

National Interagency Coordination Center

Wildland Fire Summary and Statistics Annual Report 2015



Aggie Creek Fire, Alaska



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Identifier Legend

Interagency Coordination Centers

NICC – National Interagency Coordination Center
AK - Alaska
EA - Eastern Area
GB - Great Basin
NO - Northern California
NR - Northern Rockies
NW - Northwest
RM - Rocky Mountain
SA - Southern Area
SO - Southern California
SW - Southwest
CIFFC - Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre
NIK - National Interagency Radio Support Cache

Government Agencies

Department of the Interior:
BIA - Bureau of Indian Affairs
BLM - Bureau of Land Management
FWS - Fish & Wildlife Service
NPS - National Park Service
AMD - Aviation Management Directorate

Department of Agriculture:
FS – USDA Forest Service

Department of Defense: DOD or DDQ

Department of Homeland Security:
FEMA - Federal Emergency Management Agency
ESF #4 – Emergency Support Function 4, Firefighting

Department of Commerce:
WXW - National Weather Service

Department of Energy: DOE

ST – State
ST/OT – State and Other combined
OT – Other
PRI – Private
CNTY – County
CN – Canada
AU – Australia
NZ – New Zealand

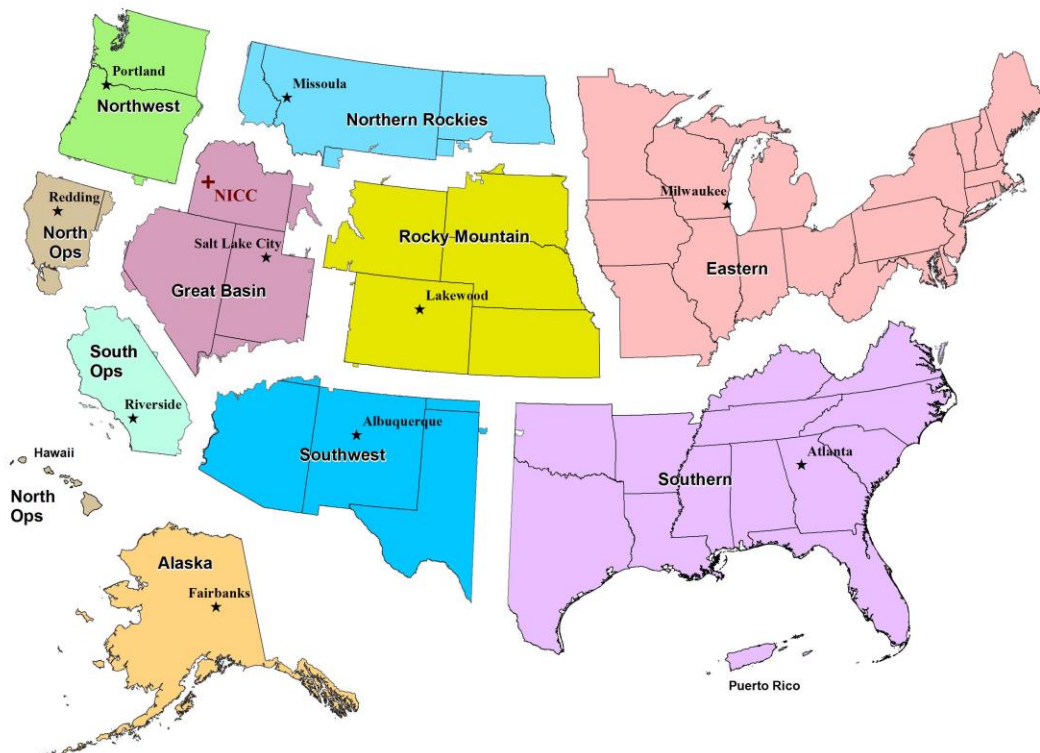
Preface

Statistics used in this report were gathered from the interagency Fire and Aviation Management Web Applications (FAMWEB) system, which includes the Situation Report and Incident Status Summary (ICS-209) programs. Previous National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) annual reports and other sources were also used in this document. The statistics presented here are intended to provide a national perspective of annual fire activity, but may not reflect official figures for a specific agency. The statistics are delineated by agency and Geographic Area. Pie chart figures are rounded to the nearest whole percentage point. This document is available electronically at the National Interagency Coordination Center web page: <http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/intelligence/intelligence.htm>.

For agency-specific details or official data contact the individual agency.

