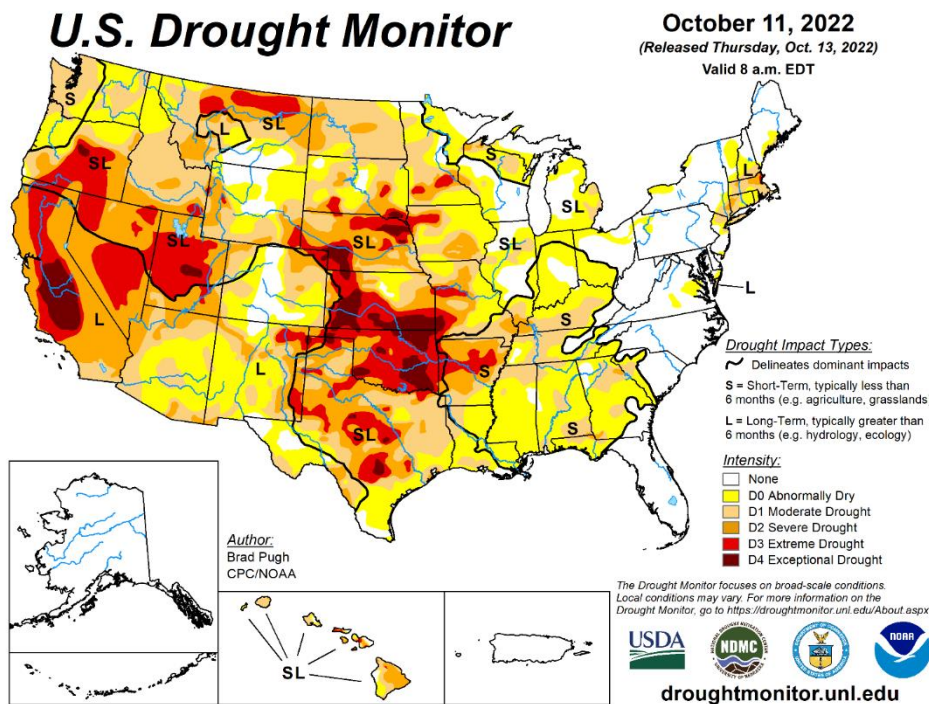


A Snapshot in Safety and Risk

Wildfires: A Year-Round Threat

While May is officially “Wildfire Awareness Month”, many areas of the United States are prone to the threat of wildfire year-round. Local drought conditions can play a major role in an area’s vulnerability, although this is not the single driving factor. Other factors which will play a significant role in this vulnerability including local topography, prevailing wind patterns, and vegetation (fuel) cover. The drought map shown below is one example of a tool in identifying potential wildfire vulnerability.



Wildfire vulnerability has always been regional and fluid. Activity to this point in the year has been persistently prevalent in Texas and Oklahoma. The potential for fire in these areas is expected to continue through at least through December. West coast states California and Oregon have already experienced large scale wildfires, as well as Montana and Idaho. Those regional areas are expected to decrease in wildfire risk as the year progresses, with the exception of Southern California. Surprisingly Hawaii, is projected to be vulnerable through most of the remaining quarter year.

