



2024

WASHINGTON STATE PATROL

STATE FIRE SERVICE MOBILIZATION REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Washington State Patrol (WSP) is required under RCW 43.43.965 to report on an annual basis the following information for each emergency or disaster in which the Washington State Fire Service Mobilization Plan was used for purposes other than fire suppression, and reimbursement was made under RCW 43.43.961:

- The type and nature of the disaster or emergency
- The reasons why the host jurisdiction and mutual aid resources were exhausted
- The additional risk resources provided under the mobilization plan
- The cost incurred by the state patrol
- The amount of reimbursement made under RCW 43.43.961 to the host jurisdiction and each non-host jurisdiction providing all risk resources
- An assessment and any recommendations of actions that can be taken by the host jurisdiction and its mutual aid network to prevent future use of the fire mobilization plan for similar disasters or emergencies.

STATE FIRE SERVICE MOBILIZATION

State Fire Service Mobilization was not authorized for an incident other than fire suppression. State Mobilization was used on one occasion to pre-position firefighting resources.

On **July 9, 2024**, Chief John R. Batiste authorized the use of the Mobilization Plan to preposition firefighting resources in Yakima and Klickitat Counties. This authorization was subsequent to a request from fire chiefs in those two counties, based on current and forecasted weather, combined with fuel moisture indices that presented a high likelihood of rapid growth on any new wildfire in those areas.

The firefighting resources sent to those two counties augmented local initial attack during their deployment, enabling local fire jurisdictions to more easily contain and control two different wildfires.

The pre-positioned resources were demobilized and released to their home units on July 12, 2024.

RESOURCES

The resources provided to Klickitat and Yakima counties were two task forces of wildfire engines.

COST

As of November 30, 2024, the overall Mobilization cost incurred by WSP is \$21,405,000 (estimated). Of that amount, an estimated \$200,000 was for pre-positioning resources in Klickitat/Yakima counties. The remaining \$21,205,000 (estimated) for traditional wildfire mobilization response. Including the pre-positioning assignment, Mobilization was authorized 30 times in 2024. This is the highest number of Mobilization authorizations (tied with 2015).

The amount already reimbursed to local jurisdictions is \$4,787,493. The WSP anticipates reimbursing an additional \$16,529,902 (estimated) for invoices not yet received from local jurisdictions and state agencies. Estimated WSP costs are \$290,000.

In 2023, No “host” entities received reimbursement for non-wildfire uses of the Mobilization Plan.

ASSESSMENT

Most fire departments across Washington state continue to experience staffing challenges at near-crisis or crisis level, as both career and volunteer fire departments, as well as state and federal agencies, are struggling to recruit and retain qualified personnel. These challenges impact their ability to consistently provide resources for routine mutual aid requests, mutual aid requests through their Fire Defense Region plan, and state mobilization authorizations.

Additionally, the length of the traditional fire season continues to expand, with a constant increase in incidents and the duration of those incidents. This increase in response workload further exacerbates the challenges described above.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The WSP recommends that local fire agencies continue to enhance local and regional mutual aid agreements, as well as participating in the updates their local regional plan. The WSP also recommends that regions exercise their regional plans (through tabletop exercises or other means) for all types of incidents they may encounter, including non-wildfire natural disasters and hazardous materials responses. This will be particularly important with the approach of the 2026 FIFA World Cup soccer tournament.

The WSP also recommends that the Legislature make permanent its authority to pre-position resources in anticipation of wildfires or other potential disasters, to lessen the severity and lower the cost of those responses.