Resource mobilization statistics used in this report were gathered from the interagency Resource Ordering and Status System (ROSS), which tracks tactical, logistical, service and support resources mobilized by the national incident dispatch coordination system. Statistics presented in this report are the resources requested by one of the ten Geographic Area Coordination Centers and processed through NICC. Requests by FEMA are placed to NICC through Emergency Support Function (ESF) #4 (Firefighting). The resource ordering process and procedures may be found in the National Mobilization Guide. The National Mobilization Guide can be found on the NICC web site (www.nifc.gov/news/nicc.html) under reference materials.

Geographic Area Coordination Centers



National Interagency Coordination Center

2015 Fire Season Summary

Winter (December 2014 – February 2015)

The winter months took a huge shift from very warm December 2014 to very cold late January and February. Major snowstorms struck the East with snow measured in feet in the northeastern states. Frigid cold across the Midwest and New England balanced above normal temperatures in the West. Several storms also struck the West with rain on the West Coast and snow in the Interior West. Parts of drought-stricken California and Arizona were teased with brief rains in December and February but not enough to put a dent in the deficits.

Precipitation was below normal for most of the eastern half of the United States and a large portion of the western U.S. The central and southern Rockies and the central Plains observed well above normal precipitation for the period. Severe to exceptional drought remained over most California, western Nevada, southern Oregon, southwestern Idaho, and parts of North Texas and western Oklahoma.

Wet weather patterns across the southern U.S. kept fuels wet through most of the Southern Area. However, a drier-than-normal trend emerged during January in Oklahoma where weather-driven events sparked some short duration peaks in fire activity. Fuel moistures dropped across portions of Minnesota and Missouri through the first half of the winter. In the Southwest, little concern for early fire season existed and overall a below normal start to the fire season occurred in the Area. The remainder of the U.S. was out of fire season. Some sporadic activity occurred, especially in fine fuels but generally minimal fire activity occurred in the winter.

Spring (March – May)

Dry conditions continued to plague the West Coast, the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, keeping precipitation below normal. Much different conditions prevailed over most of the central states as much above normal precipitation fell across the Interior West, the southern and central Rockies, the southern Plains and the southern Mississippi Valley. After a snowy winter, precipitation was below normal across much of the Eastern Seaboard with New England much below normal.

Temperatures in the West and Alaska were above normal for the Spring while the southern Rockies and southern Plains were below normal with stormy and wet conditions for the three month period. New England, despite being dry, was also cooler than normal while the Southeast observed much above normal temperatures.

Drought continued through the West, spreading deeper into the interior and farther north into the Pacific Northwest. Alaska was also suffering drought conditions. Heavy rains in the south central U.S. during the Spring all but eliminated drought in Texas and Oklahoma. However, increasing precipitation deficits in the Upper Midwest triggered drought conditions in the northern Great Lakes region.

Wet weather continued across the southern U.S. keeping fuels wet through most of the Southern Area. However, in Oklahoma weather-driven events led to short duration peaks in fire activity. Fuel moistures and drier-than-usual conditions across portions of the Mississippi and Missouri River areas as well as the Great Lakes did not increase the likelihood for early season pre green-up fires as expected. Significant fire potential was low for most of the Southwest entering the spring season. Fuels were abundant in many areas but precipitation inputs kept fire activity below normal. Southern California began to see fuel conditions become a concern thanks in large part to long term drought. Dry conditions gradually spread northward into summer. Limited snowpack in Alaska led to fuels becoming exposed earlier than usual which in turn lead to drier-than-usual conditions early. The remainder of the U.S. continued out of fire season conditions. Pre green-up fire activity caused some concern in March and April across the Great Plains.

Summer (June – August)

The summer was characterized by an intense ridge that sat over the western half of North America, bringing very hot and dry conditions to much of the western U.S. and Alaska. A series of tropical systems from the Pacific brought much needed rain to California and parts of the Southwest. A period of relatively cool conditions developed in mid-summer in much of the West before the upper ridge returned with the extreme heat. However, trapped moisture under the ridge created stormy conditions for the region. Weakening ridge conditions over Alaska allowed cooler and much wetter conditions to develop toward the end of the summer. The Northwest and northern Rockies remained much drier than normal under the intense ridge.

In the central and eastern U.S., relatively cooler conditions prevailed through the Plains and Midwest while the south had near normal temperatures. Precipitation was much above normal across the main storm track through the upper and mid-Mississippi and Ohio Valleys and into New England and the Mid-Atlantic region. Drier conditions develop along the Gulf and Southeast Atlantic coasts.

