



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers



NFFE News Release

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Hundreds of Federal Firefighters to Spend Christmas on Fire Line as Historic Thomas Fire Rages On

Washington, D.C. – More than 1,000 federal wildland firefighters will spend this holiday season far from home fighting one of the largest wildfires in the history of the United States. The Thomas Fire, the largest wildfire in California history and the country's most costly at more than \$160 million, has consumed more than 272,000 acres (142,326 acres on National Forest Service lands) with its containment status at 60%.

6,500 fire personnel from federal, state and local resources are deployed in Santa Barbara and Venture Counties with additional fire personnel providing mutual aid from away places including Alaska, New York, North Carolina, and the Hawaiian Islands. Among those deployed are 1000 wildland firefighters primarily from the U.S. Forest Service (FS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), many of whom are represented by the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE).

“We have firefighters serving on the front lines and we have personnel providing critical operations support through Unified Command,” said Mike Rivera, vice president of NFFE Local 2023 at Los Padres National Forest. “Most of our people will spend the holidays right here on the fire line, and all of us will support recovery operations during the coming weeks and months.”

The Thomas Fire continues to challenge firefighters as a cold front brings high winds today, further complicating fire suppression efforts. NFFE-represented FS and BLM firefighters continue to work with other fire personnel on the remaining 50 miles of open fire line still burning, with full containment not expected until early January. “This is not a typical fire in terms of its enormous size, especially this late in the season,” Rivera continued. “We make solid progress every day but we still have a lot of work to do.”

When asked about the effects of long term deployment over the holidays, Rivera replied, “It is hard on the firefighters to be away from home, and it is hard on families to know that their loved ones are somewhere along an active fire line. But, we accept it as a part of the profession and we will be here until the end. In the meantime, our thoughts remain with the victims of the Thomas Fire, some of whom lost everything.”

NOTE: More than 770 single family homes were destroyed by the Thomas Fire and another 400 homes and businesses were damaged. Please help the victims of the Thomas Fire by contributing to fire relief effort listed on the Santa Barbara County website at www.countyofsb.org or click [HERE](#) for more information.

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Established in 1917, the National Federation of Federal Employees is the oldest union representing civil service federal employees. NFFE represents 110,000 federal employees in 35 departments and agencies government-wide. NFFE is affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO. For more information, go to www.nffe.org