



For Immediate Release

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National Wildfire Preparedness Moves to Highest Level

Boise, Idaho - The National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) is increasing the National Fire Preparedness Level (PL) to its highest point, PL-5, effective at 5:30 a.m. Mountain Daylight Time on Thursday, August 13th. The PL ranges from one, indicating minimal activity, to five, which signals very high activity.

NMAC, which consists of top federal and state fire managers, sets the national PL. The raised preparedness level reflects a high degree of wildfire activity, a major commitment of fire resources, and the probability that severe conditions will continue for at least a few days.

“A significant amount of initial and extended attack and large fire activity has occurred over the past several days as a result of lightning storms that have intensified local and geographic response,” said Aitor Bidaburu, Chair of NMAC. “Given the continuing hot and dry weather and the increase in fire activity in the western U.S., the decision to move to Preparedness Level 5 depicts the complexity that fire managers are encountering to assure that adequate firefighting resources are available for protection of life, property and our nation’s natural resources.”

During periods of high wildfire activity, when assets are stretched thin, federal, tribal, state and local partners work together to prioritize wildfires so that those threatening life, property and valuable natural and cultural resources receive assets as quickly as possible. Professional wildfire managers adapt their strategies and tactics based on the assets that they receive and do the very best they can to suppress unwanted wildfires effectively and efficiently.

Wildfire activity has escalated in recent days after thunderstorms, many with little or no moisture, moved across parts of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana, sparking hundreds of new fires. To date, 39,254 wildfires have burned nearly 6.4 million acres in the United States this year. The number of wildfires in 2015 represents about 80 percent of the ten-year average. However, the number of current acres burned represents about a 38 percent increase over the ten-year average at this point in the year.

The last time that the National Preparedness Level was raised to 5 was on August 20, 2013. The National Preparedness Level remained at 5 for 7 days until it was dropped to 4 on August 26, 2013. This is the fifth time that PL-5 has been reached in the last ten years.

During PL-5, further assistance from the military, beyond what is already in use, and international resources may be considered and requested, but no decisions have been made concerning those steps.

The fire forecast for most of the West predicts above normal temperatures, below normal precipitation, and continuing drought in many areas into the fall.

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