HB70/HJ62: STATUS OF WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION AND RESILIENCE EFFORTS IN MONTANA

FINAL REPORT TO THE 70TH MONTANA LEGISLATURE

Environmental Quality Council
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This report is a summary of the work of the Environmental Quality Council, specific to the Environmental Quality Council's 2025-2026 HB70 and HJ62 studies as outlined in the council 2025-26 work plan. Members received additional information and public testimony on the subject, and this report is an effort to highlight key information and the processes followed by the EQC in reaching its conclusions. To review additional information, including audio minutes, and exhibits, visit the Environmental Quality Council website: https://committees.legmt.gov/#/nonStandingCommittees/5

A full report, including links to the documents referenced in this print report, is available at the Environmental Quality Council website.

Introduction: “The shape of things to come”

The Ahorn, Black Cat, Jocko Lakes, Fool Creek, Chippy Creek, and Meriwether wildfires of 2007 were different.

The fires roiled in an extended Western drought, feasting on overgrown, diseased forests. They were sprawling in size, increasingly complex, with more extreme flame behavior. At the same time, the public expected firefighters to snuff them out quickly as always, even as they burned in riskier, harder-to-reach areas. Each fire agency had a different way of dealing with incidents. None had enough resources, as the fires sapped budgets.

For the first time since the 1988 Yellowstone National Park fires—or perhaps even the 1910 Great Burn—the legislature recognized a different approach to wildland firefighting was necessary. The year 2007 “may just be the shape of things to come,” stated the report of the Fire Suppression Committee, specially created to examine the topic.

The Fire Suppression Committee went on a road show in the summer of 2008, hosting public hearings in Choteau, Hamilton, Lewistown, Miles City, Seeley Lake, and Thompson Falls. Citizens provided hundreds of comments.

After months of work, the committee concluded “the forests of Montana are growing more fuel, more trees are dying, and the state is headed toward larger fires. Either we do more logging, more prescribed burns, or other fuel reduction or we have more dangerous fires.”

The committee also predicted even longer fire seasons, spiraling fire spending, negative economic impacts, uneven fuels reduction projects, uncertain federal support,

Many of these conclusions and predictions are today’s reality. The 2025 Environmental Quality Council reflected on that Fire Suppression Committee report, acknowledged some progress and identified remaining issues. Other concerns have emerged.

Wildfires still pose perhaps Montana’s most regular—yet unpredictable—“natural” problem. And it is a problem the Environmental Quality Council examined once again.

EQC findings on wildfire suppression, resilience

Landscape	Policies	Resilience
Forest and timber conditions continue to deteriorate	Aggressive initial attack identified as most cost-effective wildfire suppression method	As wildfire risks in Montana have doubled since 2000, fire insurance is the fastest-growing consumer insurance expense
Timber mortality exceeds harvest rate	Beyond damage to land and wildlife, wildfires tax law enforcement and emergency services, destroy infrastructure, and create public health issues	Increased property insurance rates are driven by industry losses due to weather events and more-expensive rebuilding costs for larger homes
The timber industry continues a long-term decline; 5 mills remain	Timber treatment projects may have slowed or halted recent wildfires	Hardening structures may lower the costs of insurance and decrease the effects of destructive fires
9 Montana communities face “urban conflagration risk”	Consolidated federal firefighting agencies may improve contracting, decision-making, response	A majority of Montana homes are constructed in the wildland-urban interface, which is at highest risk for wildfire
Climate change and extreme weather events increase wildfire risk	The state wildland firefighting budget has stabilized since 2009. Resource-sharing with local fire units also a positive	Insurance availability and affordability may be uneven for low-income, mobile, inherited, and rural homeowners
	Traditional fire suppression and fuels reduction efforts are not enough to protect structures	State insurance policy prohibits blanket cancellations by geographic area
		Smoke damage is a complex issue and increases in severity during an urban conflagration

An involved legislature

The Montana Legislature has routinely studied wildfire issues. Over the past two decades, lawmakers have:

- Created the special Fire Suppression Interim Committee (mentioned in the introduction), which proposed 38 bills
- Examined how Montana's laws on "strict liability" for uncontrolled burn has effectively limited the use of fire except for "major burners," like public agencies and timber companies (2018)
- Focused on incentives for the state's estimated 8,000 volunteer firefighters, such as worker's compensation insurance for on-the-job injuries (2018)
- Examined how wildfire smoke can push cities and towns over air quality standards, especially for the few areas designated as "nonattainment areas" under the Clean Air Act due to existing pollution (2022)

The 2025 Legislature continued that work, passing laws to create:

- a state-certified prescribed fire manager, allowing "burners" some liability protection and a claims fund for damages from escaped fires (House Bill No. 84)
- a Public Service Commission-approved "wildfire mitigation plan" to limit the legal liability of a "electric facilities provider" in the event of a wildfire (HB 490)

In addition, the 2025 Legislature approved two fire studies, which the Legislative Council assigned to the Environmental Quality Council (see box).

HB70	Study of state fire suppression
HR62	Study of wildfire prevention and resilience

These studies are the subject of this report, which will detail the EQC's review of how the state fights wildfires and prepares for their annual return.

HB70: Study of state wildfire suppression

House Bill 70 asked the Environmental Quality Council to investigate:

- firefighting operations and management policies in Montana by the state and federal governments
- the efficient use of fire suppression resources
- the impact of operations on private land and use of private resources
- state and federal forest and grazing policies

The council's work focused on:

- Past legislative work, such as the 2009 report, Price of Flame
- The state's "six-party" relationship with federal firefighting agencies
- A GIS-based data tool (developed by the Legislative Fiscal Division) that maps wildfires with associated data
- Input from an array of state and local fire agencies, law enforcement, and private wildfire contractors.[1]

State policy: Rapid initial attack

One law provides the main thrust of Montana's wildland fire suppression policy, the state fire policy.[2] The policy states:

- the safety of the public and of firefighters is paramount
- aggressive and rapid initial attack minimizes property and resource loss
- interagency cooperation and coordination is encouraged
- fire preventions, hazard reduction, and loss mitigation are fundamental
- all property in Montana have wildfire protection from a recognized fire protection entity
- all private property owners and public land agencies have a responsibility to manage resource, mitigate fire hazards, and prevent fires on their property
- forest management activities reduce risk

[1] Panelists: Commissioner Jeff Burrows (Ravalli Co.); Rich Cowger, Columbus Rural Fire District chief; Wyatt Frampton, deputy forest administrator (DNRC); Sheriff Steve Holton (Ravalli Co.); Jason Jarrett, mutual aid coordinator (Gallatin Co. Sheriff's Office); Peter Kolb, MSU Extension forestry specialist; Patrick Lonergan, chief of emergency management and fire (Gallatin Co.); Ray Ragsdale, Broadus Volunteer Fire Dept. and Power River Co. fire warden; Julia Altemus, Montana Wood Products Association executive director; Kevin Erickson, Call When Needed Resources LLC; Jason Todhunter, Montana Logging Association regional representative; Meranda Warren, private wildland firefighting contractor

[2] Section 76-13-115, MCA.

The specific language for "aggressive and rapid initial attack" is a hallmark of the state fire policy. This may sometimes come into conflict, when a "federal resource management directive" to allow a fire to continue to burn.

Additional statutes also provide direction, including those for:

- burn permits from local fire authorities
- community wildfire protection plans from every Montana community, to be updated every 5 years
- the organization of local fire districts and fire service areas
- county fire wardens, who coordinate between local and state fire protection

Also relevant is a law establishing legal liability for forest or range fires, which sets a strict standard for a person conducting a controlled burn. This strict liability statute reduces the number of "big burners" in the state to government land management agencies (like the U.S. Forest Service or Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation) and large timber companies. These burners must get a prescribed wildland open burning permit from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality; local fire control authorities must also sign off.

Panel: Progress in wildland fire policies?

The January 2026 panel's comments and recommendations (see box) make up many of this report's findings of facts, such as those related to deteriorating timber conditions, the decline in the state's timber industry, the effectiveness of aggressive initial attack, a stable state firefighting budget, and the secondary impacts of fires.

The panelists also expressed concerns. Private wildland firefighting contractors said they continue to be overlooked by the federal procurement process. More people move to the wildland-urban interface (WUI), but many are less self-reliant and have higher expectations of public services during disruptive fire events. And, the panelists said, in spite of efforts to increase fire mitigation work in Montana's forests,[3] the state has not made significant progress in wildfire prevention or forest management since the 2008 Fire Suppression Interim Committee.

Panel recommendations on fire suppression
Pre-position resources to enhance initial attack
Create a unified workforce to fight fires during the fire season and perform recovery/mitigation work out of season
Increase local gov't involvement in incident management teams for large, complex wildfires
Increase timber removal to benefit forests and the timber industry

[3] Panelists cited efforts under the Good Neighbor Authority and the federal Fix Our Forests Act as positive.

Working groups face issues

The council created working groups to further study and make recommendations related to:

- wildfire suppression funding
- wildland urban interface (WUI)
- wood products infrastructure and fuels treatment
- contracting of resources

Two of the working groups conducted surveys of local fire agencies, private wildland firefighting contractors, and operators of wood products industry. The working groups received surveys from 14 fire departments, 103 contractors, and 14 wood products operators.[4]

Some contractors surveyed said a lack of work on the fire line is a major problem. Because of this they feel they cannot keep employees. Furthermore, some contractors said they don't have a voice in the resource dispatching process and fear retaliation from state and federal agencies.[5]

Other working groups noted that wildland firefighting funding appears sufficient, observing that even as wildfire risk has elevated since 2009, state costs have not escalated as much as predicted.[6]

At the May 2026 council meeting, the working groups suggested:

- A legislative audit of how the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation uses private assets
- further discussion about the fire dispatch process
- Options to address increasing property insurance rates

Jurisdiction vs. protection

The McCormick Rural Volunteer Fire District in Troy has two stations and 8 volunteers patrolling the timber-dense northwest Montana. The U.S. Forest Service has a nationwide force of 11,300 with air tankers, engines, water tenders, smokejumpers, hand crews, support staff and many others. Both must work together in overlapping, complex, and

[4] See appendices B, C, and D for summaries of those surveys. The wood products survey is only a partial one, as other responses were given to the working group in a format not obtained by council staff.
[5] Testimony of Rep. Steve Gist to EQC, Sept. 8, 2026.
[6] Testimony of Sen. Pat Flowers to EQC, May 12, 2026.

flexible relationships. These relationships led to EQC discussions of jurisdiction and protection—and who has ultimate authority and responsibility.

