
CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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As California Enters 5th Year of Drought, CAL FIRE Continues to Staff with Extra Firefighters During Winter Months

Sacramento – While recent rains and cooler temperatures have lowered the threat of wildfires in some areas of the State, CAL FIRE continues to have extra firefighter staffing statewide and remains at peak fire season in Central and Southern California. Last week alone CAL FIRE crews responded to nearly 50 new wildfires. Even as CAL FIRE transitions out of peak fire season in Northern California and into its winter preparedness mode, fire officials are still asking residents statewide to be cautious outdoors as ‘One Less Spark means One Less Wildfire’.

“As drought conditions continued throughout the year, we experienced a significant increase in the number and size of fires,” said Chief Ken Pimlott, CAL FIRE director. “Even with the increased likelihood of precipitation due to El Niño, it will still take several years of steady rainfall for some of the larger vegetation to return to normal levels and no amount of rain will bring back millions of bark beetle infested dead and dying trees across the state. We can’t let our guard down, especially with changing climate conditions leading to longer fire seasons and larger wildfires.”

While CAL FIRE has begun to close some of its seasonal fire stations and facilities in Northern California, CAL FIRE is maintaining firefighter staffing that meets the current threat, as well as strategically moving resources to areas that remain at a higher threat level. As California prepares to enter the fifth year of drought, CAL FIRE will continue to monitor weather conditions closely to determine when it can move into winter preparedness in Central and Southern California. The department will also increase staffing in Northern California should the weather conditions change or if there is a need to support wildfires or any other emergencies in Southern California.

The 2015 fire season to date has been an extremely active year, even more than in 2014. Statewide, CAL FIRE and firefighters from many local agencies battled over 6,100 wildfires within the State Responsibility Area that burned nearly 308,000 acres. This is nearly 1,800 more wildfires this year than in an average year. Across all jurisdictions in California there were over 8,100 wildfires that burned nearly 825,000 acres in 2015.

A leading cause of wildfires this time of year is from escaped outdoor landscape debris burning. Residents are urged to still take precautions outdoors in order to prevent sparking a wildfire. In Northern and Central California residents should ensure it's a permissive burn day in their area by contacting the local air quality district and make sure they have any and all required burn permits. During burning make sure that piles of landscape debris are no larger than four feet in diameter, provide a 10 ft. clearance down to bare mineral soil around the burn pile and that a responsible adult is in attendance at all times with a water source and a shovel.

Firefighters will also be utilizing this same window of opportunity to conduct prescribed burns aimed at improving forest health on private and public lands.

For more ways to prevent sparking a wildfire visit www.ReadyForWildfire.org. One Less Spark, means One Less Wildfire.

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