

# PRESS RELEASE

Private Firefighting Resources play a significant role in fire suppression efforts in the West

*Over 3000 private firefighters on the fire lines in the West*

**Lyons, OR - September 18, 2012:** As wildfires continue to burn in the western United States, there are over 3000 private wild land firefighters providing hand crews, water handling equipment, and other specialized resources on the fire lines in Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

These firefighters work alongside their agency partners to control wildfires and protect lives, property and our environment. Our firefighters must meet or exceed the very same standards as their agency partners with regards to safety and training, and as they are paid as contract resources, they accept all liability for their resources and employees.

Contract resources are a great value to the taxpayer as they help supplement the agency resources when fires have depleted their resources or when fire season for agency seasonal firefighters has come to an end as fires continue. These contract resources are available from January to December for wildfires as well as other emergency response and are paid only for their actual time on the lines.

"Historically private contract resources have made up around 40% of the firefighting resources available nationally and an even higher 75% in the Pacific Northwest Region (Oregon & Washington).", said Deborah Miley, NWSA Executive Director. Per an Region 6 US Forest Service agency estimate in April 2012 there were over 171 Type 2 IA - 20 person hand crews, 24 Type 2 Initial Attack 20 person hand crews, 709 pieces of water handling equipment, 525 pieces of heavy equipment and 370 specialized types of resources.

The Pacific Northwest has utilized private resources for fire suppression since the early 1980's and those agreements/contracts have evolved to our current interagency agreements. These interagency agreements allow private resources to be utilized by any state or federal agency as the need arises.

Private contract firefighters take great pride serving in a role that benefits all of our citizens by protecting our environment and property against catastrophic wildfires.

As former USFS Assistant Director of Fire Operations, Jim Furlong said, "If it weren't for the markings on the side of the engines, you would not know the difference."

The National Wildfire Suppression Association (NWSA) was formed in 1991 with 6 member companies and today it has 200 member companies in 23 states. NWSA also has a recognized Training Program with over 80 Certified Trainers that provide agency accepted training to all our firefighters. Our goal is to provide the agencies and the taxpayer with a highly trained, qualified resources that are cost effective, and above all else that all our firefighters return home.