

APPENDIX 20
(SOUTH CAROLINA WILDFIRE PLAN)
TO THE SOUTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. As required by state and federal law, South Carolina’s policy is to be prepared for any emergency or disaster, including wildfire events.
- B. This plan is designed to provide support to counties and agencies engaged in wildfire operations.
- C. A wildfire is defined as an uncontrolled fire burning in forests, grasslands, or brush.

II. PURPOSE

- A. Provide a process for a coordinated support effort in the response to a wildfire incident in South Carolina to prevent or minimize injury to people, damage to property, and impacts to the environment.
- B. Define the roles and responsibilities for the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) personnel to support the South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC).

III. SCOPE

- A. The South Carolina Wildfire Plan addresses wildfire support operations to be conducted in coordination with the South Carolina Emergency Operations Plan (SCEOP), Annex 4 (Firefighting), and Appendix 6 (SC Recovery Plan). This is not a fire suppression plan.
- B. This plan will be used for large incidents requiring SEOC activation, smaller fires will be handled locally in coordination with SCFC.

IV. FACTS AND ASSUMPTIONS

- A. Facts
 - 1. According to the South Carolina Forest Fire Protection Act, Title 48, Chapter 33, the South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC) is responsible for wildfire response outside of town or city limits.
 - 2. The SCFC maintains a Type II Incident Management Team (IMT) to manage large wildfire incidents.
 - 3. South Carolina averages 3,000 wildfires annually with a total of 18,000 acres burned.

- 4. The largest wildfire in South Carolina on record was 30,000 acres in Horry County in 1976.
- 5. South Carolina wildfire ignitions by source:

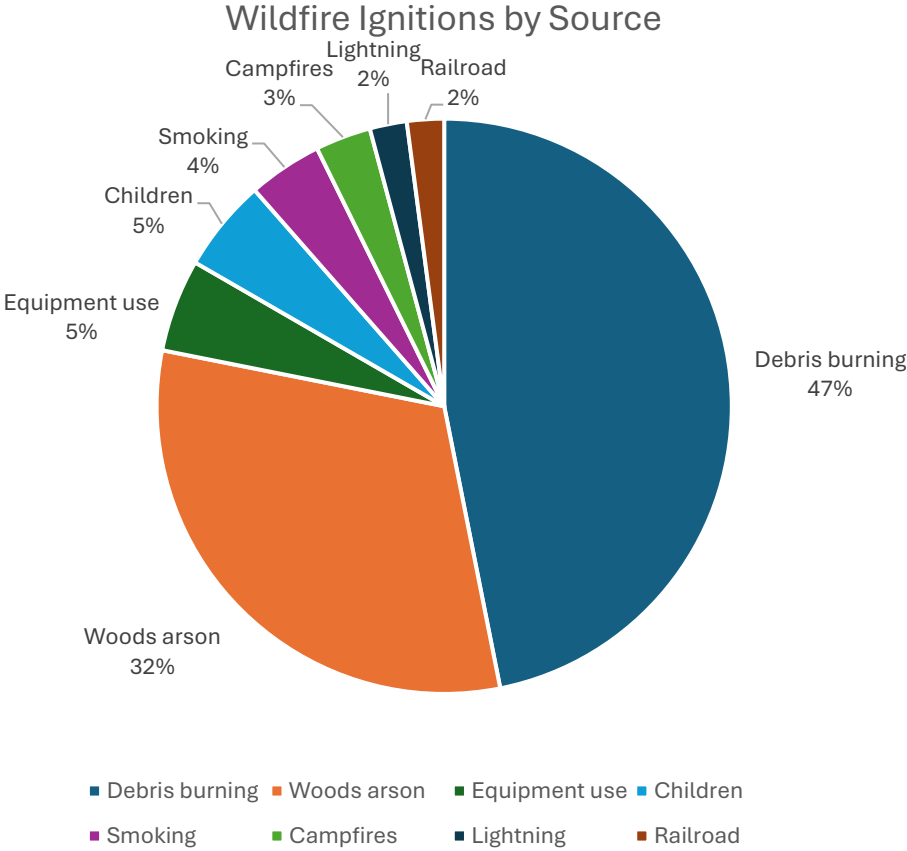


Figure 1: Wildfire Ignitions by Source

Note. Data adapted from “Wildfire in South Carolina”. <https://www.scfc.gov/protection/fire-burning/fire-resources/wildfire-in-south-carolina/>. Copyright 2025 by South Carolina Forestry Commission.

