org/CountyWildfirePlaybook)