



Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology

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Firefighters' Group Releases New Guide to Wildfire Information Sources *FireWatch Guide* Enables Citizens to Track Wildfire Events Online Without Waiting for Official Agency News Releases or Media Broadcasts

EUGENE, OR— Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology (FUSEE) released their new report, **FireWatch: A Citizen's Guide to Wildfire Suppression Monitoring**, that provides easy step-by-step instructions for accessing a number of different internet sites that track wildfires. Many of these internet sites are the same information sources that are used by firefighting agencies to distribute maps and information to fire managers and firefighting crews. Citizens can directly access these sites on their own without the lag between the time agencies gather the information and release it to the newsmedia. Reporters do not have to wait for official briefings, or rely on official "spin" to find out where wildfires are located and what agencies are doing to respond to them. The internet sites featured in FUSEE's *FireWatch Guide* provide maps and other essential information that people need to know about wildfires burning in their local area or region.

"People living in rural communities have a critical need for accurate, timely information about wildfires in their area. They cannot afford to sit and wait for agency spokespersons to assemble the information into an officially-approved press release that is delayed getting to the public until the next newspaper edition or television newscast," said Timothy Ingalsbee, executive director of FUSEE. "The *FireWatch Guide* shows how people how to get wildfire information as accurately and quickly as possible with the use of their own computers or smartphones."

"Wildland firefighters always seek to optimize their 'situational awareness,' and citizens should do that too. Don't just *be* safe, *think* SAFE (Situational Awareness For Everyone) by seeking wildfire information directly from the source, and then sharing it with your neighbors," said Michael Beasley, lead author of the *FireWatch Guide* and veteran firefighter currently managing wildfires in northern California. "Wildland firefighters and the communities they serve benefit from an informed public."

The instructions and internet sources presented in the *FireWatch Guide* are valuable to reporters, too, enabling them to gather unmediated fire information in close to real-time. Given the dynamic nature of wildfires and the way they can rapidly spread or change direction, reporters need to be able to access raw information quickly without waiting for scheduled official information releases.

In addition to current maps providing the locations of wildfires, the *FireWatch Guide* also presents online sites that give information about the number and kind of suppression resources assigned to each wildfire.

A variety of internet sites offer different kinds of information such as up-to-date maps of wildfire perimeters and areas of high heat or rapid growth, statistics on the number and kind of suppression resources assigned to a wildfire incident, the kind of fuels and vegetation that a fire is spreading through, various community assets that may be at risk, and contact information for the fire team managing a suppression incident. This information is updated regularly, but may not always be presented in agency news releases.

The *FireWatch Guide* is accessible on the FUSEE website and can be downloaded for free:

http://www.fusee.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FireWatch_2018.pdf

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