

California Wildland Fire Coordinating Group

Framework for Mandatory COVID Testing on Federal Fire Incidents in California

Due to the risk of spread of COVID-19 to individual fire personnel and modules, as well as the overall impact on firefighting capacity, the federal leadership of the California Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (CWCG) have decided to move forward with the intent of mandatory testing on all federal fire incidents in California, specifically type 1 and 2 wildfire incidents when logistically possible (e.g. personnel to support, testing available). This intention applies to all federal employees and federal contractors regardless of vaccination status and will be voluntary for partners and cooperators involved in a federal fire incident.

To date, the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, COVID-19 Emergency Response Team (CERT) implemented two mandatory pilot testing programs in California. The first pilot program was during the McFarland Fire on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The testing service was provided through a contract. The second pilot program was on the French Fire during unified command between the Bureau of Land Management and the Sequoia National Forest. Cal OES provided the testing service. These pilot programs provided many lessons to assist with more effective implementation on other fire incidents.

To implement this intent the CERT and a Point of Contact (POC) from each of the following Department of the Interior (DOI) agencies: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service will coordinate and collaborate.

It is recognized that testing in and of itself is not a silver bullet, but it is an important tool in the suite of COVID mitigations to protect fire personnel, modules, and their families and friends when personnel return home from fire incidents. With increasing COVID cases over the past few months, and continued fire activity expected in the weeks and months ahead, we have decided this is a necessary tool until vaccine requirements for the federal workforce are fully implemented.

Mandatory Testing Intent & Framework

- Applies to all federal employees and federal contractors on type 1 and 2 wildfire incidents in California, regardless of vaccination status.
- Testing will be provided for partners and cooperators that volunteer or request testing, if testing capacity is available.
- The requirement for testing will be included in the resource order for those resources identified as available to fill orders.
- Refusal of COVID testing on incidents will be handled on a case-by-case basis by the employee's agency or the hiring agency of the federal contractor with participation on the incident not occurring until a resolution is identified.
- If there are logistical challenges (e.g. personnel support, testing availability) the CERT and DOI POCs will attempt to implement this intent in the following priority order: (1) test individuals upon arrival to an incident, (2) test individuals upon demobilization from an incident, (3) test individuals that are already assigned to an ongoing incident at frequencies recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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Signature Page

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Bureau of Indian Affairs
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Bureau of Land Management
State Director

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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National Park Service
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