Drought continued to intensify and expand in the West with severe to exceptional drought across California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Utah and much of Idaho.

Fire danger indices in the interior of Alaska continued to indicate the potential for significant fire activity in June, which came to fruition in late June and early July. Alaska's fire season continued later into the year than is normally expected thanks to the elevated conditions that were currently in place. During the last week of June, moisture moved into the Southwest in earnest, greatly reducing fire potential for Arizona and New Mexico. East of the divide, fuels remained moist and provided limited potential for fire growth. West of the divide fuels supported large fires, however generally did not cause for fire control problems. Fire danger indices remained well below seasonal averages across the entire Rocky Mountain Area. The warm and dry winter and spring led to very dry fuels across the Northwest. Fire danger was unusually high. In Northern California, the long-term drought and occasional brief periods of hot and dry weather allowed fuels to return to drier-than-normal levels rather quickly in the absence of precipitation. In Southern California native brush and shrubs showed renewed leaf growth while a fine carpet of new grass covered some lower elevations. Live fuels remained moist, but dead fuels resumed low fuel moistures by the middle of August. Dead fuel moistures in northern Idaho and western Montana continued at very dry values. For the Great

Basin, sagebrush live fuel moisture decreased to normal, or even below normal in some areas, despite the moisture. In the east fuel moistures were at or below the 90th percentile across the majority of the Eastern Area. For the Southeast fire activity remained well below average.

Autumn (September – December)

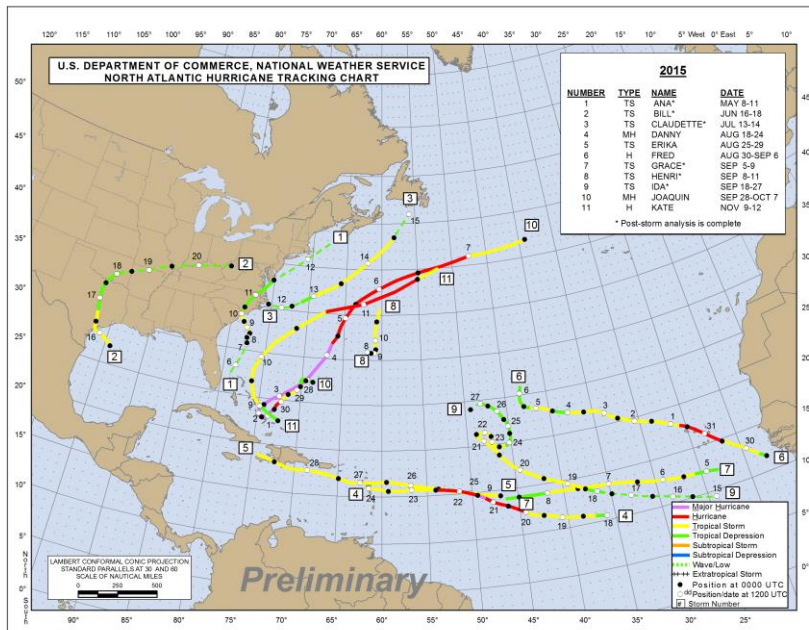
By September, a series of troughs moved through the West, bringing periodic rain and snows with increasing frequency. Heavy rain and snow were observed along the West Coast from northern California to Washington in November and December. A late season tropical system brought heavy rains to the Southwest and Great Basin. Frontal systems that dropped to the southeastern U.S. brought prolonged rain events to the region. For the season, most of the U.S. had above normal precipitation with only southern California showing significant deficits. Most of the Southwest experienced near or below normal temperatures while the Northwest had warmer conditions than average. In the central and eastern U.S., much warmer than normal conditions prevailed despite the increases in rainfall.

The abundant rainfall around the country greatly reduced drought over the central and eastern U.S. and across parts of the Northwest. However, severe to exceptional drought remained firmly in place across most of the California, western Nevada, southern Oregon, and in pockets over western Montana, Idaho, and Utah.

