

## THE ROLE OF NWSA IN WILDLAND FIRE/EMERGENCY INCIDENT SUPPORT



The National Wildfire Suppression Association (NWSA) represents over 150 private wildland fire services contractors who operate on an as-needed basis to provide federal/state and local agencies with a variety of resources for wildland fire and other emergency incidents. Resources include twenty-person firefighting crews, timber faller modules, engines, tenders, dozers and other specialized fire equipment as well as a full complement of fire/emergency incident camp services.

NWSA provides training certification, advocacy and support to help its member companies field experienced, highly trained, safety-focused resources that meet or exceed all federal standards, including all requirements of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG).

When lives are on the line, the agencies must have confidence in any resources that are a part of the fire community. Since 1991, the mission of NWSA is to insure that its members earn that confidence. Because safety and skill is paramount, certifying instructors is a vital part of NWSA services to its member companies. In 2007, NWSA certified instructors held 800 classes and trained 7,400 private wildland, agency and rural structure fire department firefighters.

NWSA's annual national conference, newsletters and website promote professionalism and excellent performance through the exchange of information about issues related to the industry. NWSA's new online bulletin board, [www.myfirecommunity.net](http://www.myfirecommunity.net), is creating an ongoing "conversation" among agency and private wildland firefighters, trainers, engine and specialized equipment operators and other resources.

NWSA also is partnering with agencies over the next year to offer a new contractor certification program in 2009 called Business Ethics 101 which will equip members with the basics in Worker's Compensation, USDOL, OSHA and USDOT regulations, Drug & Alcohol Training and Business Ethics.

NWSA advocacy includes working as a cooperator in the wildland fire services to build positive relationships with agencies and to advocate for programs like Best Value Contracting that provide agencies with the most professional private resources.



## QUALITY RESOURCES THROUGH RIGOROUS TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION



Wildfire destroys everything in its path. With a mere shift of the wind, it can become a monster endangering those who don't understand its nature. Federal, state and local government firefighter skills are honed by arduous and constant training required to fight wildland fires and survive. Anyone who doesn't have that level of training jeopardizes everyone on the fireline

The National Wildfire Suppression Association (NWSA) is recognized by federal/state and local agencies for the quality of our instructor certification programs. They are designed to provide resources that meet or exceed all training, safety, experience, and physical fitness standards identified in the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualifications System Guide (PMS 310-1). More than 7,400 private wildland firefighters received training by NWSA certified instructors in 2007. Our focus on performance and safety has resulted in loss ratios (accidents) that are significantly lower.

NWSA was the first to hold the Pacific Northwest Coordination Group (PNWCG) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to certify instructors to train private sector, agencies, and interested parties.

NWSA's nationally recognized database for tracking all training by NWSA certified instructors meets all the requirements of the PNWCG MOU and is open to other users by affiliation for checking training records, Incident Qualification (IQ) Cards, and photo ID. It securely prints IQ Cards and Training Certificates.

In 2009, a new course, Business Ethics 101, will help certify our member companies in the basics of Worker's Compensation, USDOL and USDOT, OSHA regulations, Drug & Alcohol Training and business ethics. Many other seminars at our national conference offer continuing professional growth and important information.

All these efforts by NWSA have resulted in a highly trained, safety centered, trustworthy resource agencies can trust on the fireline or any emergency incident.



### GOOD CAUSE FOR CONFIDENCE

- Nationally recognized database for tracking training
- Excellent training/tracking system ensures firefighter skill/safety
- Most NWSA certified instructors/trainers former state/federal wildland fire employees - combined 800 years fire experience.
- NWSA Code of Ethics and monitoring program govern instructors
- Annual Mandatory Training Sessions update NWSA instructors on changes/requirements
- NWSA standards set by the training committee based on the 310-1NWCG Training Guide.

## RAPID RESPONSE WITH QUALITY SUPPORT



Braving the smoke, heat and danger of wildland fires or the aftermath of disasters and emergency incidents is an “army” of federal/state and local agency responders battling to contain the crisis. When the magnitude of the event exceeds agency resources, these agencies can call in reinforcements from professional wildland fire contractors: 20-person firefighting crews, timber faller modules, engines, tenders and other specialized equipment.

Pre-existing agreements and contracts with the agencies allow National Wildfire Suppression Association (NWSA) member and associate member companies to dispatch these resources immediately. More than 130 contract crews and over 400 fire engines and tenders of all types are available from NWSA member companies for dispatch across the U.S.

Because of budget cutbacks and increased fire activity, agencies are increasingly calling on these private resources on an as-needed basis. They are paid only for time worked on the line. The contractor bears all costs of training, equipment, travel, and insurance costs.