Fire suppression is in the hands of a protecting agency. This may be different than the jurisdictional agency, i.e. federal land, state trust land, private land.

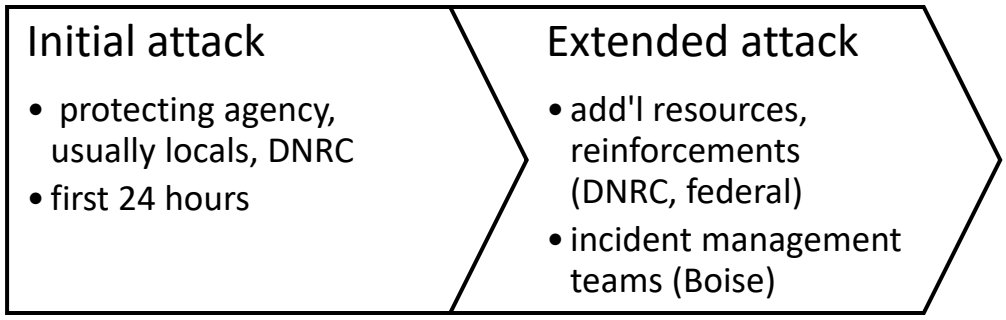
For example, the Montana DNRC protects U.S. Forest Service lands in western Montana. And some of the 400 local fire departments protect state lands in eastern Montana. State law requires the DNRC to assume protection of private land, although landowners also have responsibility to manage resources, mitigate fire hazards and prevent fires.[7]

Agency cooperation is detailed in the "six-party master agreement"[8] between the state of Montana and five federal agencies with land holdings, or the state's 56 agreements with Montana's counties.

These cooperative agreements are not rigid. For example, the "six-party master agreement" includes language such as the "closest forces concept," which allows firefighters from any agency to engage a fire "regardless of which agency has protection responsibility or jurisdiction." And "independent action" does not prohibit "any party on its own initiative from going upon lands known to be protected by another party…to engage in suppression of wildfires, when such fires are a threat to land under that part's management or protection…"

Federal reorganization

How the locals, state, and federal agencies cooperate this summer and in the future may be in flux, as last year the federal government announced a major reorganization and consolidation of federal firefighting efforts.



Four Department of Interior agencies[9] now comprise the U.S. Wildland Fire Service. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) will convert from a legacy regional structure to a state-based

[7] Section 76-13-115, MCA.
[8] Officially known as the Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement (2023-2027).
[9] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs

one, including relocating its headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Salt Lake City, along with two-thirds of its staff.

In Montana, the USFS reorganization means the shift of operations from Missoula (former the Region 1 headquarters) to Helena, and the potential closure of small research and development facilities in Bozeman and Hungry Horse. Missoula will retain its fire lab—the only of its kind—and is designated as one of six national operations centers.

In March, federal officials assured EQC members that they should expect typical federal response and support, including aggressive initial attack efforts. A Forest Service official said the USFS is studying the idea of consolidating with the U.S. Wildland Fire Service.

Officials said consolidation may:

- create efficiencies in contracting, administration, and payments
- initiate better data-measuring, such as fire response times (which are not measured) and effective risk-reduction by treatment projects (instead of acres treated)
- improve other aspects, such as faster response times, avoid response overlaps, and improvement of firefighter safety and career paths

Congress has passed numerous acts and budgets that affect federal wildland firefighting, although no single federal law has the same effect at the state fire policy. Wildland firefighting is considered by various acts requiring management of federal lands; other federal acts refer to disaster relief and ecological recovery, which are essential for paying for firefighting efforts and repairing the landscape.

Federal and state law can come into conflict when managing wildfires. While federal agencies routinely employ "aggressive initial attack" when responding to wildfires, a federal agency may also have a land/resource management plan in place that identifies "the need for fire's role in a particular area and for a specific benefit."[10]

A new look at data

The council benefited from new and emerging analyses of wildfires.

A Legislative Fiscal Division (LFD) data tool[11] was built for the Legislature's Modernization and Risk Analysis Committee in an effort to predict firefighting costs per acre.

[10] Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement (2023-2027).
[11] https://www.legmt.gov/lfd/publications/wildfire-library/

The tool uses geospatial data collected by state and federal agencies to pinpoint specific information about fire perimeters, structures, structure value, risk to structures, firefighting resources, recent mitigation projects, fuel types, wildfire hazard potential, and more.

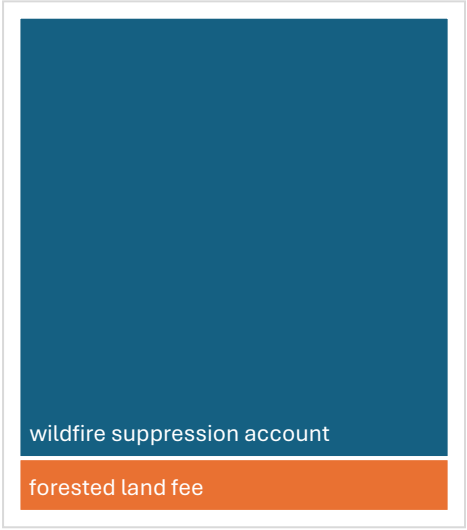
LFD staff told the council the data model has produced some preliminary conclusions, including:

- Over the past five years, 4.1 percent of acres were "very high" fire potential risk, but consumed 32 percent of the state firefighting budget
- More structures have been lost to grass fires than timber fires in the last five years
- Evidence that fuel reduction projects have slowed or stopped wildfires.

Staff will continue to develop and refine the tool.

Fire funds stabilize

Fighting fires is a resource-intense process—mostly paid for with public money.



Relative funding sources for state wildfire costs, fiscal year 2023

Though the council's study did not expressly investigate its fire funding, it is worth noting state is on better footing compared to 2009.

About 1,800 wildfires ignite every year, according to 20-year figures from the DNRC. And the state of Montana spends about $36.5 million a year on wildfire suppression,[12] although this figure depends on a variety of factors, such as the severity of the fire season. For example, the 2025 fire season cost the state $54.5 million, of which $28 million was needed to combat the Windy Rock fire northwest of Avon.

The state has two main sources of fire funding: the wildfire suppression account (section 76-13-150, MCA) and forest land protection fees (76-13-201).

The wildfire suppression account draws from the state's general fund. The forest land protection fee is a fee paid by landowners depending on property's protection zone, size, and forested classification.

[12] Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, *2025 Fire Season Suppression Summary*.

The wildfire suppression account provides the bulk of Montana's funding, although federal reimbursements and disaster relief payments are also a sizeable portion. These federal reimbursements are paid over years.

HJ62: Wildfire prevention and resilience

The Lahaina, Hawaii, wildfire of August, 2023, destroyed more than 2,200 structures and killed 101 people. The fire reduced block after block of homes to ash.

Yet one home—the red-roofed "miracle house"—survived. A 24-gauge metal roof and a zone of "defensible space" may have saved it.[13]

Metal roofs and defensible space are ways to reduce property vulnerability. This "resilience" strategy adds to traditional wildfire suppression and fuels reduction efforts. The 2025 Legislature passed House Joint Resolution 62 to study this strategy

Resilience—also referred to as "fire-adapted communities"—is one of three pillars of the national wildland fire management strategy.[14] Congress mandated that the federal departments of Interior and Agriculture develop the strategy in 2009.[15]

As the previous pages reflect, most of Montana's efforts focus on suppression, although some laws are in place allowing for "resilience." By law, property owners are charged with caring for their property and landscape.

National Strategy Goals
Restore and maintain landscapes
Fire-adapted communities
Wildfire response

Impacts and costs to communities

In the face of more hot and dry days, large amounts of fuels and ignition material, and a burgeoning number homes in harm's way, Montana's focus on fire suppression and fuels reduction is not enough, experts told the council.[16]

The warning signs are there: Wildfire risks have doubled in Montana since 2000; fire insurance is the fastest-growing insurance expense. And nine Montana communities face an "urban conflagration risk" comparable to Paradise, Calif., and Laihaina, Hawaii.

Recommendations include:

- prioritizing state funding of wildfire-resistant retrofits
- adoption of wildland-urban interface (WUI) building codes at a local level, as authorized

[13] https://www.fema.gov/case-study/mitigation-measures-may-have-saved-lahainas-miracle-home
[14] U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Interior, *The National Strategy* (2014)
[15] Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement Act of 2009 (FLAME Act)
[16] Testimony of Ryan Maye Handy (AICP), Headwaters Economics and Chief Brad White, Grand Co. Fire District (Colo.) to EQC, Jan. 14, 2026.

- model state wildfire risk planning after the Montana Floodplains Program (DNRC), which delineates floodplains, allowing communities to administer floodplain requirements allowing

Property insurance

Some Montana homeowners are facing large increases in property insurance costs. Much of this increase is blamed on wildfire risk, although other factors are at play.

Insurance industry representatives[17] said recent insurance industry losses in Montana—primarily from flood and wind events—and more expensive rebuilding costs for ever-larger homes drive the cost of insurance. Climate change and extreme weather events increase wildfire risk, even as more and more homes are constructed in the wildland-urban interface.

Insurance availability and affordability may be uneven, as Montana's uninsured rate (9%) is higher than the national average and disproportionately affects low-income, mobile, inherited, and rural homeownership. Some choose higher deductibles, forced-placed insurance, or coverage of only "actual cash value."

The state insurance commissioner's office said that state insurance policy prohibits blanket cancellations by geographic area.

Insurance industry recommendations for tempering coverage costs include:

- strengthening building codes, land-use planning, and incentives for fire safe retrofitting and risk mitigation
- increasing fire risk score transparency, building on the passage of HB 533 (Revise insurance laws relating to wildfire and real property)
- improving homeowner education about wildfire risks
- reducing legal system abuse
- not increasing the regulatory burden on insurers

Building codes in the WUI

State law designates the the Department of Labor and Industry as the only agency allowed to promulgate building regulations,[18] include for "reasonable fire protection." The

[17] Members of a March 25, 2026, panel on insurance costs and wildland fire included: Bob Biskupiak, FireSafe Montana; Lyn Elliott, vice president of state government relations, American Property Casualty Insurance Association; Brandon Vick, regional vice president, National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies; Michael DeLong, research and advocacy associate, Consumer Federation of America; Trevor Graff, director of government relations, Montana State Auditor.
[18] Section 50-60-202, MCA.

department must also certify the building regulations of cities, counties, and towns.[19] A city, county, or town may adopt the department-approved building codes for the wildland-urban interface. The cities of Bozeman, Columbia Falls, Great Falls, and Whitefish have adopted WUI building codes.

