

Wildland Fire: Alaska

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Wildland fire management agencies and organizations in Alaska share common goals: to enhance personal safety and reduce loss of life while preserving and enhancing the health of forests and wetlands.

Public and firefighter safety is our first priority.

- Federal and state policies reflect the fact that human life concerns are placed above all others.

Wildland fire happens, be ready.

- People who live and recreate in fire-prone lands assume a certain level of risk and responsibility. Managing risk from wildland fire is a personal responsibility.
 - People can live compatibly with fire, if aware of and prepared for local fire conditions.
 - ◆ Individuals can reduce fire risk to their homes, property and communities.

Wildland fire is an essential, natural process.

- Fire has shaped many wildlands for thousands of years; in these areas, fire is important for the survival of many plants and animals.
- Fire behaves differently throughout Alaska.
 - Virtually all vegetation types in Alaska can experience wildland fire but some like black spruce are especially prone to burning. Others, like hardwood stands, only burn well under extreme conditions.
- In populated areas, situations arise where the natural role of fire must be tempered with the need to protect human life and health, private property and developments. Efforts are also made to protect natural and cultural resources from fire, as appropriate.

Alaskans work together to manage wildland fire.

- Fires spread when conditions are right.
 - Fires cease only when either there is no fuel or conditions are not suited for burning.
 - Fire does not acknowledge jurisdictional boundaries of federal, state, and local agencies, native organizations or private landowners.
- Wildland fire management in Alaska is a joint effort among federal, state, and local governments, native organizations, fire departments, communities and landowners.
 - Agencies, native organizations and communities are working together to understand and accept what it means to live in a fire-prone area and to realize the benefits of managing fire in the wildlands.

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Managing wildland fire in Alaska balances risks and benefits in an ever changing environment.

- All fire management programs in Alaska adhere to the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan (AIWFMP).
 - The AIWFMP sets priorities for the assignment of firefighting resources statewide.
 - The AIWFMP sets the initial attack priorities through the use of management option designations.
 - ◆ Management options provide a range of alternatives from aggressive initial attack to surveillance. The AIWFMP contains 4 management option choices. Critical management option lands are the first priority for the assignment of suppression forces followed by Full, Modified, and Limited in that order.
- Fire management programs are customized for specific wildland areas to maintain healthy ecosystems and protect neighboring communities.
 - Fire management programs are designed based on a balance of needs including fire suppression, prevention and using fire as a tool. There will always be a need for prevention and suppression to protect people and communities.
- Every wildland fire season is different due to seasonal and/or annual variation.
 - Two of Alaska's top-three wildland fire seasons have happened in two consecutive years. 4.5 million acres burned in 2005, Alaska's third largest wildland fire season. 6.7 million acres burned in 2004, the largest season since reliable records began in the 1950's.
 - Other years, such as 2006, are notable for their lack of fire. 266,000 acres burned in 2006.

For More Information:

***Alaska Interagency Coordination Center -
fire.ak.blm.gov***