

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Statement on National Wildland Firefighter Day

July 2, 2023

Today, on National Wildland Firefighter Day, I join Americans across the country in expressing deep gratitude for our wildland firefighters and support personnel who heroically protect our communities and natural resources from wildfires.

National Wildland Firefighter Day takes place during the week of remembrance that is held annually from June 30 to July 6 which serves as a moment for the entire Nation to reinforce our commitment to wildland firefighter safety, as we remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

We also celebrate our wildland firefighting teams who are currently making an impact and helping keep communities safe in Canada, as they battle a historically difficult start to their wildfire season. Through the National Interagency Fire Center, we have deployed almost 1,300 Federal and State firefighters, support personnel, and significant firefighting assets, such as airtankers and advanced technology support, to help our Canadian allies.

This week, we also honor the lives of firefighters who have fallen in the line of duty, like the 19 Granite Mountain Hotshot firefighters who died fighting the Yarnell Hill Fire in Arizona 10 years ago. Their sacrifice—and that of too many others—drives us to renew our commitment to wildland firefighter safety.

Recognizing the service of our wildland firefighting teams on this day is especially important because we continue to ask more of them year after year. Since taking office, I have traveled to communities across the country that have been impacted by historic wildfires. I've met with firefighters working night and day to keep their communities safe, as fires get larger, more intense, and more difficult to control because of climate change.

That is why my administration continues to make supporting this workforce a top priority. The bipartisan infrastructure law and the Inflation Reduction Act included over \$7 billion in funding for the Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Interior, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to increase pay for our wildland firefighters and to enhance our ability to prevent, mitigate and respond to wildfires. These resources will help over 100 at-risk communities in 22 States and seven Tribes develop and implement plans to protect themselves from wildfires.

I have directed my administration to do everything possible to ensure wildland firefighters receive the wages, benefits, and other investments for health and wellness that are necessary to support and grow this critical workforce. We will continue work with Congress to get it done.

I have also directed my administration to work proactively with private sector partners to spur technological innovations and ensure we are investing in further research and development of wildfire protective equipment and response, detection, and suppression tools. We owe nothing less to our brave firefighters and their loved ones.

Finally, I have directed my administration to invest in building more resilient communities. Resilience keeps us safer and reduces the burden on our firefighters. Today please join me in thinking about all of them and expressing gratitude for their selfless service to our country.

May God bless our firefighters and their families across our Nation.

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