For the city of Bozeman, the WUI codes apply primarily to new residences or renovations that require a permit. Operations and maintenance activities are usually not subject to the code.[20]

State law requires counties to create and update wildfire protection plans, although definitions of the wildland-urban interface may vary by county.

Ideas from other states

Other states are taking a variety of approaches toward improving their wildfire resilience (see box).

Ideas for resilience in other states:

Mitigation/retrofit funding
Property insurance availability
WUI building codes, zoning

The Strengthen Alabama Homes program is the model for many programs that award grants for hardening homes.[21] The 2011 law provides grants to residents of certain counties for residential wind mitigation for occupied, single-family homes. The insurance industry funds this program.

A number of states are following Alabama's lead. The Colorado General Assembly passed a similar program in 2026, which charges a fee on insurers for grants to homeowners who retrofit their homes, such as resilient roof systems. The Montana State Auditors office is working with other states on a similar approach.

Access to insurance is of increasing concern in the Northern Rockies. The Council of State Governments-West has identified five policy approaches by state legislatures:[22]

- voluntary certification programs and wildfire insurance incentives to recognize homeowners' wildfire mitigation actions. Some legislation mandates premium discounts or coverage
- community-based catastrophe insurance emphasizes collective risk management, resource pooling, and community resilience initiatives

[19] Section 50-60-302, MCA.
[20] Testimony of Ben Abbey, chief building official, City of Bozeman, to EQC, March 25, 2026.
[21] https://www.strengthenalabamahomes.com/
[22] https://csgwest.org/forging-a-resilient-west/

- parametric insurance, which estimates the probability of a damaging event and provides an automatic payout when the event occurs
- Fair Access to Insurance Requirements (FAIR) is a state-mandated insurance pool providing basic coverage for high-risk properties
- regulation of wildfire insurance by state insurance commission, requiring transparency and regulating premium rates

Many states have only proposed some of these policy ideas.

California and Colorado are notable for adopting more-comprehensive WUI building codes.[23]

For example, California now has a single building standard that applies to hazard areas throughout the state. Colorado now requires wildfire resilient construction and defensible space for all new construction and major remodels within mapped WUI areas, depending on geographic risk intensity.

Utah will require all counties and cities to adopt updated WUI building codes. Homes will eventually be required to pay fees based on fire risk.

As previously described, four Montana communities have adopted state-approved WUI building codes. Enforcement of these codes is limited.

[23] Headwaters Economics, *Tracking Western states' diverse approaches to wildfire building codes* (2026)

Recommendations, legislation

On Sept. 8, 2026, the council voted to preintroduce PD30 (Creating Montana wildfire resiliency task force).[24] If passed, the bill would create a 17-member task force to develop wildfire safety standards, which may be adopted by local jurisdictions. These standards must conform with state zoning laws and building codes. The task force would also recommend how state agencies could provide to local jurisdictions:

- technical assistance
- voluntary certification of risk reduction efforts
- standardized risk assessment
- data and mapping services
- incentive programs for risk reduction
- recommendations for federal/state funding reform

[24] See draft at Appendix E.

APPENDIX A:
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Before the close of each legislative session, House and Senate leadership appoint lawmakers to interim committees. The members of the Environmental Quality Council, like most other interim committees, serve one 20-month term. Members who are reelected to the Legislature, subject to overall term limits and if appointed, may serve again on an interim committee. This information is included in order to comply with 2-15-155, MCA.

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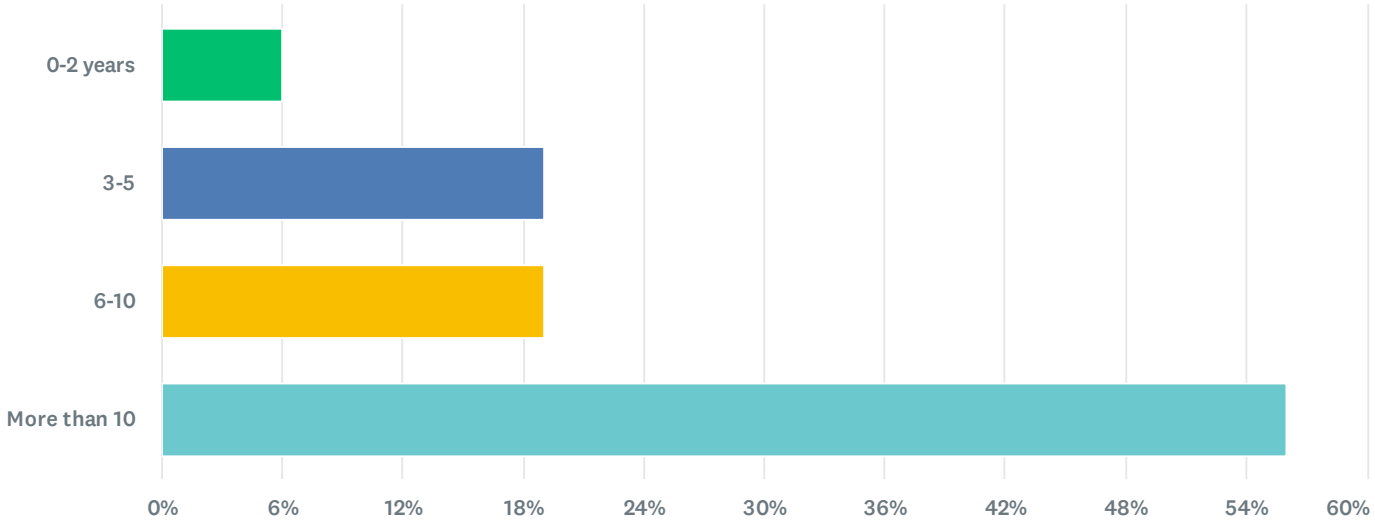
Environmental Quality Council staff

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Casey Pallister, legislative research analyst |Jacelyn Sterling, secretary

Q2 100 responses

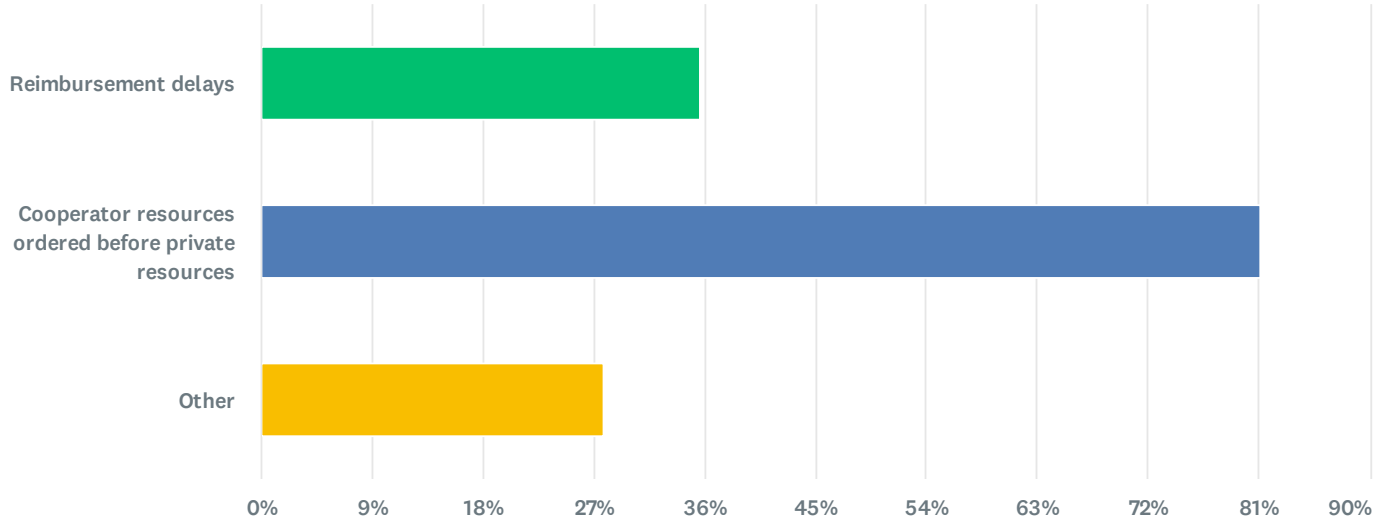
How many years has your company been involved in wildland fire contracting?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
0-2 years	6.00%	6
3-5	19.00%	19
6-10	19.00%	19
More than 10	56.00%	56
Total		**100**

Q3 90 responses

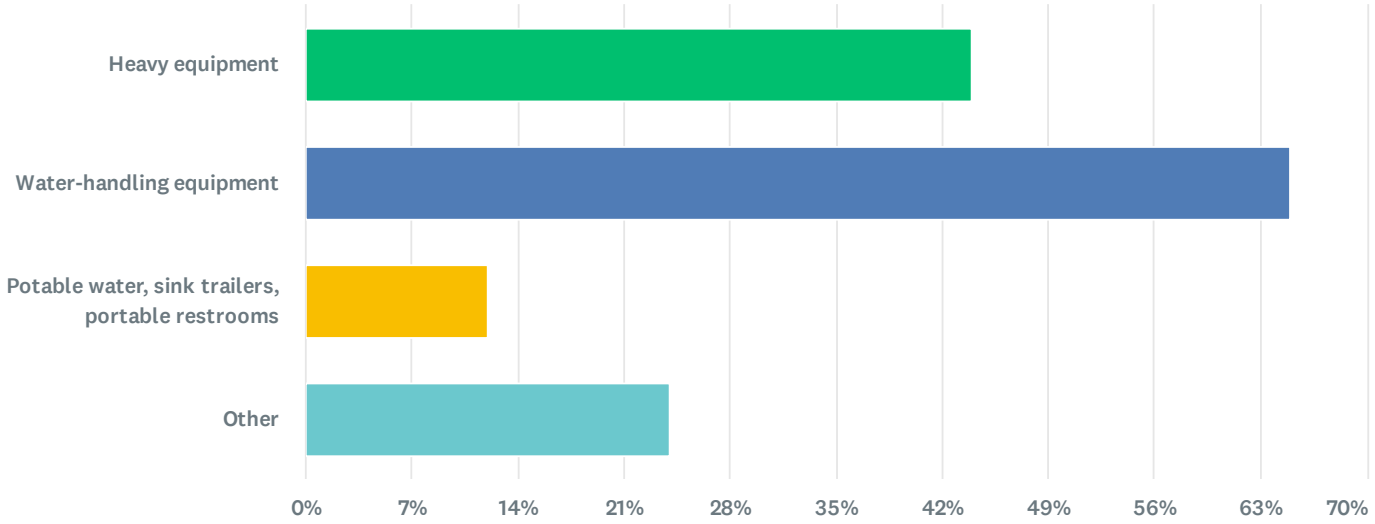
In the last 15 years of contracting, which of these challenges has your company faced in the wildland fire industry?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Reimbursement delays	35.56%	32
Cooperator resources ordered before private resources	81.11%	73
Other	27.78%	25
Total		**130**