After a 12-14 hour shift on the line, agency and private contractor crews need a place to eat, sleep, shower and revitalize. In addition to providing crews, engines, tenders and other specialized equipment for the front lines, contractors can send resources to set up a totally operational camp: shower, laundry, lavatory, and housing units, as well as catering operations that can feed thousands of firefighters or emergency responders.

### SUPPORT RESOURCES

- Fully Equipped 20-person Crews
- Timber Faller modules
- Various types of Engines
- Water Tenders
- Tactical Tenders
- Dozers
- Lowboys
- Bus Transportation Services
- Handwashing Units
- Shower Units
- Catering Units
- Time Recorders
- Overhead Personnel
- Temporary Housing Units
- Skidgeons
- Reefers
- Potable Water
- Laundry Units
- Pumping Stations
- Tower Fill Tanks





**The National Wildfire Suppression Association**  
*preserving and protecting our environment*

*Dear Members of Congress:*

We at the National Wildfire Suppression Association (NWSA) wish to introduce you to our organization. We know that two concerns in Congress have been the rising costs of wildfire suppression efforts across the United States and the safety of our firefighters on the line. We represent the private industry that provides professionally trained emergency resources to federal/state and local agencies responding to wildfires and other national disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, that threaten our nation's natural resources, private property and personal safety.

The enclosed papers describe who we are, what resources we provide and the nationally recognized quality of training we have developed that enables us to field high performance crews with an excellent safety record.

We believe it is important that you understand these resources are available on an as-needed basis to complement agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Homeland Security, in their efforts when the wildfires/national disasters have depleted their resources.

We believe that we provide a safe, cost effective resource to help protect this country's lives, home and environment.

We hope that you will consider us a valuable asset for information on the issues of Wildfire Suppression/Emergency Response and please feel free to contact us for information that might be of value to you or your staff on these issues.

*Sincerely,*

Deborah Miley  
Executive Director

## WHY THE NEED FOR PRIVATE CONTRACT RESOURCES?



The relationship between federal and state fire organizations and the private wildland firefighter contract industry began in the early 1980's—an era of shrinking agency budgets and a growing incidence of wildland fires. Prior to that, almost 30 years of the wettest and coolest period in the last 100 years led the U.S. Forest Service to reduce its firefighting capacity from 1,200 to 500 crews.

However, since 1980, drought, altered fuel complexes, and the expansion of the urban wildland interface have dramatically affected fire frequency, size and intensity. The fires of 2006, for example, burned over 10 million acres, consuming nearly 80 percent of federal suppression expenditures and 41 percent of the Forest Service budget for that year. This situation is further exacerbated by a budget-driven reduction in agency forces over the last 18 years. By the end of the 1990's, these events led to the first crew agreement between private wildland fire services and the agencies.

The emergence of private contract resources--national and regional 20- person firefighting crews, engines, dozers, tenders and other specialized equipment, and support services such as caterers and shower/handwashing units--gives agencies the flexibility they need to increase or decrease support with the most cost effective solution. Training, insurance costs, benefits, gear and transportation are all borne by the contractor.

Today, approximately 40 percent of the resources across the United States are provided by private wildland fire services. NWSA represents more than 150 private sector contract companies in 16 states that can field a work force of around 12,000 during the height of fire season.

NWSA Board President Rick Dice emphasizes that the role of the private sector is to complement, rather than compete with existing agency resources when fire activity and other emergency incidents, such as Hurricane Katrina and the Shuttle recovery operation, exceed organizational capacity.





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**CHAPTERS**

Pacific Northwest Chapter  
Great Basin Chapter  
Region 5 Chapter  
Eastern US Chapter  
National Contract Resources Chapter  
Northern Rockies Chapter

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**

Northwest Contract Firefighters Association  
Oregon Firefighting Contractors Assn.  
Western Forest Fire Services Assn.  
Umpqua Community College  
Linn Benton Community College

**STATES REPRESENTED**

Arizona	Nevada
California	North Carolina
Colorado	Oregon
Georgia	Utah
Idaho	Tennessee
Michigan	Washington
Minnesota	Wisconsin
Missouri	Wyoming
Montana	



*NWSA Board Members and Vicki Minor at the Wildland Firefighter Memorial in Boise ID.*

L-R: Don Moss; Mike Wheelock; Deborah Miley, NWSA Exec. Director;  
Vicki Minor, Wildland Firefighter Foundation Exec. Director;  
Bruce Ferguson; Rick Dice, NWSA Board President

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