

2024 Wildfire Summary

An All-hands, All-lands Fire Year

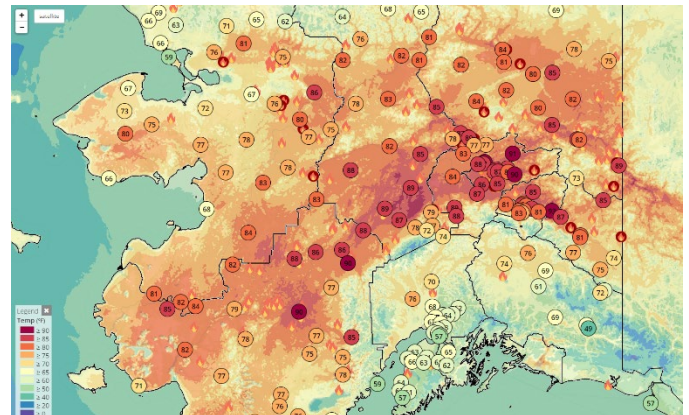
When the fire bell rings, you answer the call. And while the “bell” comes in a text message, email, or phone call these days, answering the need is exactly what hundreds of USDA Forest Service firefighters did this year as wildfires rapidly expanded across interior Alaska in June 2024. In total, over 600,000 acres burned on Alaska Department of Forestry protection and US Bureau of Land Management lands. Fourteen fires burned less than two acres on the Chugach and Tongass National Forests.

June Ramp Up; All Eyes on Denali

On June 24, thunderstorms across the state produced nearly 7,000 lightning strikes igniting new wildfires. Just four days later another round of Red Flag conditions were forecasted with the potential to exaggerate already dry and windy conditions over existing wildfires. Then on June 30, the Alaska wildfire year rocketed to national news as the Riley Fire prompted evacuations and closures in Denali National Park and nearby areas.



Photo: The combined Chugach and Tongass National Forest Fire Program, with support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service in Alaska, deployed three hand crews and an engine to half a dozen high priority fires in Nevada, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon and Montana. Credit: USDA Forest Service



Map: Multiple Alaska communities reported 80–90-degree temperatures on July 23, 2024. Source: AICC

July Rains; Support to the Lower 48

By July 2, there were 172 active wildfires, and more than 460,000 acres had burned across the state. Cycles of cooler temperatures and rain showers in mid-July allowed fire managers to increase containment on most large fires as well as start sending resources to the rapidly intensifying wildfire year in the Lower 48. In total, 94 Alaska Region Forest Service employees supported wildfire efforts across the nation. However, near record temperatures would persist on and off in Alaska throughout July.

Fire on an Island

In a unique note for the 2024 Alaska wildfire year, the Circle Bay Fire was reported Aug. 16 on Woronkofski Island in the Tongass National Forest. With no direct life safety threats, fire managers utilized a monitor strategy to minimize risk to firefighters. The fire continued minimal creeping and smoldering behavior for four days, stopping at about a half-acre in size.