Q4 100 responses

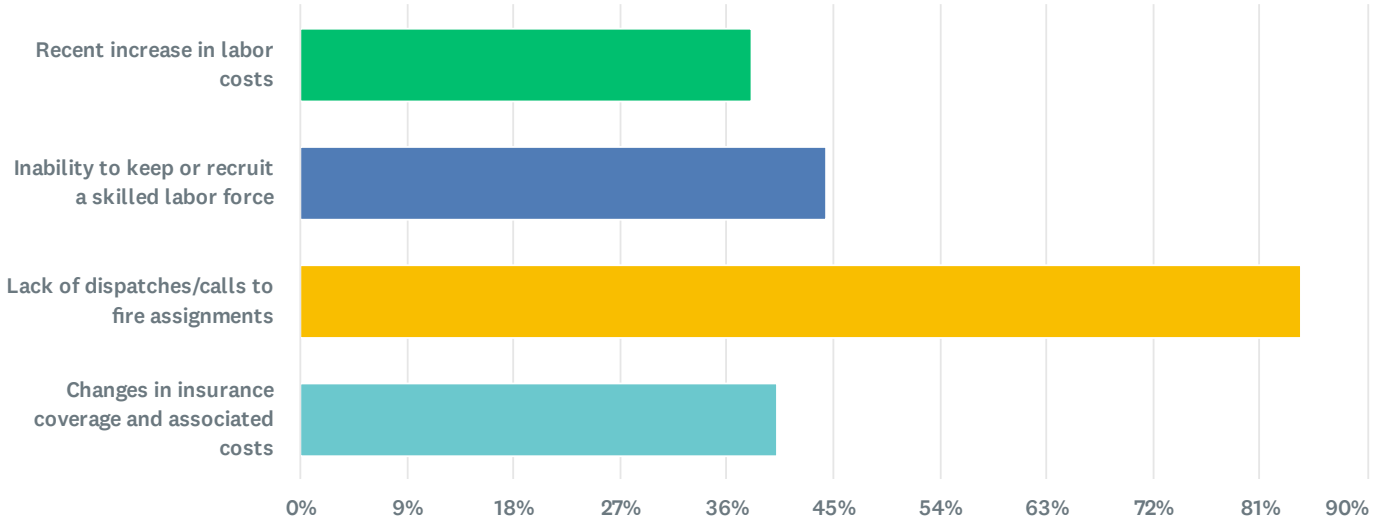
What type(s) of equipment do you supply for wildland fire contracting? (Check all that apply)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Heavy equipment	44.00%	44
Water-handling equipment	65.00%	65
Potable water, sink trailers, portable restrooms	12.00%	12
Other	24.00%	24
Total		**145**

Q5 97 responses

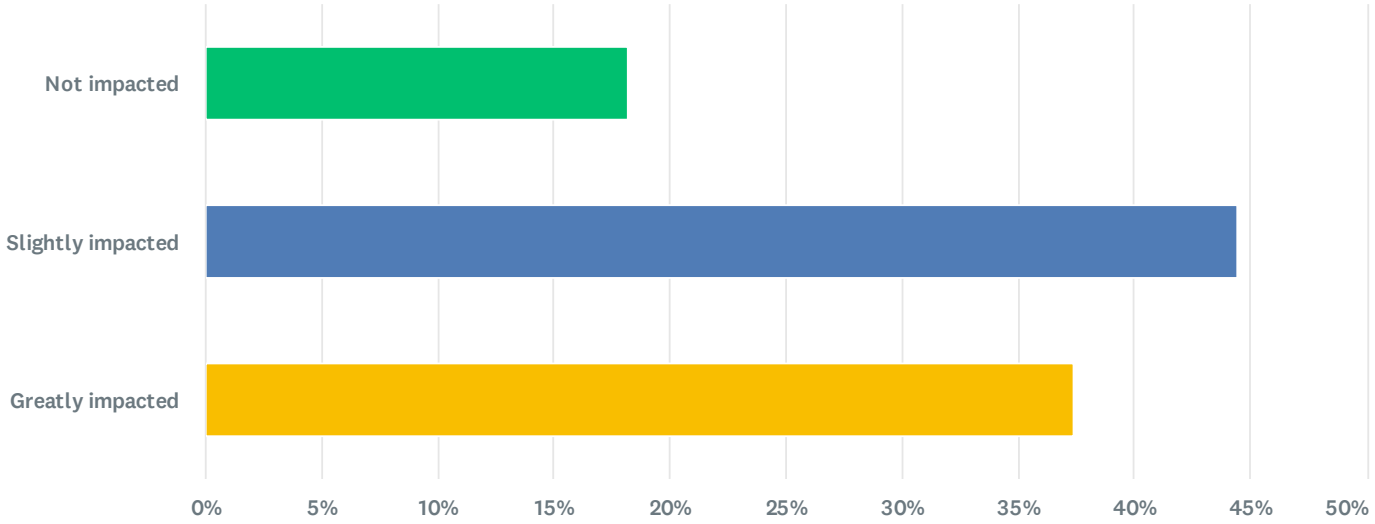
Which of these has had the biggest negative impact on your business (Check all that apply)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Recent increase in labor costs	38.14%	37
Inability to keep or recruit a skilled labor force	44.33%	43
Lack of dispatches/calls to fire assignments	84.54%	82
Changes in insurance coverage and associated costs	40.21%	39
Total		**201**

Q6 99 responses

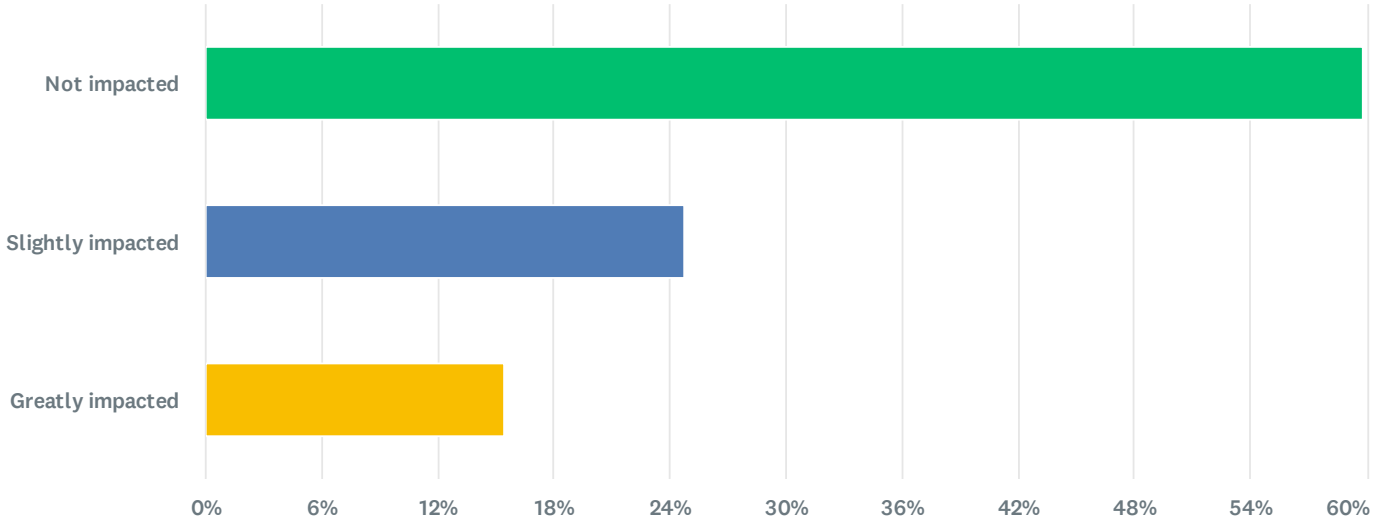
How has the recent mandatory increase in labor costs affected your operation financially?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Not impacted	18.18%	18
Slightly impacted	44.44%	44
Greatly impacted	37.37%	37
Total		**99**

Q7 97 responses

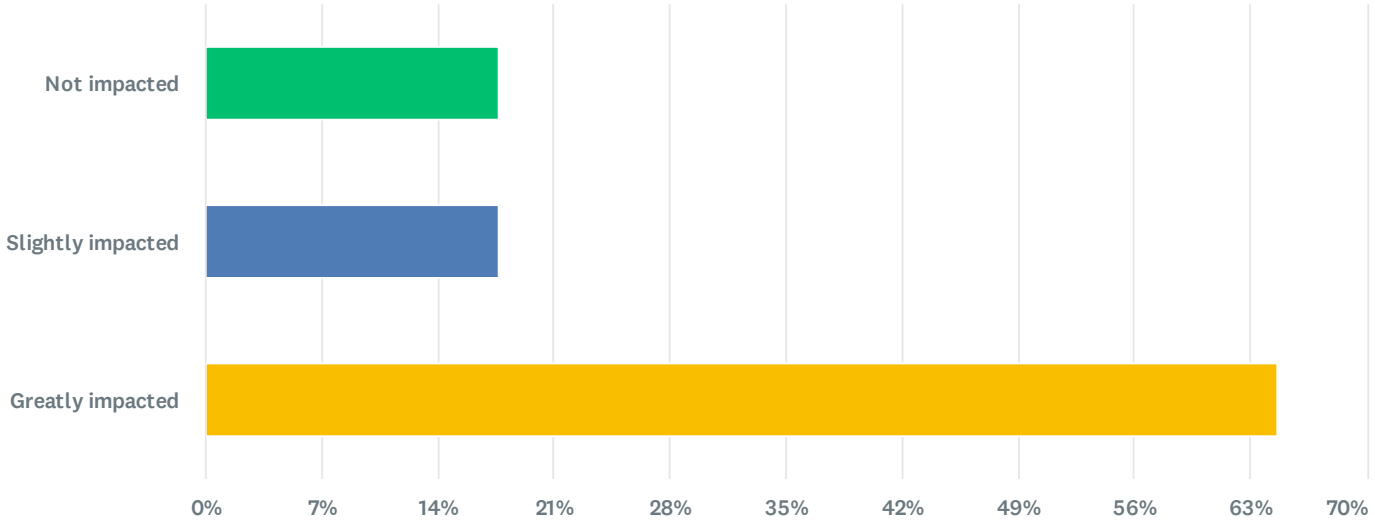
How has the Migrant Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act impacted your business?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Not impacted	59.79%	58
Slightly impacted	24.74%	24
Greatly impacted	15.46%	15
Total		**97**

