

## Pennsylvania wildland firefighters fight blazes throughout the nation

The Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry is tasked with protecting life, property, and natural resources in the Commonwealth from wildfire. Consistent with formal mutual aid agreements with local, state and federal agencies, the Bureau of Forestry trains and equips wildland firefighters for fire suppression work. When states and agencies need assistance, Pennsylvania wildland firefighters may be called upon, by virtue of these agreements, to assist. Pennsylvania firefighters are trained and qualified under national wildland standards to function either as a member of an organized incident management team or as a member of a wildland crew. Since 1973, more than 150 crews from the Bureau of Forestry, of 20 individuals each, have been mobilized for deployment to aid with wildfire suppression and hurricane emergency aid throughout the lower 48 states and Alaska.

Fire crew mobilization is traditionally referred to as a 'Call-Up'. By agreement, crews gather at the mobilization center, located at the Lower Swatara Fire Department in Middletown, PA. Pennsylvania fire crews are formed using a mix of trained state and local volunteer wildland firefighters. Each crew is composed of twenty firefighters under the leadership of a crew boss and three squad bosses.

Firefighters are required to carry their own tent and sleeping bag to fire camp. In order to be assigned to the fire, firefighters must be equipped with flame resistant clothing (such as Nomex), leather lug-soled boots, hardhat, leather gloves, eye protection and a fire shelter before being allowed to work on the fire-line. These articles are referred to as personal protection equipment (PPE). The Bureau of Forestry ensures that each firefighter has all of the necessary PPE prior to deployment.

The crew remains intact as a working unit throughout the call-up. Crew members live and work together for the duration of their assignment, and assignments typically last 14 to 16 days. When traveling to the western states, Pennsylvania crews often travel with crews from other northeastern states.

Work on the fire-line is accomplished through all members of the fire crew functioning as a team, using hand tools for the construction of fire breaks. Fire crews can be tasked with the installation of water lines and sprinkler systems for protection of fire lines and buildings, and improvement of defensible space for homes that are in the path of wildfires.

Families of firefighters are kept informed through agency contacts during the call-up. Individual firefighters' names and their hometowns are withheld for the duration of a call-up but firefighters are encouraged to tell their stories to local media when they return home.



Visit our website

DCNR maintains a comprehensive website about wildland fire. Visit [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry) and click on "Wildland Fire."

For local information contact your forest district office. See the forest district directory at [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/directory/districtoffice/](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/directory/districtoffice/).