

Forest Fire Resources Compact Amendments

2025 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Derrin R. Owens

LONG TITLE**Committee Note:**

The Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee recommended this bill.

Legislative Vote: 16 voting for 0 voting against 3 absent

General Description:

This bill enacts the Great Plains Interstate Fire Compact.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

▸ empowers the governor to enter into the compact related to forest fires in the form provided in statute.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

ENACTS:

65A-8-216, Utah Code Annotated 1953

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **65A-8-216** is enacted to read:

65A-8-216 . Great Plains Interstate Fire Compact.

The governor may enter into a compact on behalf of the state with any other state or states legally joining therein in the form substantially as follows:

ARTICLE I

The purpose of this compact is to promote effective prevention and control of forest fires in the great plains region of the United States by the maintenance of adequate forest fire fighting services by the member states, and by providing for reciprocal aid in fighting forest

31 fires among the compacting states of the region, including South Dakota, North Dakota,
32 Wyoming, Colorado and any adjoining state of a current member state.

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ARTICLE II

34 This compact is operative immediately as to those states ratifying it if any two or more
35 of the member states have ratified it.

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ARTICLE III

37 In each state, the state forester or officer holding the equivalent position who is
38 responsible for forest fire control may act as a compact administrator for that state and may
39 consult with like officials of the other member states and may implement cooperation between
40 the states in forest fire prevention and control. The compact administrators of the member
41 states may organize to coordinate the services of the member states and provide administrative
42 integration in carrying out the purposes of this compact. Each member state may formulate and
43 put in effect a forest fire plan for that state.

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ARTICLE IV

45 If the state forest fire control agency of a member state requests aid from the state forest
46 fire control agency of any other member state in combating, controlling, or preventing forest
47 fires, the state forest fire control agency of that state may render all possible aid to the
48 requesting agency, consonant with the maintenance of protection at home.

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ARTICLE V

50 If the forces of any member state are rendering outside aid pursuant to the request of
51 another member state under this compact, the employees of the state shall, under the direction
52 of the officers of the state to which they are rendering aid, have the same powers (except the
53 power of arrest), duties, rights, privileges, and immunities as comparable employees of the
54 state to which they are rendering aid.

55 No member state or its officers or employees rendering outside aid pursuant to this
56 compact is liable on account of any act or omission on the part of such forces while so
57 engaged, or on account of the maintenance or use of any equipment or supplies in connection
58 with rendering the outside aid.

59 All liability, except as otherwise provided in this compact, that may arise either under
60 the laws of the requesting state or under the laws of the aiding state or under the laws of a third

61 state on account of or in connection with a request for aid, shall be assumed and borne by the
62 requesting state.

63 Any member state rendering outside aid pursuant to this compact shall be reimbursed by
64 the member state receiving the aid for any loss or damage to, or expense incurred in the
65 operation of, any equipment used in answering a request for aid, and for the cost of all
66 materials, transportation, wages, salaries, and maintenance of employees and equipment
67 incurred in connection with such request. However, nothing in this compact prevents any
68 assisting member state from assuming such loss, damage, expense, or other cost, or from
69 loaning such equipment, or from donating the services to the receiving member state without
70 charge or cost.

71 Each member state shall assure that workers compensation benefits in conformity with
72 the minimum legal requirements of the state are available to all employees and contract
73 firefighters sent to a requesting state pursuant to this compact.

74 For the purposes of this compact, the term "employee" includes any volunteer or
75 auxiliary legally included within the forest fire fighting forces of the aiding state under the
76 laws of the aiding state.

77 The compact administrators may formulate procedures for claims and reimbursement
78 under the provisions of this article, in accordance with the laws of the member states.

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ARTICLE VI

80 Ratification of this compact does not affect any existing statute so as to authorize or
81 permit curtailment or diminution of the forest fighting forces, equipment, services, or facilities
82 of any member state.

83 Nothing in the compact authorizes or permits any member state to curtail or diminish its
84 forest fire fighting forces, equipment, services, or facilities. Each member state shall maintain
85 adequate forest fire fighting forces and equipment to meet demands for forest fire protection
86 within its borders in the same manner and to the same extent as if this compact were not
87 operative.

88 Nothing in this compact limits or restricts the powers of any state ratifying the compact
89 to provide for the prevention, control, and extinguishment of forest fires, or to prohibit the
90 enactment or enforcement of state laws, rules, or regulations intended to aid in the prevention,
91 control, and extinguishment in the state.

92 Nothing in this compact affects any existing or future cooperative relationship or
93 arrangement between the United States Forest Service and a member state or states.

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ARTICLE VII

95 Representatives of the United States Forest Service may attend meetings of the compact
96 administrators.

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ARTICLE VIII

98 The provisions of Articles IV and V of this compact that relate to reciprocal aid in
99 combating, controlling, or preventing forest fires are operative as between any state party to
100 this compact and any other state which is party to this compact and any other state that is party
101 to a regional forest fire protection compact in another region if the Legislature of the other
102 state has given its assent to the mutual aid provisions of this compact.

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ARTICLE IX

104 This compact shall continue in force and remain binding on each state ratifying it until
105 the Legislature or the Governor of the state takes action to withdraw from the compact. Such
106 action is not effective until six months after notice of the withdrawal has been sent by the chief
107 executive of the state desiring to withdraw to the chief executives of all states then parties to
108 the compact.

109 **Section 2. Effective date.**

110 This bill takes effect on May 7, 2025.