Q8 96 responses

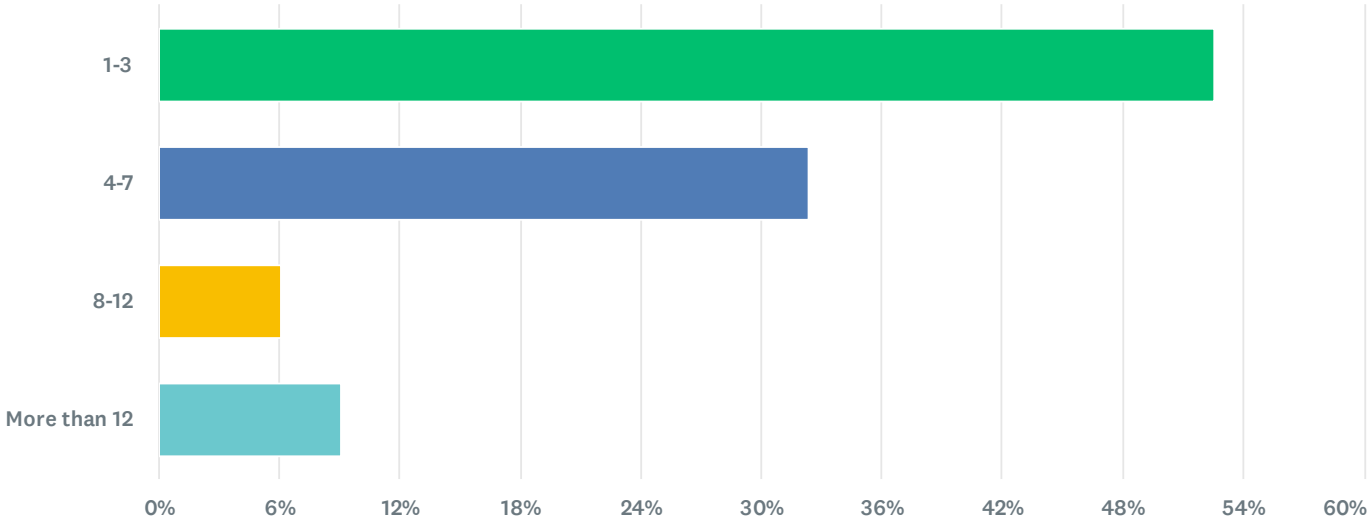
To what degree has competing with cooperator fire department resources for out-of-area dispatches impacted your business?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Not impacted	17.71%	17
Slightly impacted	17.71%	17
Greatly impacted	64.58%	62
Total		**96**

Q9 99 responses

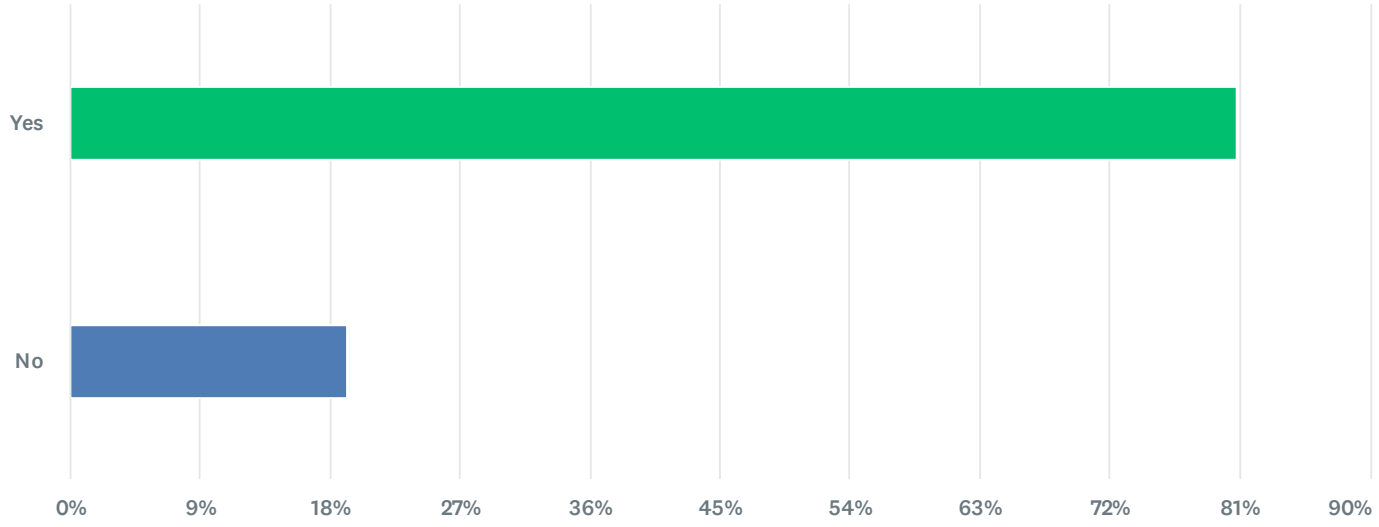
How many pieces of equipment does your company contract out for wildland fire?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
1-3	52.53%	52
4-7	32.32%	32
8-12	6.06%	6
More than 12	9.09%	9
Total		**99**

Q10 99 responses

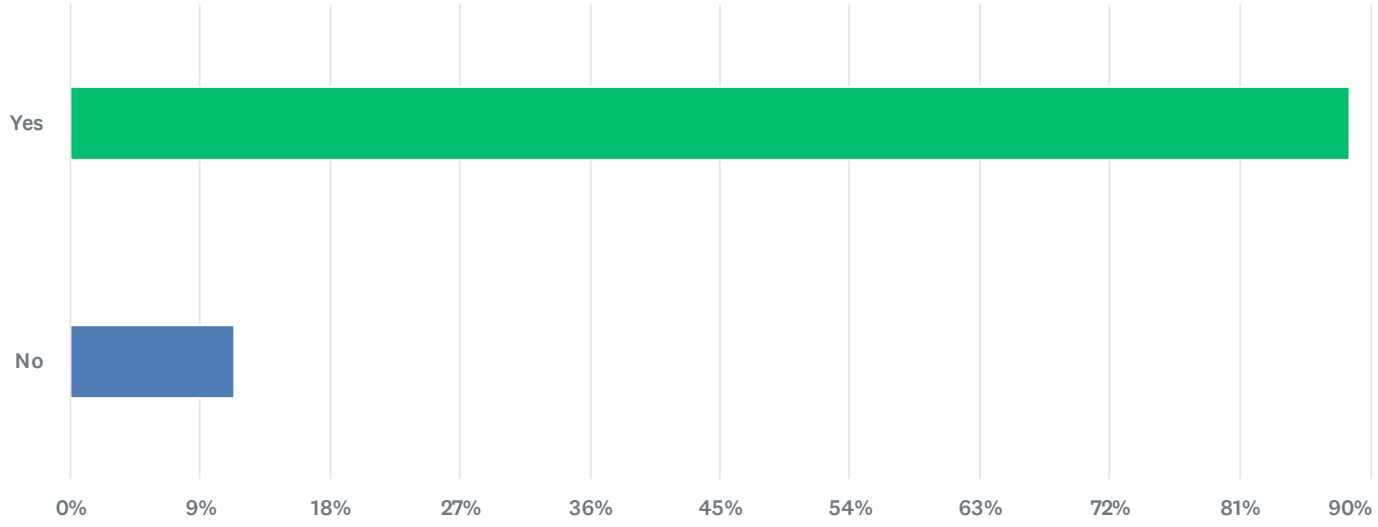
Does your company depend on out-of-area fire dispatches?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	80.81%	80
No	19.19%	19
Total		**99**

Q11 97 responses

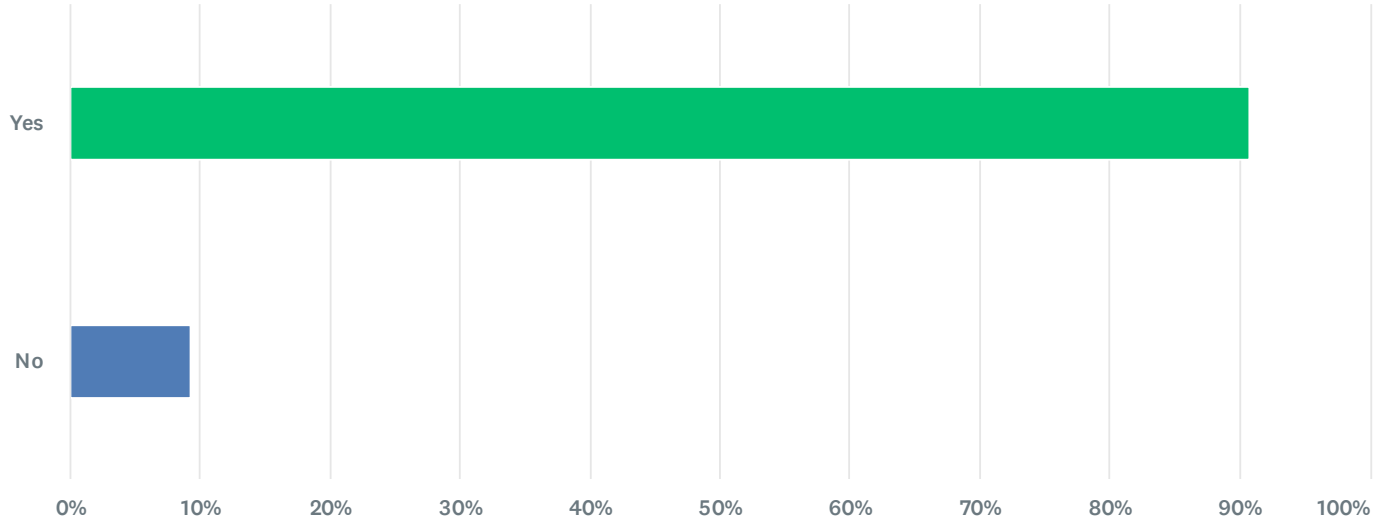
Do you believe the closest-available resource to an incident should be called first?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	88.66%	86
No	11.34%	11
Total		**97**