- 6. Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) identify wildfire risk and help develop risk reduction strategies for communities in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). A CWPP is required for many federal grants for fuel reduction projects on private lands. 213 Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) have been completed in South Carolina.
- 7. Historical Impacts
 - a. The Table Rock Fire started on March 21, 2025, fueled by extremely low relative humidities and gusty winds in Pickens County. Two days later the Persimmon Ridge fire started in neighboring

Greenville County. The two fires were managed as the Table Rock Complex Fire burned a combined 15,973 acres. During the fire approximately 1,300 homes were under evacuation orders in Greenville and Pickens County. The fire was declared out on April 8, 2025.

- b. The Covington Drive Fire started on March 1, 2025, just north of Myrtle Beach in the Carolina Forest Community. The fire burned 2,059 acres. The fire threatened thousands of homes and evacuations were issued for communities, but none were destroyed. The fire burned in an area known as the Carolina Bays, which are known for peaty soil and dry vegetation, creating difficulties. Wildfires burning in peat soil can burn for extended periods underground and are difficult to detect and extinguish. The fire wasn't declared controlled until June 4, 2025, making it the longest duration wildfire on record in the state.
- c. The Pinnacle Mountain Fire was reported on the morning of November 9, 2016, in the Table Rock State Park area of Pickens County. Pickens County was in a severe drought and low humidity with strong gusty winds caused the fire to grow over 10,000 acres. Over \$4 million was spent on firefighting. The fire was declared out on December 16, 2016.
- d. The Highway 31 Fire started on April 22, 2009, near Myrtle Beach. It is South Carolina's most destructive wildfire in terms of damage. Extreme fire conditions caused the fire to burn 19,130 acres. The evacuation of 2,500 people was ordered during the first night of the fire. The fire destroyed 76 homes and damaged 97 others, resulting in \$25 million dollars in damage. The fire was declared controlled on May 20, 2009.

B. Assumptions

1. Large wildfires will be managed by the SCFC under an IMT in Unified Command with the local jurisdiction. Command of an incident may be delegated to an IMT from another state or federal agency.
2. South Carolina or select counties will be under a State of Emergency during the response actions of this plan.
3. Wildfires may be a regional or interstate event.
4. Predicting where wildfires will occur is difficult.

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5. Wildfires that require activation of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) may displace populations that will require evacuations, sheltering, and temporary or long-term housing.
 6. Critical infrastructure may be damaged by wildfire resulting in a loss of services across the lifeline sectors.

V. SITUATION

- A. The 2023 South Carolina Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies the threat of wildfire as a hazard in all counties of the state.
- B. The wildland-urban interface (WUI) is the zone where the forestland meets human development including homes and critical infrastructure. Homes and critical infrastructure in the WUI are at an increased risk of ignition from direct flame contact or embers from wildfire. Communities completing wildfire mitigation activities in the WUI can reduce their risk.
- C. South Carolina is experiencing significant population growth and subsequently housing developments are expanding farther into rural forested areas. About 56% of homes in South Carolina are in WUI areas and at increased risk from wildfire.
- D. Wildfires can occur year-round, but potential for large wildfires is highest from January to mid-April. During these months, most vegetation is dead or dormant. This contributes to lower fuel moisture in vegetation causing it to ignite and burn easier.
- E. Wildfire can present different challenges based on the location of the fire. In the Upstate, fire is driven by topography of the mountains. In coastal areas, fires can burn in peat soil making them difficult to extinguish.

