

## OKLAHOMA WILDFIRE WORKING GROUP

Oklahoma Secretary of Public Safety Tricia Everest and Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur are leading a Task Force to gather information on the state's firefighting and emergency response resources. The Task Force will conduct an after-action review of the wildfire outbreak that occurred on March 14, 2025, and the days that followed. It will also evaluate the structure and resource allocation of Oklahoma Forestry Services. Additionally, the Task Force will identify opportunities to improve wildfire responsiveness among state agencies and enhance coordination between Oklahoma Forestry Services, Oklahoma Emergency Management, other state agencies, local responders, and stakeholders.

### ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDED

- Oklahoma Emergency Management
- Oklahoma Forestry Services
- Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality
- Oklahoma Insurance Department
- Oklahoma Corporation Commission
- Tulsa Firefighters Association
- Oklahoma City Fire Department
- Oklahoma Office of Faith-Based Initiatives
- Oklahoma State University
- OG&E
- Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives
- Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma
- National Weather Service
- Oklahoma Municipal League
- Oklahoma Farm Bureau
- Local emergency managers
- Local fire chiefs

### PRELIMINARY REPORT

The Task Force held an initial meeting on April 17, 2025 and identified priority areas. These include state and local coordination, mitigation, first responder recruitment, retention and training.

This was the first time attendees are aware of that all the entities represented have gathered to discuss emergency response and more specifically wildland fire response.

Working Groups will be established to work on each of these topic areas and develop a report and recommendations for the Task Force.

### AREAS OF CONCERN AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

The initial review has identified several areas of concern and opportunities for improvement, including:

- Improved integration between emergency response agencies.
- Increased coordination between state and local responders.
  - Shared information on availability of resources.
  - Statewide radio interoperability.
- Improved statewide wildfire mitigation.
  - Rural community fire prevention.
- More accurate and timely response to where and how resources are dispatched.
- Opportunities for local coordination and collaboration.
- Additional training for opportunities for first responders.
  - Specifically for high fire danger, high fuel load, and grass fuel load situations.
  - Unified command.
- Additional opportunities for planning and response exercises.
- Recruitment and retention of rural volunteer firefighters.
- Statutory Change Considerations.
  - County burn ban requirements.
- Oklahoma Forestry Services Considerations.
  - Eliminate current designations of Protection Areas in eastern Oklahoma.
    - Continue to mobilize OFS resources from eastern Oklahoma to proactively pre-position based on predictive service guidelines.
  - Expand prescribed fire opportunities.
  - Designate an existing full-time OFS employee as Emergency Management Liaison to coordinate with OEM.
  - Implement a Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system for more effective management of resources.