Q12 97 responses

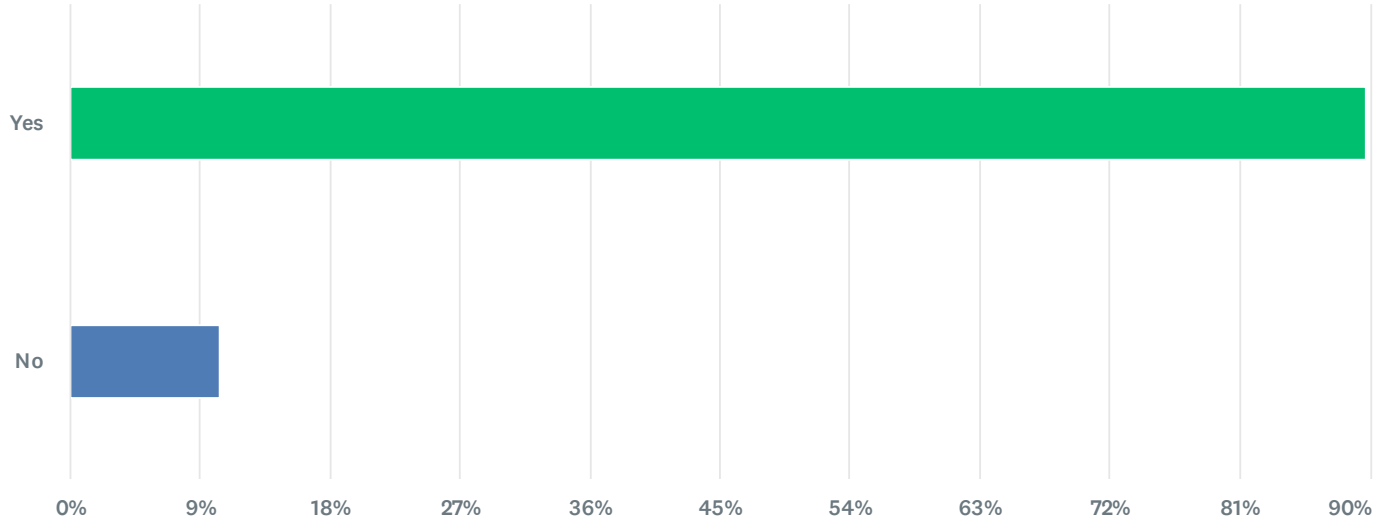
Do you believe that private-sector resources should be used in pre-positioning or severity assignments?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	90.72%	88
No	9.28%	9
Total		**97**

Q13 97 responses

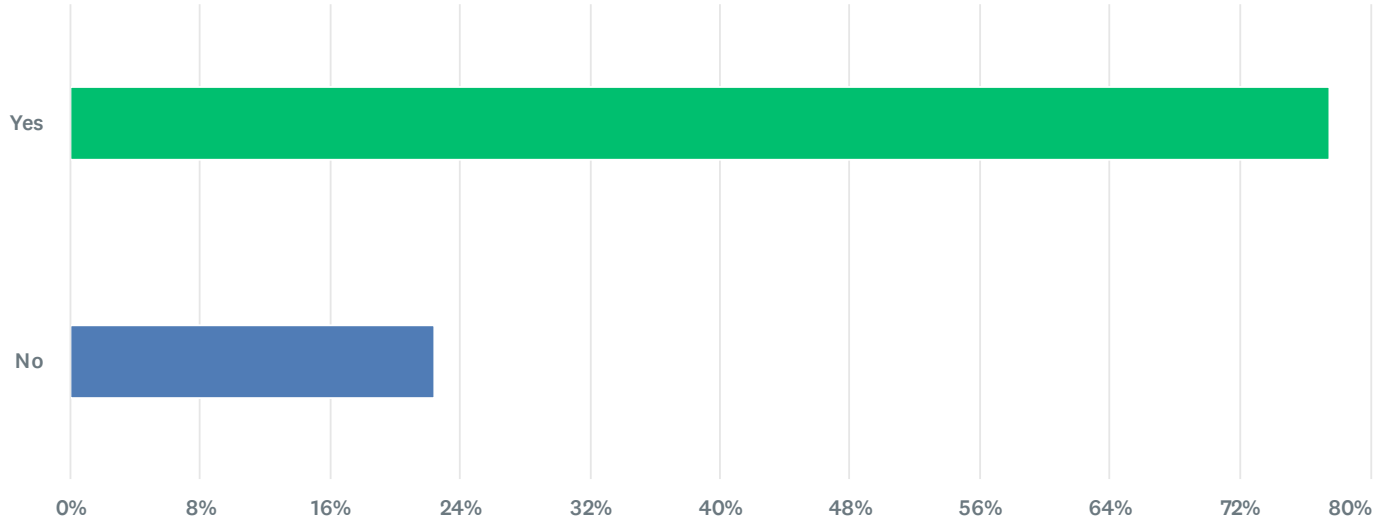
Do you believe that private-sector resources should be used for doing fuels reduction work between fire assignments?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	89.69%	87
No	10.31%	10
Total		**97**

Q14 98 responses

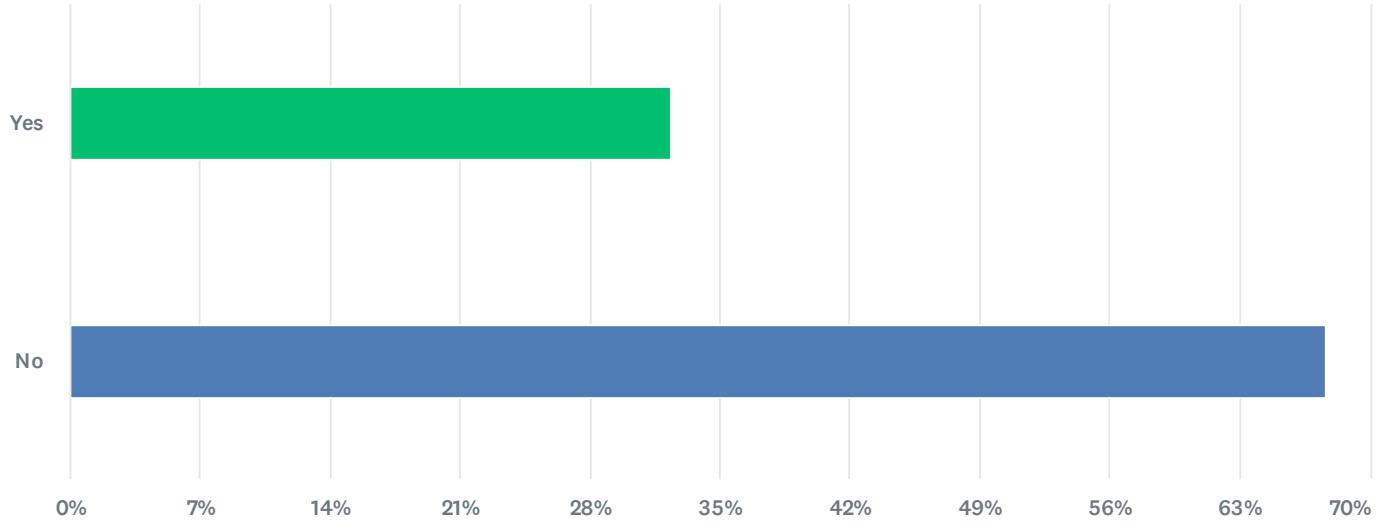
Has your company experienced workforce issues with a lack of dispatches?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	77.55%	76
No	22.45%	22
Total		**98**

Q15 99 responses

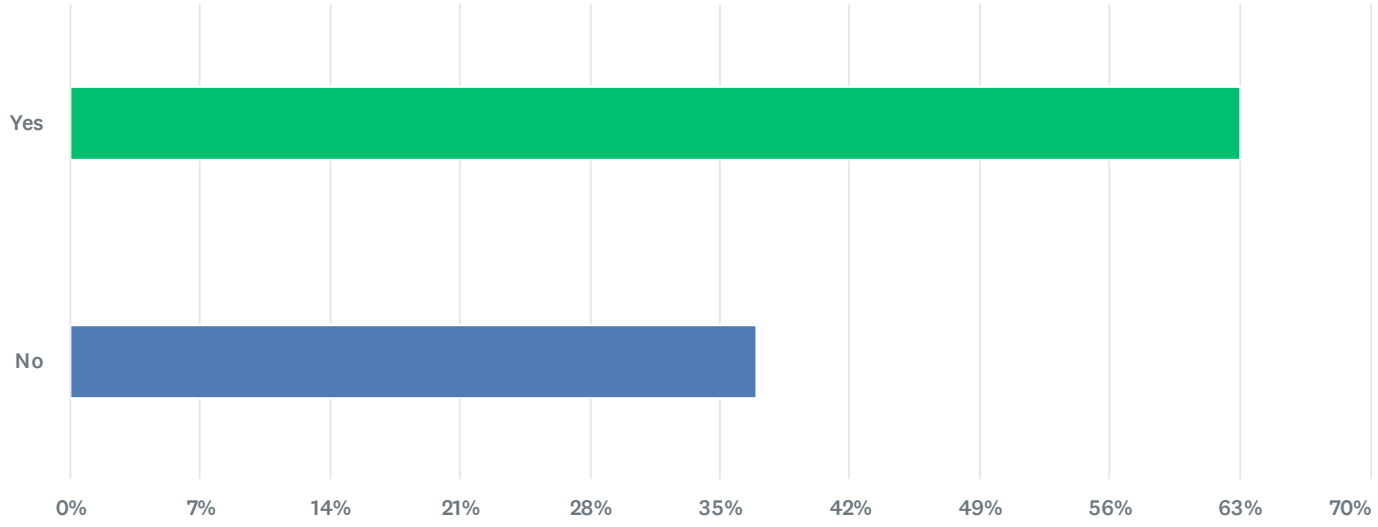
Have you had problems working with government contracting officers?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	32.32%	32
No	67.68%	67
Total		**99**