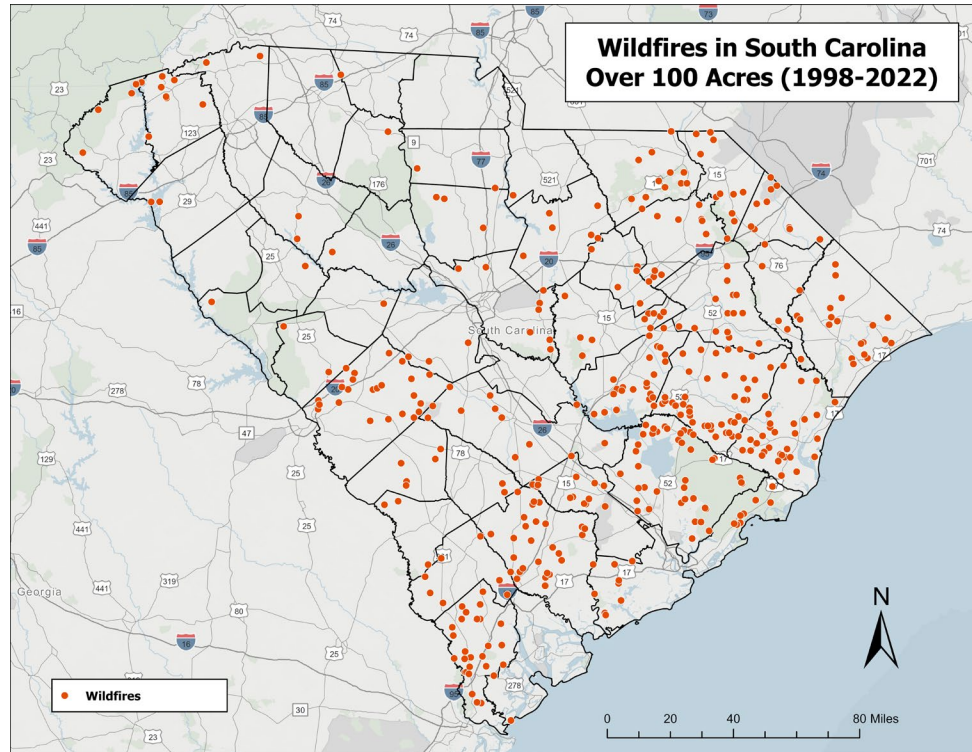


Figure 2: Wildfires in South Carolina Over 100 Acres (1998-2022)

- F. Extreme fire behavior is driven by four critical weather elements. Low relative humidity, strong surface winds, unstable or turbulent air, and drought.
- G. Certain counties and municipalities have established ordinances to prevent outdoor burning when extreme fire danger conditions exist.
- H. When conditions exist where extreme wildfire behavior could occur, the following notification could be issued.
 1. Red Flag Alert – Issued by the SCFC when specific conditions are met including relative humidity, winds, ground fuel moisture, and outdoor activity. All outdoor burning is strongly discouraged.
 2. Red Flag Warning – Issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) when conditions are favorable for the rapid spread of wildfire.
 3. State Forester’s Burn Ban – Issued by the director of the SCFC. Prohibits starting any kind of outdoor burning.
 4. Governor’s Burn Ban – Issued by the Governor’s Office with input from the SCFC and various firefighting agencies. It applies statewide but not to agriculture burning.

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- I. Winds from tropical cyclones, thunderstorms, and tornadoes can blow down trees increasing fuel loads on the ground. Increased fuel loads paired with a drought could potentially create extreme wildfire conditions.
 - J. A wildfire is contained when a control line has been completed around the fire and there is reasonable expectation the fire will no longer spread beyond the containment lines. A wildfire is controlled when the fire is completely out or the control lines around the fire are strengthened enough that firefighters are confident the fire will not spread beyond those lines.

VI. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. General

SCFC is the lead agency for firefighting operations during wildfires. The South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD) is the lead agency for SERT operations supporting the SCFC and Counties.

B. Preparedness Actions in Advance of Wildfire Conditions

1. Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS)

A PSPS is when a utility makes the decision to temporarily shut off power to an area to reduce the risk of a wildfire being caused by power lines. Conditions that could trigger a PSPS include low humidity, high temperatures, high winds, low fuel moisture conditions, or Red Flag Warning issued by the NWS. Vegetation can be ignited by either direct contact creating an electrical short circuit or electricity arcing from the power line to vegetation.

2. Pre-Staging Wildfire Resources

SCEMD may coordinate with SCFC and SERT partners that provide wildfire resources in advance of a high fire danger weather event. SERT resources may be staged in areas with the highest potential for large wildfires.

C. Plan Activation

- 1. SEOC activation will occur if SCFC has determined the need for additional state assistance.
- 2. Upon a State of Emergency declared by the Governor's Office, SCEMD will activate the SEOC at Operational Condition Level 2 (OPCON 2) (partial activation). The appropriate SERT elements will be activated.
- 3. SCEMD may activate the SEOC at OPCON 1 (full activation) if either of the following conditions are met:

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- a. Multiple major wildfires burning concurrently
 - b. Wildfire significantly impacting a densely populated area