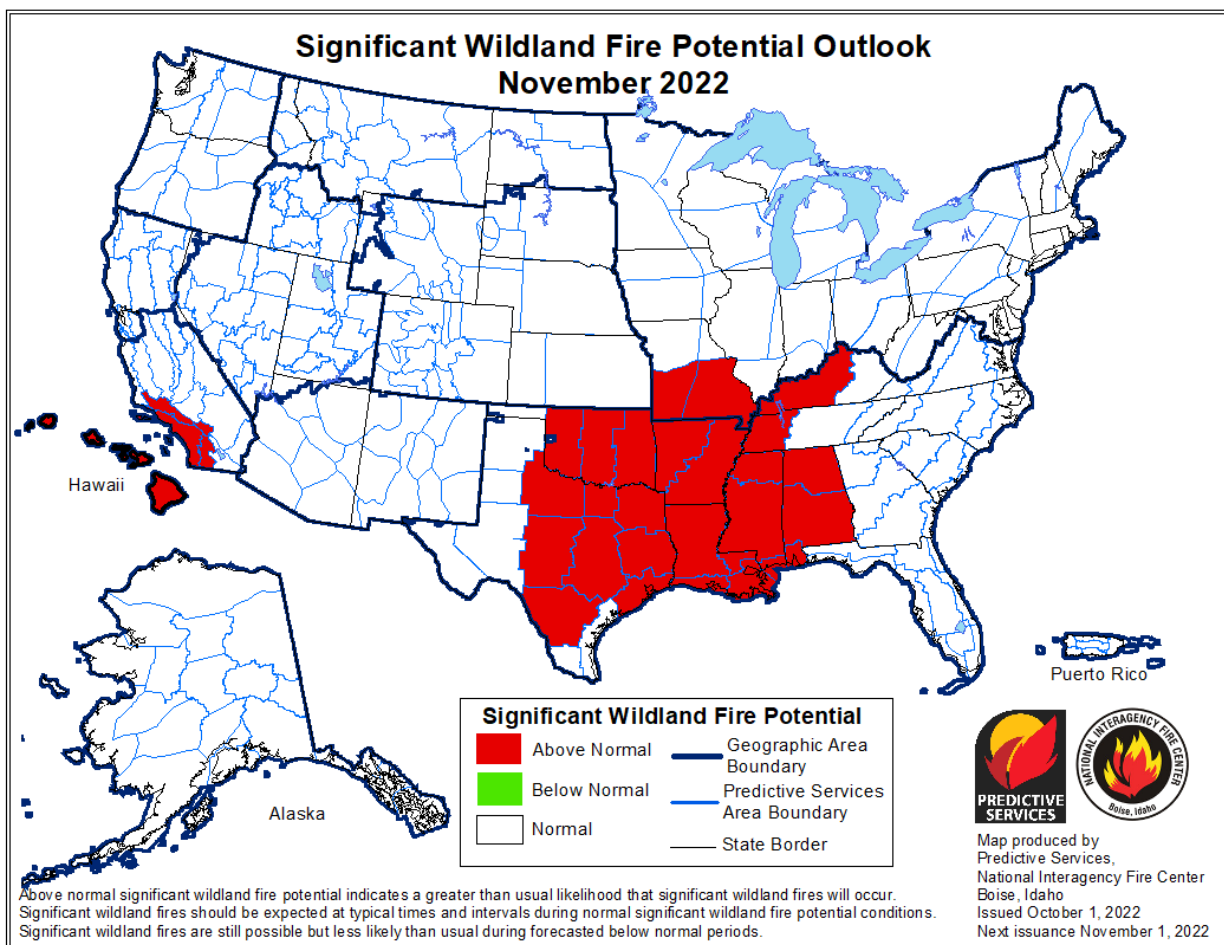
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Nationally, the number of acres burned in the US in this year to this date have exceeded the 10-year average. Over half of this total acreage took place in Alaska. This is not projected to continue in Alaska for the near future. However, conditions in the South have increased the local potential risk for wildfire, and this is expected to continue until close to the end of the calendar year.

The geographical illustration below depicts predicted conditions for November 2022 in the United States.



Effectively addressing the risk presented by wildfire can vary by the situation, but requires a concerted pre-meditated, and multi-faceted approach.

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Mitigate the Potential

Companies, public and tribal entities, and individual families must be prepared to mitigate and minimize wildland fire exposures that threaten property, operations, and life safety. In order to minimize loss to wildland fires and other emergencies, regardless of the time of year, there are a number of wildfire mitigation measures which should be explored:

1. **Assess Your Current (and future) Landscaping Situation.** This is essential for any potentially threatened building – where appropriate, replace or install landscape that will not contribute to fire loading and growth wherever possible. Non-combustible hardscape and materials are desired when there is wildland fire exposure though they may not be as aesthetically pleasing as vulnerable planted landscaping. This is the first step to creating a Defensible Space for the building.
2. **Defensible Space.** One of the simplest and most inexpensive ways to mitigate wildfire damage potential for individual buildings. Create a defensible space around your structures – this space includes 3 zones:
 - a. **Zone #1 (Critical)** a non-combustible zone, 0-5 ft. from any building that is to be protected and under any decks or combustible platforms. Plant and material selection and control is one of the most important considerations in Zone 1. Hardscape and utilize non-combustible mulch products wherever possible when planning outdoor spaces. Keep desired plants watered, trimmed, and pruned. The objective is to avoid the accumulation of dried leaves and foliage that will act as a fuel source for embers. Make sure to extend this non-combustible zone at least 6" above grade and include siding, sheathing, and structural framing. Assess the need for and remove any non-essential combustible materials.
 - b. **Zone #2** an intermediate zone that extends from 5-30 ft. from any threatened building structure. Ideally, trees and shrubs will already be planted and subsequently maintained in well-spaced groups. Tree crowns should be at least 10' apart. Remove all dead plant material and non-landscaping combustible waste, and prune tree limbs and branches up to a height of 15'. For shorter trees, low branches should not exceed 1/3 of the tree height.
 - c. **Zone #3** an extended range is 30 – 100 ft. from the threatened building structure. Make sure to maintain plants in this zone that will slow down and reduce the energy of a wildland fire if one were to occur. Keep foliage trimmed back and remove any dead vegetation to minimize the potential fuel loading as much as possible.

