



## Media Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Southern California Wildfires Underscore the Growing Threat in the United States**

**McLean, VA** – “Firefighters encountering walls of flames backed by 80 mph winds in densely populated areas of Southern California are facing the new wildfire reality,” said Chief Brian Fennessy of the Orange County Fire Authority. Chief Fennessy represents the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) on the [National Wildfire Coordinating Group](#), [National Interagency Aviation Committee](#). After visiting the Eaton Fire earlier today, he added, “This is destruction on a level I have not witnessed in my fire service career.”

The risk of wildfire is increasing in both significance and prevalence in the United States. Reasons for these devastating megafires include growing urban populations; the decreasing health of our forests; a hotter and drier climate; and an increase in the number and density of homes built in the wildland-urban interface (WUI). Statistics show a general increase in the size of wildland fires, the number of homes destroyed by them, and a rise in both the suppression costs and financial losses associated with fires in the WUI.

“As fire chiefs command some of the largest and most demanding wildfire incidents in our lifetime, and firefighters face extreme danger while fighting these fires, the IAFC continues to attack wildfire challenges head-on. The IAFC’s primary focus is to reduce wildfire risk, promote fire-adapted community policies, and to develop a national, single platform mutual aid system that identifies where fire resources are and where they need to go to improve response time using real-time decision-making tools,” added IAFC President Chief Josh Waldo, Bozeman (MT) Fire Chief.

The IAFC continues to advocate for a renewed WUI strategy focused on key areas. These include developing fire-resilient landscapes, strong community mitigation and prevention programs, and providing our wildland firefighters with the highest levels of technology, funding, and resources.

As our member fire chiefs and their firefighters battle the most recent round of unprecedented wildfires, the IAFC's thoughts are with them – and with those who have had to flee their homes not knowing what will be there when they return.

The IAFC believes the devastation unfolding now in Southern California underscores the extreme challenges of today's wildfire environment. Continued Congressional action is needed to support the findings and federal policy recommendations in the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission's final report to Congress (SEP 2023). The report's conclusions align with the IAFC's ongoing efforts to reduce the risk of wildfire in our communities and to better address our nation's growing wildfire crisis.

*Chief Fennessy is available for interviews. Contact Dave Statter at 202 487 5678.*

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