

# Whole-of-Government Approach



**Employ** a proactive and fully resourced whole-of-government approach, with significant involvement by the fire service, to address threats — including fire — to the health and safety of our nation's population.

## Issue

The fire service must have a greater role in federal policy development when federal agencies develop policies and programs related to public safety, such as first responder mental health and wellness, building and fire codes, and the five mission areas of the National Preparedness Goal (prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery). We must undertake a whole-of-government, proactive, resourced approach to the nation's fire problem.

The United States faces a serious fire problem. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), fire accounted for nearly \$16 billion in direct property loss in 2021. These fires caused 3,800 civilian deaths and 14,700 civilian fire injuries.<sup>1</sup> According to a September 2023 report from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a record number of billion-dollar weather and climate related disaster have occurred in the United States year-to-date. These events have resulted in costs exceed \$57 billion and 253 direct and indirect fatalities.<sup>2</sup>

## Areas

### Resources and Funding

Many local fire departments remain under-resourced, leaving their communities and firefighters at risk. Vital research into emerging technologies, firefighter health and safety, and advancements in building systems and practices are underfunded. To address the nation's fire problem, the federal government, as well as state and local governments, need to invest in a comprehensive strategy with stakeholder partners.

### Aligning USFA with Current Need

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) should be elevated within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and transformed into a multi-disciplinary response, preparedness, and mitigation agency. As many response agencies already have, each FEMA region should have a dedicated USFA specialist to assist in the planning and response to disasters. USFA must be fully funded and appropriately staffed to execute its mission.

### Fire's Footprint in the Federal System

As the White House and federal policy makers address resiliency in the built environment, they must recognize the fire service is the first line of response to all disasters, including those involving wind, water, fire, or other hazards. Nearly every department and agency in the federal government touches upon fire and emergency services in some way. These departments and agencies are responsible for engaging with fire service stakeholders — inside and outside of the federal



FEMA



U.S. Fire Administration  
Working for a fire-safe America



government — when developing policies and procedures impacting fire and life safety. Despite the fire service's significant footprint in these departments' mission, there is a lack of coordination and cohesive policy development among these agencies. Consistent, competent, and effective leadership at the U.S. Fire Administration can coordinate these policies and ensure that the fire service stakeholders can effectively operate at the national level.

The federal government has numerous agencies and programs impacting the nation's fire and emergency services. Nearly every department in the federal government touches upon fire and emergency services. Here is a snapshot of some of the various programs in the federal government impacting fire and life safety.

#### Department of Defense

- ▶ Military firefighter health and safety

#### Department of Justice

- ▶ Bureau of Justice Assistance
- ▶ Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program

#### Department of the Interior

- ▶ Bureau of Land Management
- ▶ Wildland firefighting

#### Department of Agriculture

- ▶ US Forest Service
- ▶ Wildland firefighting

#### Department of Commerce

- ▶ National Telecommunications and Information Administration
- ▶ First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet)

#### Department of Labor

- ▶ Occupational Safety & Health Administration

#### Department of Health and Human Services

- ▶ Centers for Disease Control & Prevention/National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health
- ▶ National Firefighter Registry

#### Department of Housing and Urban Development

- ▶ Public and Indian Housing
- ▶ Safe and affordable housing for our most vulnerable populations

#### Department of Transportation

- ▶ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- ▶ Office of EMS

#### Department of Energy

- ▶ Office of Environment, Health, Safety & Security
- ▶ Fire Protection Program

#### Department of Education

- ▶ Office of Postsecondary Education
- ▶ Campus Safety & Security

#### Department of Veterans Affairs

- ▶ Safe and affordable housing for veterans and their families

#### Department of Homeland Security

- ▶ Federal Emergency Management Agency/US Fire Administration
- ▶ National Fire Academy
- ▶ Assistance to Firefighters/Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response/Fire Prevention & Safety Grants

<sup>1</sup>"Fire Loss in the United States During 2021" (National Fire Protection Association; September 2022)

<sup>2</sup>"Assessing the U.S. Climate in August 2023" (National Centers for Environmental Information, NOAA; September 11, 2023)

**More Information** ▶



**FEMA**



U.S. Fire Administration  
Working for a fire-safe America