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3. **Create a Landscaping Maintenance and Material Storage Plan.** This plan will reflect and support your efforts to protect the applicable Defensible Space as outlined above. While the plan does not necessarily need to be formal and in writing, procedures should be established to keep live vegetation trimmed and remove the accumulation of dry vegetation and any unnecessary combustible materials. If there are “non-vegetation” combustible materials which are necessary to operations, consider moving them away from the building or protecting them from potential ignition. This plan can be integrated into an existing Preventative Maintenance (PM) program or Fire Prevention plan which is in place to address fire exposures within a building or property campus.
4. **Assess vulnerable exterior areas such as elevated decks, balconies, and canopies.** Take prudent steps to protect these areas of your building by:
 - a. Minimizing or eliminating storage of combustible materials and fuels from underneath the deck.
 - b. Eliminating foliage and trees from under or adjacent to the deck to prevent the possibility of fire spread from the natural environment to the building’s structure.
 - c. These areas should be regularly surveyed to ensure those preventative measures have not been compromised.
5. **Identify any attic, crawl spaces and ventilation ducts of the potentially vulnerable building.** These spaces can present an easy point of entry for airborne ember and should be addressed to prevent fire and smoke travel throughout the building. Install non-combustible screens 1/8” or finer on exterior vents to reduce the possibility of windblown embers from entering these spaces. Inspect the screens regularly to ensure their integrity.
6. **Awareness.** Track broadcasts and alerts using a computer and mobile apps, conventional radio, and/or emergency radio. This is helpful to track fire progression and determine when there is a safe window to leave if needed.
7. **Technology.** Consider and research technological options available. This is a field that has recently made advancements with regard to wildfire risk. Like most technology, it is a constantly evolving field which can offer new and progressive options for extinguishing, monitoring, and mitigation. As an example, drone technology has applications which can be applied to many situations.
8. **Individual Life Safety.** Individual persons will need to assemble and manage a disaster kit for their own use in the event of an emergency. A minimum effective kit will be able to sustain an individual for a minimum of 3 days; at a minimum this emergency kit will

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include water and food, flashlight, first aid materials, batteries, moist towelettes, local maps, and whistle.

9. **Create a Safe Internal Space.** Not all hazards of a wildfire are a direct threat to life safety and health. Proximity to the wildfire and an ongoing and prevailing wind can lead to smoke and smog levels that potentially reach unhealthy levels. When evacuation is not appropriate, i.e. in the absence of a direct threat, establish a “clean room” to offer a fresh air space to any building occupants. Keep external vents and dampers closed to minimize outside air infiltration and maintain this “clean room”; having a clean room can help prevent issues from exposure to the fire’s airborne products of combustion which can include a number of acute and chronic health problems.
10. **Public Relations.** Anticipate and mitigate negative backlash from customers by communicating with them upfront about delayed deliveries, curtailed services, and/or reduced hours that are a direct or indirect result of a fire. Where appropriate, consider ways to reduce customer traffic to offices, store fronts, and retail locations in these situations. This can also help minimize road congestion and bottlenecks, and improve emergency vehicle access.
11. **Plan Ahead.** Identify, anticipate, and gauge the potential threat to each individual building based on the circumstances. If appropriate for your situation, develop a written wildfire response plan. The plan should include all potential emergency actions that must be taken in the event of wildland fire as well as preventative measures. A comprehensive plan to address wildfire risk will include a business continuity procedures to help ensure that your organization can get back up to operational speed as soon as possible. Although developing this plan can be time consuming, a detailed and comprehensive plan will position an organization to efficiently recover from a wildfire loss or emergency, and reduce the costly down time of critical operations that leads to financial and operational loss. Lastly, identify crucial business partners needed to effect the necessary contingency measures. Ensure vital agreements are cemented ahead of time and before a wildfire incident strikes to guarantee timely service and prevent price gouging that results from unpreparedness. At a minimum, this plan should include contingent locations, back-up power generation, and vendor and contractor agreements.

For additional information contact:

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