

TEXAS WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

Texas A&M Forest Service provides statewide leadership and technical assistance to ensure trees, forests, and related natural resources are sustained for the benefit of all. The agency supports the state's incident response capability, protecting against wildfire and responding to a range of all-hazard incidents. The State of Texas assigns the agency the authority to take all actions deemed necessary for the prevention and suppression of wildland fires.

INCREASING EMERGENCY RESPONSE CAPACITY

As a direct result of population increases, fluctuating weather patterns and changes in land use, the expanding threat of wildfires has greatly increased requests for state assistance.



Add 100 fire and emergency response positions — Additional personnel are essential to keep pace with the growing demand for wildfire mitigation and suppression in Texas.



Add/replace wildfire suppression equipment — Utilizing the latest in firefighting apparatus is crucial to enhancing response capabilities, allowing for faster response times and increasing life safety for both firefighters and the public.



Improve current pay levels — Recruit and retain a qualified workforce to provide protection to Texas' residents and natural resources. The agency has exhausted internal options for cutting costs and has maximized the use of other funding sources.



Fund aviation support costs — Suppression aircraft are an invaluable tool in wildfire response and provide rapid response across the state. Funding will allow the agency to strengthen aviation support capacity.

A duty to protect is included in the mission of Texas A&M Forest Service, and fire departments across the state are an essential partner in realizing that mission.

The agency has a long history of supporting fire departments and is committed to helping enhance their emergency response capabilities.



OBJECTIVES

Tiered approach to wildfire suppression, relying on interagency partnerships.

Local fire departments and counties are first responders.

Texas A&M Forest Service is activated as fires or conditions exceed the local capacity to control.

As emergency response activity increases, other state agencies are mobilized.

As the capacity of state resources is exceeded, out-of-state resources are brought in to meet essential needs.

CHALLENGES BY THE NUMBERS

71

Average Annual Turnover

Out of 548 Total Agency Employees

90

Avg. Days to Fill Positions

*(Plus additional training time
New hires need to be ready
to respond in the field)*

\$15/hr

**Firefighter's
Starting Pay**



INCREASING LOCAL FIREFIGHTING CAPACITY

The requested funding will allow Texas A&M Forest Service to provide 30 additional apparatus to departments each year, an increase of 50% from current funding allocations, as well as more life-saving rescue equipment, gear and training.



Volunteer Fire Departments, (VFDs)

— Volunteer fire departments provide essential front-line emergency services that directly protect Texans and the state's natural resources every day. Grant requests exceed current funding by \$16.7M each year, and it is imperative that the agency continue to invest in local fire departments to ensure they are well-equipped and trained for response.



Texas Intrastate Fire Mutual Aid System (TIFMAS)

— The premiere mutual aid system in the nation, the TIFMAS program provides surge capacity at the request of the state to support catastrophic incidents. Continued investment will sustain and improve response capabilities to expand the state response to wildfires and all-hazard incidents.

ONE-TIME FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The agency invests in fire departments through a variety of successful grant programs for VFDs, since 2002, and TIFMAS departments, since 2009. Funding is needed to address the number of outstanding requests and meet the response needs of a rapidly growing state.

\$100M for VFD Grants

The demand for immediate life-saving equipment continues to increase each year and unfunded requests now total more than \$171.5M. Due to insufficient funding, a department may currently wait several years before a request is funded.

\$8M for TIFMAS Grants

Requests for apparatus and training far exceed the current funding of \$1M each year and unfunded requests now total more than \$23.4M.

