

Delaware Engine Crew on California's Dexter Fire

BISHOP, Calif. (July 16, 2021) – Delaware's three-person Type 6 engine crew is now fighting the 2,000-acre [Dexter Fire](#) in the Inyo National Forest of southern California. Reported on July 12, the lightning-caused blaze is actively burning in brush and timber with only 13 percent containment. A total of 308 personnel are currently working under the command of a Type 2 incident management team (IMT) and the Dexter Fire has forced the evacuation of Big Springs and Bald Mountain Springs Campgrounds as well as the closure of area roads and highways.

Leading the crew is the Delaware Forest Service's southern regional forester and engine boss Erich Burkentine of Milton, along with engine boss trainee Nikki Testa of Newark, and firefighter Hunter Melson of Milford. The crew mobilized on July 13 and is scheduled for a 21-day assignment, replacing a crew composed of Sam Topper, Adam Keever, and Bradley Melson that completed a 14-day tour of duty that took them from Colorado to California. Delaware's crew is facing high temperatures, low relative humidity, and gusty afternoon winds on the Dexter Fire as they are conducting initial attack, digging fire line, and felling trees.

An increasing number of large wildfires in the western United States—combined with a prolonged heat wave and persistent drought—led the National Interagency Fire Center to increase its [National Preparedness Level to the maximum level of "5" on July 14](#). Currently, 70 active large fires have consumed 1,061,516 acres across the United States. More than 17,700 wildland firefighters and support personnel and 32 Type 1 and Type 2 incident management teams are assigned to wildfires. So far in 2021, a total of 34,596 fires have burned 2.36 million acres—an increase from the same time in 2020, when 28,423 fires had burned 1.78 million acres.



Nikki Testa of Newark is an engine boss trainee on the Delaware Type 6 engine battling the 2,000-acre Dexter Fire in California's Inyo National Forest.



Destruction caused by the Dexter Fire in southern California's Inyo National Forest. Firefighters are facing high temperatures, low humidity, and gusty winds.



The Delaware Forest Service's Erich Burkentine felled this large tree as part of suppression efforts on the Dexter Fire, a 2,000-acre blaze burning in the Inyo National Forest in southern California. Delaware's Type 6 engine is currently on a 21-day assignment in the region.



From left, engine boss Erich Burkentine of Milton and firefighter Hunter Melson of Milford are serving on Delaware's Type 6 engine battling the Dexter Fire in California's Inyo National Forest.

More photos at the [Delaware Forest Service Facebook Page](#)

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