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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Southwest Wildfire Suppression Crews and Personnel Join the National Response to Hurricane Sandy**

**Albuquerque, NM – November 6, 2012** – Approximately 160 southwest interagency wildfire personnel, including five 20-person saw crews, two from Arizona and three New Mexico, have left the Southwest over the last five days to provide assistance to Hurricane Sandy response efforts.

The saw crews were sent to New Jersey for initial briefing before being assigned to specific locations in the state. They were instructed to be prepared for cold, rainy weather and to bring camping gear and other equipment in order to support themselves. These crews have the skills and experience that are needed for the enormous task at hand, clearing downed trees and debris removal. The other wildfire personnel will be given assignments in New York, New Jersey or Massachusetts to provide support to local emergency response agencies, assist at FEMA facilities and assist with the logistical needs of the communities affected by Hurricane Sandy.

A five member team of the Veteran's Fire Corps are part of the 20 person saw crew from the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests that left Sunday, November 4, for New Jersey. The team was selected to go on this assignment because their past experience qualified them as firefighters. The Veterans Fire Corp team has been assisting the Coconino and Kaibab with fuels reduction and prescribed burning projects over the summer and fall. Military veteran fire crews are conservation service programs that offer seasonal positions for veterans to complete fire mitigation on public lands while earning certification and experience that could lead to future employment in wildland firefighting and related fields.

In responding to hurricanes, wildfires suppression crews and incident management teams typically perform tasks such as clearing downed trees from roads so that local responders can conduct search and rescue missions; assisting at Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) logistics facilities that provide water and other commodities needed by affected communities; providing communications equipment and support to local emergency response agencies; and command and control support for emergency response agencies.

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