

Release

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Monday, Aug. 3, 2015

CONTACT:
Doug Wood, Director of Communications
803-968-1576 (cell) | 803-896-8820 (office)
DWood@scfc.gov

Forestry Commission sends 7 firefighters to California

Multi-agency SC contingent joining federal partners in battling Western wildfires

COLUMBIA—Responding to a request from the U.S. Forest Service, the South Carolina Forestry Commission has sent seven of its wildland firefighters to join crews battling more than 30 wildfires around Redding, Calif.

Accompanied by three members of the Horry County Fire Rescue Department's Wildfire Team, they will become part of a larger unit of other South Carolina responders called a Type 2-Initial Attack hand crew. The contingent arrived in Redding Sunday and was deployed to the nearby Shasta-Trinity National Forest. They will begin work today.

Hand crews do the dirty – and dangerous – work of fighting on the front lines of wildland fires. They work side-by-side in 20-person teams, constructing “firelines” around wildfires by clearing flammable materials from the ground and digging down to mineral soil.

Type 2-IA hand crews are generally more experienced firefighting teams, capable of conducting initial attack and breaking into autonomous units if necessary. “The personnel we sent to California undergo regular training for exactly these kinds of special assignments,” said SCFC Fire Protection Chief Darryl Jones. “Not only will they provide much-needed help, but they’ll also gain valuable experience that they can bring back to South Carolina.”

The South Carolina firefighters dispatched to northern California become temporary employees of the U.S. Forest Service when they mobilize and will probably stay about two weeks. Standard federal assignments for hand crews are 14 days, plus a day of travel both ways. They are working under a cooperative agreement that the South Carolina Forestry Commission has with the federal firefighting agencies, the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. “This arrangement is beneficial for us all because it allows us to share resources,” said Jones. “We can send help to other areas when they need it, and they can help us when we need it.”

The fires that the South Carolina crew will be fighting have already burned more than 23,000 acres, and more than 1,100 firefighters and volunteers have been mobilized for the effort. Timely, accurate information about the Fork Complex can be found at: <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4428/>

###

As the only state agency responsible for wildfire suppression in all unincorporated areas of the state, the South Carolina Forestry Commission protects 13.1 million acres from wildland fire. More than 500 county, municipal and volunteer fire departments operate more than 1,100 fire stations in South Carolina. The Forestry Commission cooperates with these departments to prevent and control structural and wildland fires, employing highly trained firefighters and specialized equipment when fires burn into forested areas that are difficult to reach.

Did you know...?

Escaped debris burns are the number one cause of wildfires in South Carolina. Of the state's 1,823 wildfires in 2014, 952 were caused by debris burning, more than double all other fire causes combined. Arson/incendiary reasons are the second-leading cause at about 25%.

Many people are surprised to learn that cigarettes, lightning, campfires and fireworks combine for only about 10% of wildfire origins.