Q16 100 responses

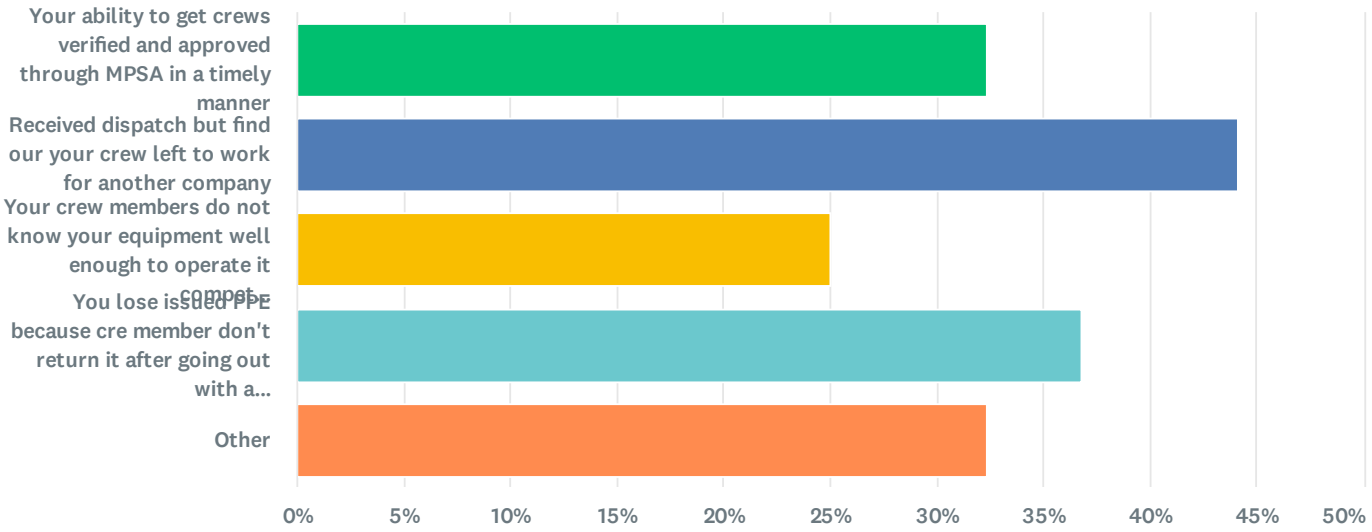
Have you experienced problems navigating the contracting process?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	63.00%	63
No	37.00%	37
Total		**100**

Q17 68 responses

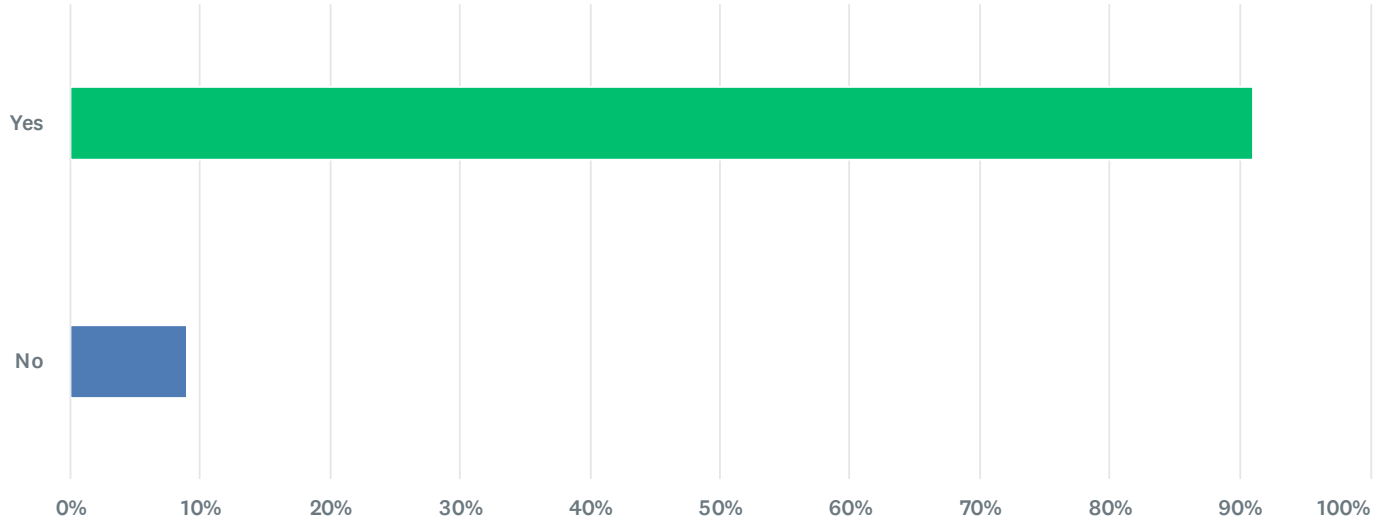
How has the recent culture of "crew hopping" and "free agents" affected your business? (Mark all that apply)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Your ability to get crews verified and approved through MPSA in a timely manner	32.35%	22
Received dispatch but find our your crew left to work for another company	44.12%	30
Your crew members do not know your equipment well enough to operate it competently	25.00%	17
You lose issued PPE because cre member don't return it after going out with another company	36.76%	25
Other	32.35%	22
Total		**116**

Q18 89 responses

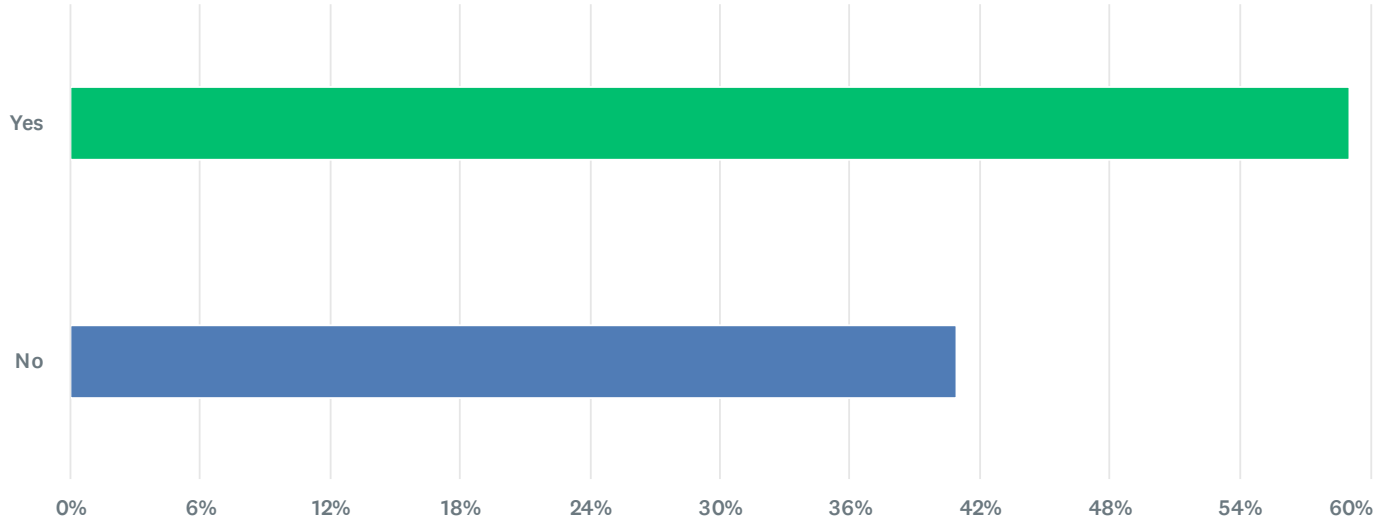
Would your company be in favor of creating a new category of fuels reduction/initial attack work force?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	91.01%	81
No	8.99%	8
Total		**89**

Q19 66 responses

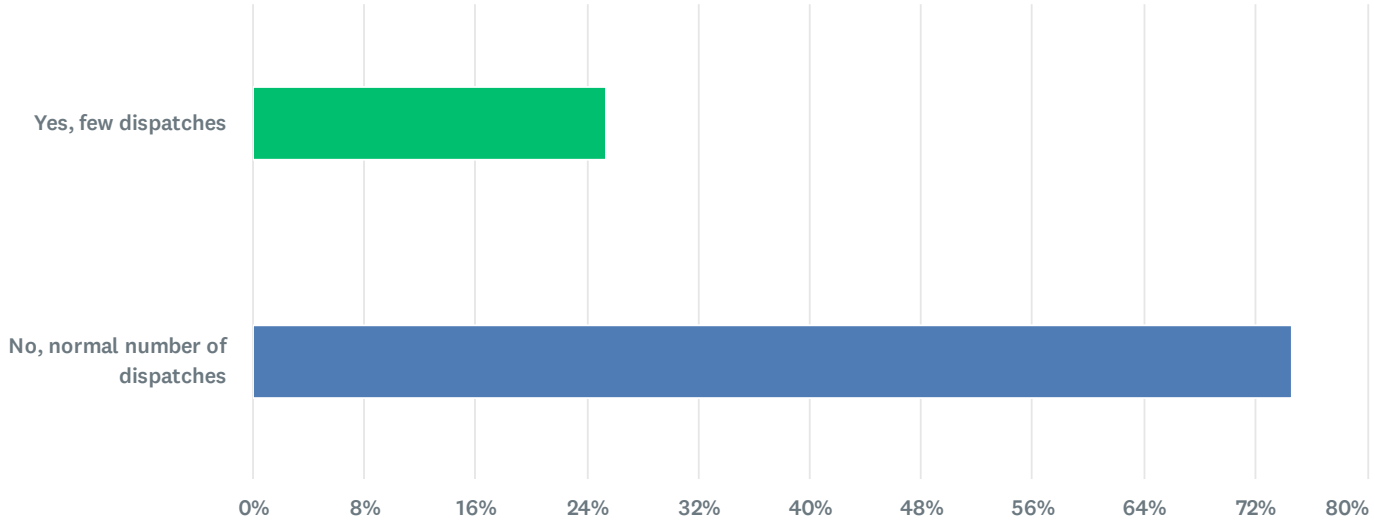
Is the updated chainsaw language in the 2026 VIPR agreement solicitation helpful?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	59.09%	39
No	40.91%	27
Total		**66**

