

Forest Fire Resources Compact Amendments

2025 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor:

LONG TITLE

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

ARTICLE II

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

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ARTICLE III

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

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ARTICLE IV

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

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ARTICLE V

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

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

55 All liability, except as otherwise provided in this compact, that may arise either under the laws
56 of the requesting state or under the laws of the aiding state or under the laws of a third state on
57 account of or in connection with a request for aid, shall be assumed and borne by the
58 requesting state.

59 Any member state rendering outside aid pursuant to this compact shall be reimbursed by the
60 member state receiving the aid for any loss or damage to, or expense incurred in the operation

61 of, any equipment used in answering a request for aid, and for the cost of all materials,
62 transportation, wages, salaries, and maintenance of employees and equipment incurred in
63 connection with such request. However, nothing in this compact prevents any assisting
64 member state from assuming such loss, damage, expense, or other cost, or from loaning such
65 equipment, or from donating the services to the receiving member state without charge or cost.

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

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

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

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ARTICLE VI

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

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

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

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

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ARTICLE VII

90 Representatives of the United States Forest Service may attend meetings of the compact
91 administrators.

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ARTICLE VIII

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

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ARTICLE IX

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

104 Section 2. **Effective date.**

105 This bill takes effect on May 7, 2025.