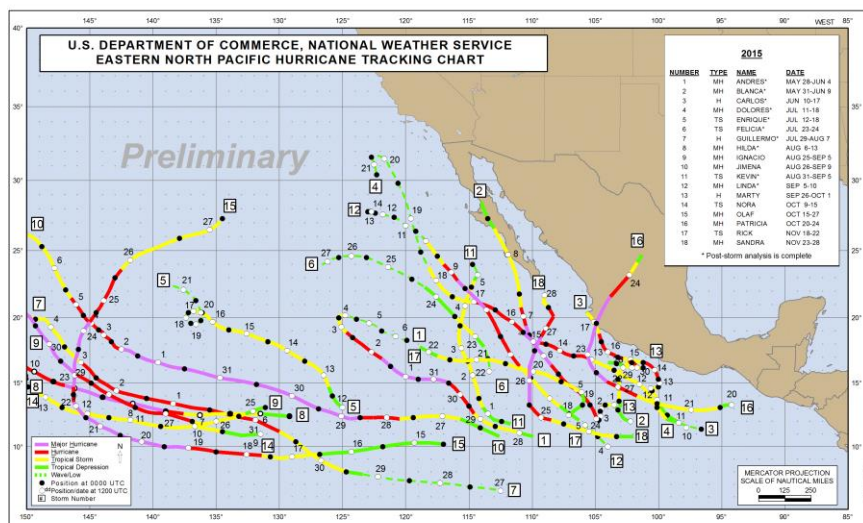
Throughout the majority of the western U.S. conditions moderated to normal fall-like conditions. This meant occasional initial attack periods and a few significant fires. Fuels across the northern tier moderated significantly with precipitation inputs occurring throughout September. For California, precipitation inputs were less significant and not enough to overcome long term drought. The Southern plains experienced some short term dryness. East of the Mississippi impacts from El Niño kept conditions below normal though most of the fall and winter.

Hurricane and Other Non-Fire Incident Support

The 2015 Atlantic Hurricane season ended with 11 named storms, four of which became hurricanes. Two storms-Danny and Joaquin-became major hurricanes. Only one storm, Tropical Storm Ana, made landfall in the continental U.S.



In the Eastern Pacific, there were 18 named storms with 13 hurricanes, well above average. Of those, nine were major hurricanes. This was the highest number of major hurricanes in the Eastern Pacific since 1971.



Preliminary hurricane storm tracks for the 2015 Atlantic Hurricane Season (top) and the 2015 Eastern Pacific Hurricane Season (bottom). From NOAA National Hurricane Center (<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>)

National Fire Activity Synopsis

The 2015 fire season was below normal for number of reported wildfires (93 percent of the 10-year annual average). There were 68,151 wildfires reported nationally (compared to 63,612 wildfires reported in 2014). The number of acres burned in 2015 was 10,125,149 acres or 145 percent of the national 10-year average. Alaska led the nation with 5.1 million acres burned (420 percent of its 10-year average).

Based on an annual 10-year average, Alaska (154%), Northwest (130%), Northern Rockies (130%), and Northern California (111%) reported above average fire occurrences in 2015. Eastern Area experienced normal fire occurrence (100%), while Southern California (94%), Southern Area (85%), Great Basin (77%), Rocky Mountain (76%), and Southwest (72%) all experienced below normal fire occurrences.

Alaska (420% percent), Northwest (229%), Northern California (163%) and Northern Rockies (139%) were the only Geographic Areas to experience above average acres burned. All other Geographic Areas were below their annual average acres. Fifty-two fires exceeded 40,000 acres in 2015; forty-three more than in 2014 (see Significant Fire Activity below for a list of those fires).

A total of 4,636 structures were destroyed by wildfires in 2015, including 2,638 residences, 29 multiple residences, 1,849 minor structures, 111 commercial structures and 9 mixed commercial/residential structures. This is above the annual average of 1,449 residences, 1,248 minor structures, and 53 commercial structures destroyed by wildfire with this year ranking 5th in total structures lost (data from 1999 to present). California accounted for the highest number of structures lost in one state in 2015: 1,892 residences, 27 multiple residences, 67 commercial structures, 1,086 minor structures, and three mixed commercial-residential structures. Washington was second with 343 residences 23 commercial structures and 182 minor structures.

Requests for firefighting resources placed to the National Interagency Coordination Center during the 2015 fire season were right at or higher than the 10-year average in most categories. Filled requests for overhead, engines, type 2 helicopters and heavy air tankers exceeded their respective 10-year averages.

