

Delaware wildfire crew headed to Colorado



PHOTO: Front row: (from left) Samuel Topper of Maryland, Adam Keever of Newark, Monica Testa of Newark, and Hannah Small of Dover. Second row: (from left) Paul Moser of Dover, Rocco Hladney of Middletown, Mark Kammer of Magnolia, Eddie Boyer of Ellendale, Erich Burkentine of Milton, Nathaniel Sommers of Smyrna, and Jeff Wilson of Clayton. Third row: (from left) Dan Mihok of Magnolia, Andrew Doug Rawling of Newark, Michael Martini of Townsend, Christopher Valenti of Dover, and Bill Seybold of Dover. Back row: (from left) Bart Wilson of Dover, Zach Brown of Harbeson, Dave Pro of Newark, and Ryan Krammes of Newark.

SMYRNA – The Delaware Forest Service is sending a 20-person wildfire crew to Colorado's Rocky Mountain region as a spate of uncontained large fires in the West have increased the

demand for trained firefighters. The [National Fire Preparedness Level](#) was increased to 3 on a 5-point scale on June 29, indicating that wildfire activity is occurring in multiple geographic areas and mobilization of resources through national agencies is moderate to heavy.



Veteran firefighter Erich Burkentine of Milton teaches Hannah Small of Dover how to adjust the new fire backpack before the trip out West.

The crew mobilized on Tuesday, July 3 at [Blackbird State Forest](#) in Smyrna, Delaware and will travel to Denver from Philadelphia on July 4 for positioning in the [Rocky Mountain Geographic Area](#), which has reported 5 new fires and currently has 6 uncontained large fires. Nationally, 66 fires are currently burning a total of 578,424 acres. As of July 3, a total of 277 wildfire crews are currently deployed across all regions of the U.S. and wildfire activity is expected to increase. Link to [National Incident Management Situation Report](#).

Delaware also sent a [crew to the Rocky Mountain region](#) in 2017. Since 1996, the DDA Forest Service has trained over 600

volunteer firefighters to be part of the 20-person crews it deploys on out-of-state wildfire assignments. Delaware firefighters have traveled to fires in many states: Alaska, California, Georgia, Idaho, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming. The First State has also sent personnel to aid in national or regional emergencies, such as hurricane relief efforts in Florida in 2004 and New York in 2011.

Trained and dispatched by the Delaware Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, wildfire crews are comprised of men and women of varying ages and backgrounds who represent a mix of public agencies, nonprofit groups, volunteer fire companies, and private citizens. Despite its small size, Delaware has earned an outstanding reputation on the national firefighting scene and was [honored by Governor Carney at the Delaware State Fair in July](#).

News reports from 2017:

- July 12 – *The News Journal* – [Delaware volunteers help contain Western wildfires](#)
- July 12 – *Cape Gazette* – [Delaware crew battles 300-acre blaze in Colorado](#)
- July 27 – *Delaware Public Media*– [90 years of Delaware Forest Service celebrated with return of wildfire crew](#)