D. Wildfire Evacuations

- 1. The authorized representatives of the Fire Authority having jurisdiction can evacuate areas determined to be threatened by wildfire. (South Carolina Code of Laws, Section 6-11-1420)
- 2. In the event an evacuation is ordered by any Fire Authority, the authorized representatives shall notify state and local law enforcement. The authorized representative of the Fire Authority will also notify the state or local Emergency Management. (South Carolina Code of Laws Section 6-11-1440)
- 3. Upon arrival of law enforcement, the Fire Authority shall yield control of the evacuated area to the law enforcement authorities. Law enforcement will manage the evacuation and area evacuated in cooperation with the Fire Authority, the state and local Emergency Management Director, and other state and local agencies having jurisdiction and authority. (South Carolina Code of Laws Section 6-11-1440)

E. SEOC Activation and Support

- 1. SEOC Activation and Support
 - a. SERT support will focus on two lines of effort.
 - (1) Actions in direct support of wildfire operations.
 - (a) Provide aviation support, traffic control point (TCP) staffing, water for suppression, and base camp support.
 - (b) Provide the required information for the Governor's Office to make a request for a fire management assistance declaration.
 - (2) Actions in support of counties.
 - (a) Provide support for evacuation and sheltering operations.
 - (b) Disaster Intelligence Group (DIG) products will be developed by SCEMD and SCFC or the wildfire IMT for local and state decision support.

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- (c) SCEMD Regional Emergency Managers (REMs) will be deployed to county Emergency Operation Centers and the wildfire incident command post (ICP) as requested.
 - b. Public information operations will be coordinated through the establishment of a Joint Information Center (JIC) and Joint Information System (JIS), staffed by Public Information Officers from the SERT, SCFC, the wildfire IMT, affected counties, and supporting agencies. The JIC/JIS will ensure the timely, accurate, and consistent dissemination of public information, warnings, protective actions, and incident updates to the public, media, and stakeholders.
 - c. Coordination with SCFC/IMT
 - (1) Coordination between the IMT and SEOC may be supported by a REM present at the ICP.
 - (2) The IMT Public Information Officer (PIO) will provide information flow from the incident to the SEOC and other agencies involved.



VII. DISASTER INTELLIGENCE AND COMMUNICATIONS







- A. See Section VIII (Disaster Intelligence and Communications) of the SCEOP Base Plan.
- B. Conference Calls and Briefings
 - 1. The SEOC will schedule conference calls with the affected Counties and activated ESFs leads upon activation of the SEOC
 - a. Format for calls:
 - (1) Opening comments from the SCEMD Director.
 - (2) Current wildfire situation brief provided by SCFC.
 - (3) Weather brief provided by NWS or wildfire IMT incident meteorologist (IMET).
 - (4) DIG products will be briefed. Briefing includes, but is not limited to, population at risk, lifeline changes, and potential wildfire spread.
 - (5) SCEMD Chiefs will brief key section actions.

- (6) SERT will brief key agency actions.
 - (7) County Directors will report on anticipated resource requests, local evacuation orders, potential shortfalls, and suggested response actions.
2. Executive Group conference calls and decision briefings will be held as requested by the Governor.
- a. Format for the calls:
 - (1) Opening comments from the Governor.
 - (2) Current wildfire situation brief provided by SCFC.
 - (3) Weather brief provided by NWS or wildfire IMT incident meteorologist (IMET).
 - (4) SCEMD Disaster Intelligence Products will be briefed.
 - (5) State agency directors will provide status of agency operations.
 - (6) The SCEMD Director will make recommendations to the Governor.

C. Lifeline Sector Analysis

- 1. The table below lists possible impacts to the state’s lifeline sectors associated with wildfire. While not all-inclusive, this list assists the SERT’s ability to respond effectively by proactively identifying possible areas of concern before impacts occur.

Lifeline	Scope of Possible Impacts
 <p>Safety and Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas affected by wildfire may be difficult to access, hindering lifesaving missions. • Operational facilities may be affected by wildfires. • Strain on firefighting and law enforcement resources from extended response operations. • Large scale evacuations.
 <p>Food, Hydration, Shelter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens displaced from wildfire impacted areas may require emergency shelter. • Crops and animal stocks may be damaged by wildfire. • Search and rescue activities may be necessary for livestock in impacted areas.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoke exposure may have a significant impact including respiratory issues, eye and skin irritation. • Urgent care/emergency departments may see an influx of individuals experiencing breathing issues or evacuation related injuries. • Potential for localized healthcare facility evacuations. • EMS response times may be impacted by road closures.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power distribution lines and wooden power poles may be damaged by wildfire activity. • Pipelines may be threatened by the plowing of fire breaks. • Fuel pipelines may be affected by power outages caused by wildfires.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telecommunications and broadband equipment and systems may be damaged from wildfire activity or lose power from wildfire impacts to power grid. • Cellular infrastructure may be impacted in areas with dense smoke. • Heat from wildfires may impact buried fiber lines.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildfire activity, smoke, and debris may prevent or impede transportation in impacted areas including roads, railways, and airports. • Blocked or damaged roadways may inhibit the restoration of power and the delivery of commodities or services.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites storing hazardous materials may be affected by wildfires resulting in the release of hazardous materials. • Smoke from the wildfires could contain hazardous materials. • Consideration should be given to handling hazardous materials that are impacted by the fire that pose a threat to the environment.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildfire may impact surface water sources of drinking water. • Damage to infrastructure may occur from response activities or the wildfire including degradation of underground plastic pipes. • Increased demand of water for firefighting may create strain on systems.