National Type 1 teams were mobilized 39 times (up from 33 in 2014), and spent 572 days on assignments (up from 411 days in 2014). All 16 national teams had between one and four assignments each. Type 2 Teams were mobilized 121 times (up from 98 in 2014), for a total of 1,537 days assigned to incidents (up from 971 days in 2014). (Figures include both national and state teams.) Area Command team were mobilized eight times for a total of 85 days assigned in 2015. National Incident Management Organizations (NIMO) mobilized 12 times in 2015 to both wildland fire and non-fire incidents.

Military and International Resource Mobilizations

Military: On August 4, four MAFFS units were activated through a Request for Assistance (RFA) to the Department of Defense. This request was filled with two MAFFS from the 146th Airlift Wing and two MAFFS from the 302nd Airlift Wing were positioned at McClellan, CA in support wildland fire operations. On August 9 the two MAFFS from the 146th Airlift Wing were released back to the DOD. On August 15 one MAFFS unit from each of the 153rd Airlift Wing and the 145th Airlift Wing were also positioned to McClellan, CA. On August 23 two additional MAFFS from the 302nd Airlift Wing were mobilized to Channel Islands, CA. On September 3 the two MAFFS from the 302nd Airlift Wing were released back to the DOD and the single MAFFS units from the 153rd Airlift Wing and the 145th Airlift Wing were re-positioned to Channel Islands California. All MAFFS units were released back to the DOD on September 12. MAFFS units primarily provided retardant delivery to the Northern California and Southern California Geographic Areas while employed from August 3 through September 12. These units delivered a total of 842,983 gallons of retardant while conducting 372 sorties. This is up from 2014 when 88 sorties were flown delivering 246,854 gallons of retardant.

Beginning August 18, two-hundred soldiers from the 17th Field Artillery Brigade based out of Fort Lewis Washington were trained as firefighters, and then assigned to wildfires within Washington State for thirty days.

International: Through the NIFC-CIFFC Agreement the U.S. provided crews, overhead and an airtanker to the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. On July 5 a heavy airtanker mobilized to Alberta. The airtanker was released back to the U.S. on July 14. On July 10 the U.S. mobilized three crews and seven overhead personnel to Alberta as well as two crews and twenty-three overhead personnel to Saskatchewan. These resources were released back to the U.S. on July 27. On July 19 the U.S. mobilized an additional five crews to Alberta. These crews were released back to the U.S. on August 4.

Through the NIFC-CIFFC Agreement Canada provided crews, overhead and air tankers to the U.S. On August 20 five crews from the province of Ontario, one Convair 580 airtanker group from both Saskatchewan and Alberta were mobilized to the Northern Rockies Geographic Area. On August 22 one CL415 scooper group from Ontario joined the fire suppression efforts in the Northern Rockies Geographic Area. On August 27, fifty eight overhead from Alberta and Ontario mobilized to the Northern Rockies Area. On August 31 an additional CL-415 scooper group from Ontario Canada was mobilized to the Northern Rockies Geographic Area and then was re-assigned to the Great Basin Geographic Area on September 2. On September 7 the five crews from Ontario and two CL-415 scooper groups were released back to Canada. On September 8 both Convair 580 airtanker groups were released back to Canada. On September 9 all fifty-eight overhead were released back to Canada.

On August 27 sixty-eight overhead personnel from Australia and New Zealand were mobilized to support fire suppression operations in the Northwest Geographic Area. On September 27 all Australian and New Zealand overhead personnel were released back to their home countries.

