



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



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Governor Sanders to Deploy Arkansas Forestry Personnel for Wildfire and Storm Response

LITTLE ROCK, AR — Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders has authorized the deployment of Arkansas Department of Agriculture forestry personnel to support wildfire suppression in Oklahoma and urban tree recovery in Tennessee, highlighting the state's commitment to regional cooperation and public safety.

"No one stands alone when it comes to responding to disasters," said Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward. "Arkansas is proud to join forces with states across the region in Oklahoma and Tennessee to support wildfire suppression and storm recovery. These deployments demonstrate the power of collaboration and the dedication of our personnel to help their neighbors whenever and wherever they are needed."

"Our teams bring specialized skills and equipment to support communities in need," said Arkansas State Forester Kyle Cunningham. "Whether it's assisting with wildfire suppression in Oklahoma or helping Tennessee communities recover after storms, these deployments show how sharing knowledge and resources across state lines strengthens the entire region."

Wildfire Response in Oklahoma

Six wildland firefighters will be deployed to eastern Oklahoma for approximately two weeks to assist with ongoing wildfire suppression. Strong winds, low humidity, and above-average temperatures have increased wildfire risk across the South Central United States, prompting activation of the South Central Interstate Forest Fire Protection Compact on February 17. The compact allows participating state forestry agencies to share personnel and resources when wildfire activity exceeds local response capacity.

The crew will focus on initial attack and rapid suppression of new wildfires to prevent further spread. The Department is also sending four bulldozers and two pick-up trucks to support operations.

Urban Tree Recovery in Tennessee

Three urban forestry personnel will be deployed to Tennessee to assist communities recovering from recent ice storms. The crew will join an Urban Forest Strike Team (UFST), a specialized group of certified arborists, foresters, and urban forestry experts mobilized to assist communities in the aftermath of natural disasters.

The UFST provides critical support to impacted communities, including tree damage and risk assessments, hazard mitigation planning, and technical expertise and training.

Arkansas personnel have previously participated in UFST deployments, including in December 2024 following tornadoes in the state. During that mission, teams from multiple states in the Southern region came to Arkansas to provide critical assistance.

Safety and Preparedness in Arkansas

While assisting neighboring states, the Department continues to closely monitor conditions in the state. Elevated fire risk remains across western and northwestern Arkansas, with all counties in the northern part of the state currently classified at high or moderate wildfire risk. Several counties have issued burn bans.

Local wildfire response capabilities will remain fully staffed and operational, with resources strategically positioned to protect Arkansas communities while supporting neighboring states.

The Department urges residents to stay alert and take the following steps to help prevent wildfires:

- **Avoid Outdoor Burning:** Arkansans should avoid outdoor burning, even in areas that are not under a burn ban. Avoid activities that involve an open flame including fireworks, campfires, trash burning, open flame grilling, and prescribed or controlled burns.
- **Use Equipment Carefully:** Avoid driving or operating machinery in dry grass, ensure trailer chains do not drag on the ground, and do not drive on flat tires.
- **Report Fires Immediately:** If you see smoke or fire, report it by calling 1-800-468-8834.
- **Stay Informed:** Monitor conditions across the state by viewing the [county-by-county map](#) and following the Department on social media.

With dry and windy conditions expected to continue, Arkansans are urged to take proactive steps to protect lives, property, and natural resources.

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About the Arkansas Department of Agriculture

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture, forestry, and natural resources to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while conserving natural resources and ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. For more information, visit agriculture.arkansas.gov/.