VIII. ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. See Section IX (Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities) of the SCEOP Base Plan for the general roles and responsibilities of county, state, and federal agencies in preparation, response, and recovery from a disaster impacting the State.

B. Emergency Support Functions

1. ESF-1 (Transportation)

South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) (Coordinating Agency)

- a. Support road clearing activities for fire access.
- b. Ensure ingress/egress on evacuation routes.
- c. Coordinate with ESF-16 to implement detours on wildfire impacted interstates.
- d. Coordinate Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) support including Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR).
- e. Support firefighting operations with equipment needs on surface roads.

2. ESF-2 (Communications)

South Carolina Department of Administration (Coordinating Agency)

- a. Assess communications needs, prioritize requirements, and make recommendations to deploy equipment and personnel to affected areas, as required.
- b. Work with counties/agencies to identify gaps in communication issues and resolve.
- c. Help coordinate the frequency management plan during the wildfire response operations.
- d. Coordinate the state strategic technology reserve.
- e. Work with private sector to identify impacts on infrastructure.

3. ESF-3 (Public Works and Engineering)

a. South Carolina National Guard (SCNG) (Coordinating Agency)

Maintain situational awareness of water and wastewater facility impacts and provide sector assessments to the SEOC.

b. South Carolina Rural Water Association (SCRWA)

- (1) Maintain situational awareness of water and wastewater facility impacts and provide sector assessments to the SEOC.
 - (2) Provide technical assistance to water/wastewater systems to maintain water quality.
 - (3) Coordinate with ESF-10 to monitor surface water impacts.
 - (4) Coordinate with Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for usage of federal resources.
4. ESF-4 (Firefighting)
- a. South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC) (Coordinating Agency)
 - (1) Refer to SCEOP Annex 4 for SCFC actions and responsibilities during a wildfire event.
 - (2) Request Air Resource Advisors to monitor smoke exposure and forecast smoke impacts.
 - (3) Establish TFRs over the wildfire area.
 - b. South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (SCLLR)

Support Firefighter Mobilization activities to support the SCFC and local jurisdictions.
5. ESF-5 (Emergency Management)
- South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD) (Coordinating Agency)
- a. Organize and facilitate county and SERT conference calls during an event.
 - b. Coordinate and distribute disaster intelligence products including wildfire mapping as needed.
 - c. Provide resource support to agencies and impacted local jurisdictions as requested.
 - d. Provide liaison support to county EOCs or wildfire incident command posts through the REM program.

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- e. Facilitate interstate mutual aid via the Emergency Management Assistance Compact as requested.
6. ESF-6 (Mass Care)
South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) (Coordinating Agency)
 - a. Coordinate with counties to identify suitable shelters to support wildfire response operations and to support evacuees.
 - b. Coordinate with the Feeding Task Force and local jurisdictions to determine the need for mass feeding operations.
 - c. Provide reunification support for displaced families.
 7. ESF-8 (Health and Medical Services)
South Carolina Department of Public Health (SCDPH) (Coordinating Agency)
 - a. Identify licensed health care facilities in impacted areas(s) and coordinate resources to assist with evacuations as needed.
 - b. Coordinate medical transport assets to support health care facilities or county EMS as needed.
 - c. Support messaging for impacts of smoke exposure.
 8. ESF-9 (Search and Rescue)
South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (SCLLR) (Coordinating Agency)
 - a. Coordinate with ESF-1, Air Branch, for Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team (HART) and other Search and Rescue (SAR) rotary and fixed wing platforms to support SAR.
 - b. Coordinate activation of the South Carolina Incident Support Team (IST) for agency coordination at the South Carolina Fire Academy or deployment to the affected area.
 9. ESF-10 (Environmental and Hazardous Material Operations)
South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) (Coordinating Agency)
 - a. Support the ability to forecast particulate matter.

