



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

1.A.2.

May 13, 2021

Memorandum

To: Regional Directors

From: Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection

Subject: Leader's Intent: 2021 Wildland Fire Year

The 2021 wildland fire year has started. We have already experienced fires causing partial or full park closures and employee evacuations. The [North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook](#) for the period of April through June forecasts above normal fire conditions in Florida, much of the southern plains, and the southwest. The above normal significant fire potential is forecast to then shift further north and west as we move into July to include portions of California and the Pacific Northwest states.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be layered over wildland fire activities. We learned a lot about managing both wildland fire and COVID-19 in 2020. Continuing to use the best management practices developed last year, and implementing newly developed practices and guidance, will assist us in maintaining employee health and response capability. The growing number of vaccinations will assist as well; however, maintaining social distance, wearing masks appropriately, and washing our hands remain important mitigation measures. Information on managing COVID-19 while conducting wildland fire management functions is available from the [Wildland Fire Medical and Public Health Advisory Team \(MPHAT\)](#)

COVID-19 is only one of many hazards our fire management workforce faces. Remembering, and then anchoring, to the basics of fire management will help us manage risk. This starts with ensuring fire management plans are current, our employees are prepared, equipment is in good shape, and that our management expectations are clear. I ask that as leaders, when you meet with your fire management staff, you have a clear conversation about the outlook for the 2021 fire year, convey your expectations for safe and effective fire management, and solicit input on actions to be successful.

Don't forget, we are in this together! Seek assistance from others to help manage your workload during fire events. Fire staff at the local, regional, and national levels stand ready to assist you in finding an Agency Representative to take on a portion of the associated workload a large wildfire brings. Additionally, if your park has a large wildfire, we may ask to send another superintendent

to work with you to build their knowledge of wildland fire incident management, as well as to assist you where possible.

It's critically important to monitor and manage fatigue of incident response personnel, fire management staff, and other local employees supporting fire management activities. It is difficult to take time off to rest and recover when there is a wildfire in your park or on your doorstep. Early ordering of the additional support personnel mentioned previously will provide time to build relationships and knowledge and allow you and your fire management staff to take needed days off.

Large wildland fires require significant logistical support and can produce large amounts of waste. Diverting trash by recycling reduces the impact to local landfills. As stated in the [*Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations, 2021*](#), "Every incident should seek opportunities to reduce unnecessary waste and limit impacts associated with management actions." On-incident recycling may be accomplished using a recycling vendor. A USDA Forest Service, Blanket Purchase Agreement is available in four geographic areas and emergency equipment rental agreements (EERA) are available in others. More information, including how to place an order for a recycling vendor, can be found on the [Forest Service Greening Fire](#) page.

Firefighter and public safety remain the first priority in wildland fire management. Proper planning, use of risk management tools, and asking for help, are all ways to begin addressing safety. Another method is to set clear expectations on treating others with respect. Harassment and discrimination are not conducive to a work environment where employees feel safe to speak up about hazards. It is important to respect individual differences and ensure all employees are included as full, contributing, and influential team members. Please ensure our management expectations of a respectful, inclusive, engaged, and psychologically safe work environment is clear.

The 2021 fire year has already proven to be difficult and indications are it will worsen as the western United States swings into the core of its fire activity. Continued use of best management practices for both COVID-19 and wildland fire management are critical in achieving safe fire management operations. Please do your part providing clear intent in establishing as much of a margin of safety as can be provided during the remainder of 2021.

Thank you for the work you do for wildland fire management each and every day.

Cc: Division Chief, Fire and Aviation Management
NPS Memorandums