Significant Wildland Fires

Fires and Complexes Over 40,000 Acres in 2015

Name	GACC	State	Start Date	Contain or Last Report Date	Size (Acres)	Cause	Estimated Cost
Tanana Area Fires	AK	AK	6/19	8/6	498,043	L	\$ 14,049,552
Ruby Area Fires	AK	AK	7/2	8/4	421,613	L	\$ 2,845,925
Soda	GB	ID	8/10	8/23	285,361	U	\$ 6,250,000
Sushgitit Hills	AK	AK	6/21	8/15	270,747	L	\$ 51,000
North Star	NW	WA	8/13	11/30	218,138	H	\$ 45,000,000
Holtnakatna	AK	AK	6/22	7/6	198,133	L	NR
Aniak Complex	AK	AK	7/4	7/19	157,783	L	\$ 6,492,120
Rough	SO	CA	7/31	10/12	151,623	L	\$ 120,930,243
Okanogan Complex	NW	WA	8/14	9/29	145,282	L	NR
Rock	AK	AK	6/19	8/15	142,637	L	\$ 1,694,868
Isahultila	AK	AK	6/21	8/15	128,617	L	\$ 10,000
Sea	AK	AK	6/19	8/8	111,193	L	\$ 7,000
Canyon Creek Complex	NW	OR	8/12	10/29	110,261	L	\$ 31,453,602
Big Mud River 1	AK	AK	6/21	8/8	103,170	L	\$ 5,000
Cornet-Windy Ridge	NW	OR	8/11	10/27	102,089	U	\$ 6,010,000
Iditarod River	AK	AK	6/20	7/25	98,183	L	\$ 282,298
Blazo	AK	AK	6/19	7/7	96,644	L	NR
Tepee Springs	GB	ID	8/12	10/19	95,709	L	\$ 31,540,000
Munsatli 2	AK	AK	7/4	8/2	95,679	L	\$ 6,000
Selway/Elk City/Red River Complex	NR	ID	8/17	10/29	94,921	L	\$ 16,000,000
Chelan Complex	NW	WA	8/14	9/20	88,985	U	\$ 10,000,000
Clearwater/Municipal/Motorway North Complex	NR	ID	8/10	9/8	83,243	L	\$ 41,527,637
Grizzly Bear Complex	NW	OR	8/13	10/30	83,148	L	\$ 20,968,610
Torment Creek	AK	AK	6/20	8/4	81,468	L	\$ 7,000
River Complex	NO	CA	7/30	9/25	77,081	L	\$ 32,678,783
Kettle Complex	NW	WA	8/11	9/27	76,512	L	NR
Valley	NO	CA	9/12	10/5	76,067	U	\$ 56,220,000
Wolverine	NW	WA	6/29	10/3	72,123	L	\$ 35,000,000
Butte	NO	CA	9/9	9/30	70,868	U	\$ 74,720,784
Rocky	NO	CA	7/29	8/14	69,438	U	\$ 46,100,000
Bear Creek	NR	MT	8/12	10/22	69,435	L	\$ 3,300,000
Kutokbuna Lake	AK	AK	6/21	7/2	68,320	L	\$ 82,167
County Line 2	NW	OR	8/12	8/31	67,207	U	\$ 16,400,000
Three Day	AK	AK	6/19	7/7	66,703	L	NR
Lloyd	AK	AK	6/24	8/14	66,267	L	\$ 603,744
Carpenter Road	NW	WA	8/14	12/16	63,972	H	\$ 22,650,000
West Fork	AK	AK	6/19	7/25	58,335	L	\$ 4,000
Dulbi River	AK	AK	6/19	6/25	56,687	L	NR
Tobatokh	AK	AK	6/22	7/1	54,036	L	\$ 2,000
Family Peak Complex	NR	MT	8/13	10/17	53,890	L	\$ 4,205,000
Cougar Creek	NW	WA	8/10	10/17	53,534	L	\$ 23,500,000
Hardpac Creek	AK	AK	6/21	8/3	50,482	L	\$ 3,000
Bendire Complex	NW	OR	8/11	9/15	49,628	L	\$ 4,820,000
Chitanana River	AK	AK	6/21	7/11	49,540	L	\$ 1,000
Can Creek	AK	AK	6/1	7/17	48,729	L	\$ 18,945
Glacier	AK	AK	6/23	7/28	47,333	L	\$ 4,000
Eden Creek	AK	AK	6/25	8/14	45,995	L	\$ 71,650

Name	GACC	State	Start Date	Contain or Last Report Date	Size (Acres)	Cause	Estimated Cost
Old Woman	AK	AK	6/20	7/7	44,098	L	NR
Zane Hills	AK	AK	6/20	7/3	43,760	L	NR
Why Lake	AK	AK	6/19	7/2	42,767	L	\$ 13,348
Kuka Creek 4	AK	AK	6/22	7/24	41,628	L	\$ 4,700
Carlson Lake	AK	AK	6/25	8/10	40,257	L	\$ 45,362

L – Lightning H – Human U – Undetermined or Under Investigation NR – Not Reported

Information in the above table was derived from ICS-209 reports submitted in the Fire and Aviation Management Web Applications system (FAMWEB). Information shown may not reflect final official figures.

Significant Fire Activity

There were 1,052 large or significant wildfires reported in 2015 (derived from ICS-209 reports submitted through FAMWEB). Significant wildfires represented about 1.5 percent of total wildfires reported nationally in 2015. The maps below depict the locations of these fires.