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- b. Facilitate Air Quality Alerts.
 - c. Assist with the coordination of debris management and disposal.
 - d. Assist with the coordination of animal carcass disposal.
 - e. Provide technical expertise to property owners in the survey, removal, and disposal of hazardous materials from residential and commercial properties.
 - f. Coordinate with ESF-3 for surface water impacts.
 - g. Coordinate with ESF-8 for respiratory impacts due to smoke exposure.
10. ESF-11 (Food Services)
- South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) (Coordinating Agency)
- a. In coordination with ESF-6:
 - (1) Identify location of fixed feeding sites.
 - (2) Support activation of Feeding Task Force.
 - b. Manage damage assessments and power outages to submit potential waivers to USDA.
11. ESF-12 (Energy)
- Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) (Coordinating Agency)
- a. Provide risk and damage assessments of at-risk electric generation and pipeline facilities.
 - b. Monitor and report on power, natural gas, or petroleum outages due to wildfire impacts.
 - c. Assist in coordinating emergency locate tickets with SC811.
12. ESF-13 (Law Enforcement)
- South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) (Coordinating Agency)
- a. Provide SLED helicopter to assist in wildfire operations.
 - b. Provide law enforcement officers to security missions as identified by state and local authorities.

13. ESF-14 (Initial Recovery and Mitigation)

South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD) (Coordinating Agency)

- a. Set up incident specific damage trackers.
- b. Compile information to support a Fire Management Assistance Grant request and submit Governor's request for a Fire Management Assistance Grant, if warranted.
- c. Track and compile damage assessment and cost information to support requests for federal assistance.
- d. Coordinate submission of damage assessment information to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) as needed.
- e. Prepare and submit for Governor's signature a request for a federal emergency or major disaster declaration, if needed.
- f. Identify potential post-disaster mitigation strategies.

14. ESF-15 (Public Information)

South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD) (Coordinating Agency)

- a. Activate the JIC/JIS.
- b. Coordinate with Public Information Officers (PIOs) from the county EOC, SERT, wildfire IMT, and SCFC to ensure the timely release of coordinated public information regarding wildfire conditions, life safety messaging, evacuation instructions, and reentry operations. Public messaging should clearly communicate when and where it is safe for residents to return, identify ongoing hazards and restricted areas, and provide protective action guidance. Joint press releases, media briefings, and synchronized social media messaging may be utilized across jurisdictions to ensure consistent and accurate public communication. Information should be updated regularly and disseminated through all available communication platforms, including traditional media, social media, emergency alert systems, and community outreach channels.
- c. See Annex 15 (Public Information) of the SCEOP.

15. ESF-16 (Emergency Traffic Management)

South Carolina Department of Public Safety (SCDPS) (Coordinating Agency)

In conjunction with county law enforcement authorities, support evacuations, and coordinate traffic control during the wildfire event.

16. ESF-17 (Agriculture and Animals)

Clemson University Livestock Poultry Health (CULPH) (Coordinating Agency)

- a. Coordinate volunteer farm-animal sheltering.
- b. Mitigate risks to infrastructure related to agribusiness, food, and public health by coordinating messaging and resources.

17. ESF-19 (Military Support)

South Carolina National Guard (SCNG) (Coordinating Agency)

- a. Provide helicopter support.
- b. Provide manpower for firefighting resources.

18. ESF-24 (Business and Industry)

South Carolina Department of Commerce (Coordinating Agency)

- a. Provide the latest disaster information to the South Carolina business community, to enable informed decisions regarding potential impacts to business.
- b. Assess business impacts in wildfire impacted communities.
- c. Coordinate the South Carolina Business Reentry Program.

IX. ADMINISTRATION, LOGISTICS, AND FINANCE

- A. Administration and Finance. See Annex 7 (Finance and Administration) to the SCEOP.
- B. Logistics. See Attachment A (SC Logistics Plan) to the SCEOP.

X. CONTINUITY OF GOVERNMENT (COG)

See Section VII (Concept of Operations), Paragraph L (Continuity of Government) of the SCEOP.

XI. CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS (COOP)

See Section VII (Concept of Operations), Paragraph M (Continuity of Operations) of the SCEOP.

XII. PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

SCEMD and designated stakeholders and partners identified in this plan will review this Appendix on a biennial basis and update/revise as necessary.

XIII. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

See Attachment C (Authorities and References) to the SCEOP.