Q20 67 responses

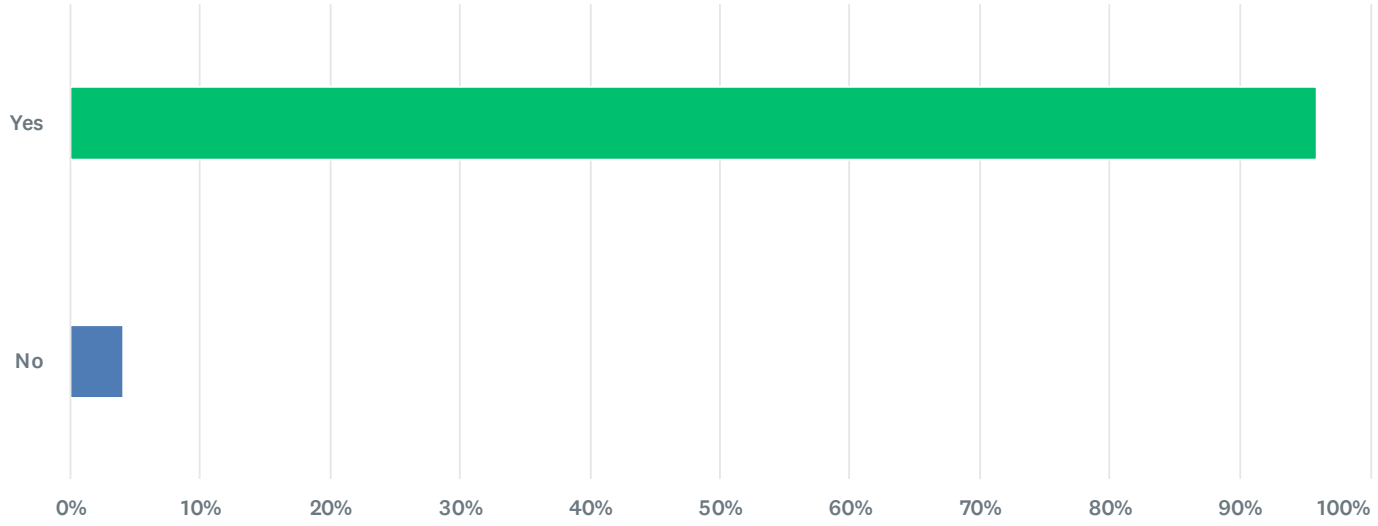
Did the chainsaw language in the 2025 VIPR agreement affect your business?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes, few dispatches	25.37%	17
No, normal number of dispatches	74.63%	50
Total		**67**

Q21 98 responses

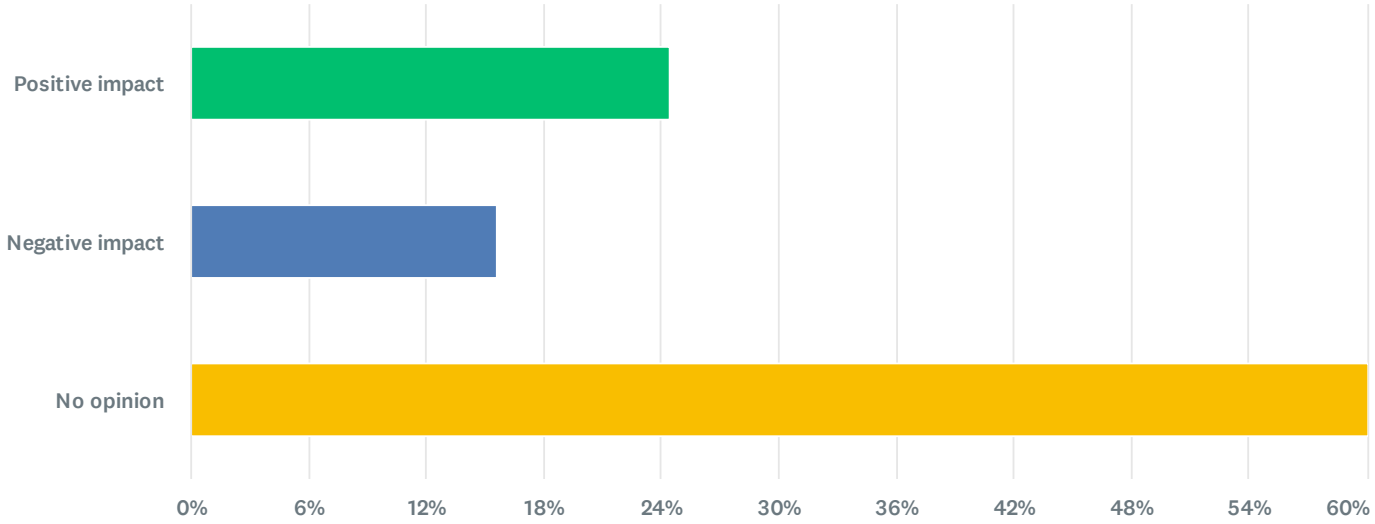
Do you feel that private wildland firefighters/contractors need to have a voice or representation in the decision-making process and policies that affect the industry?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	95.92%	94
No	4.08%	4
Total		**98**

Q22 90 responses

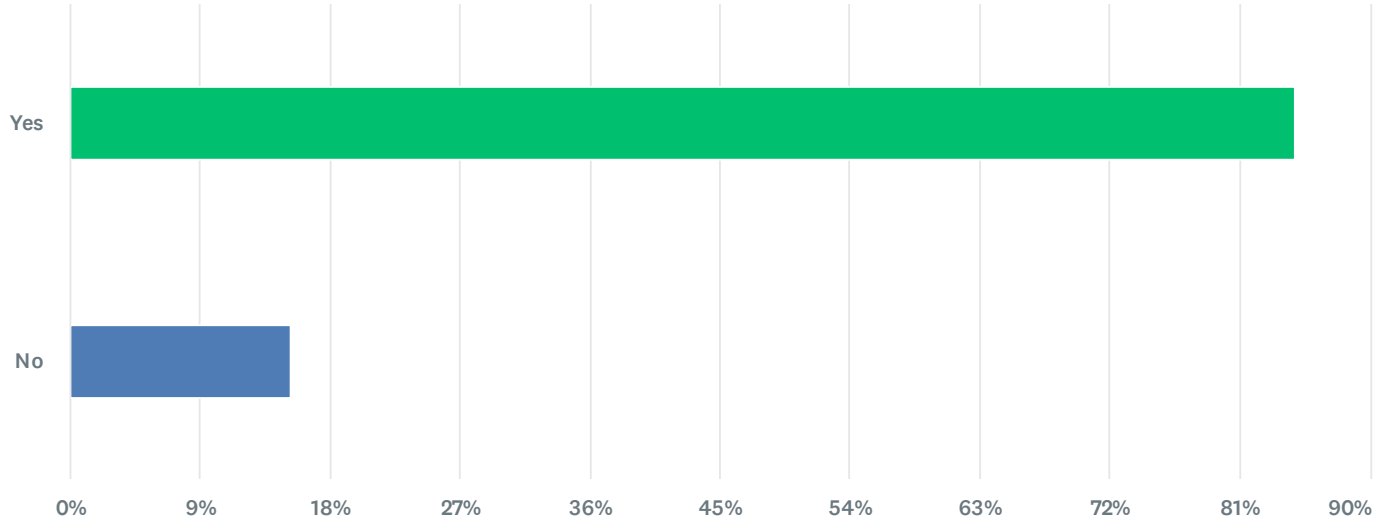
What effect will the consolidation of federal wildland fire services have on wildland firefighting?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Positive impact	24.44%	22
Negative impact	15.56%	14
No opinion	60.00%	54
Total		**90**

Q23 92 responses

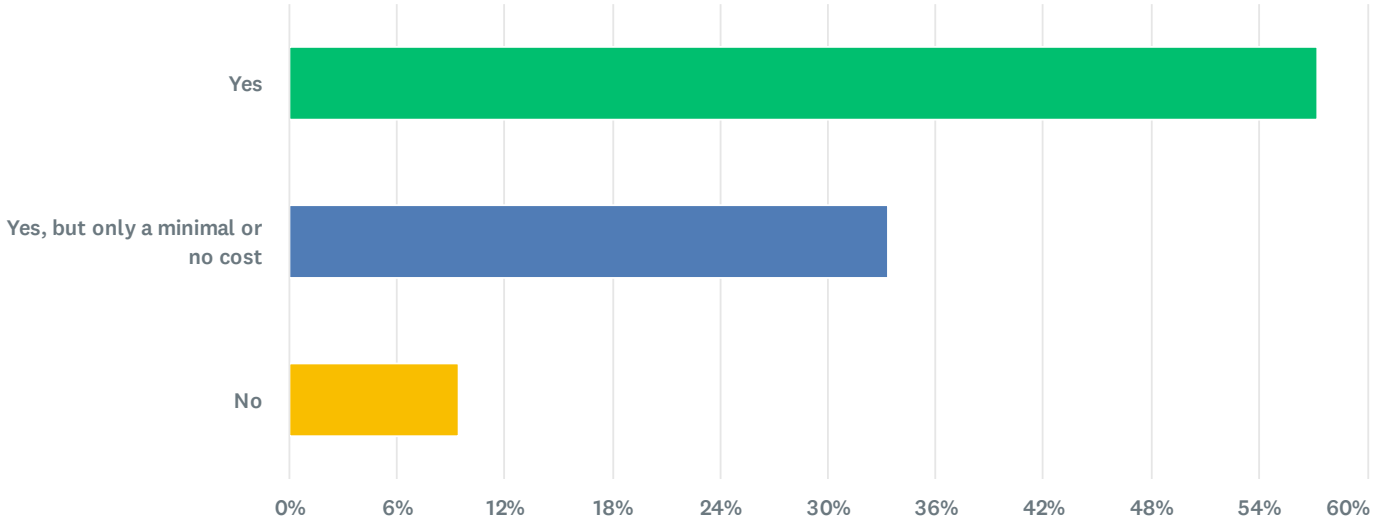
Do you feel that private landowners (i.e. timber companies, ranchers, farmers, et al) should have a seat at the table on fire issues?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	84.78%	78
No	15.22%	14
Total		**92**

Q24 96 responses

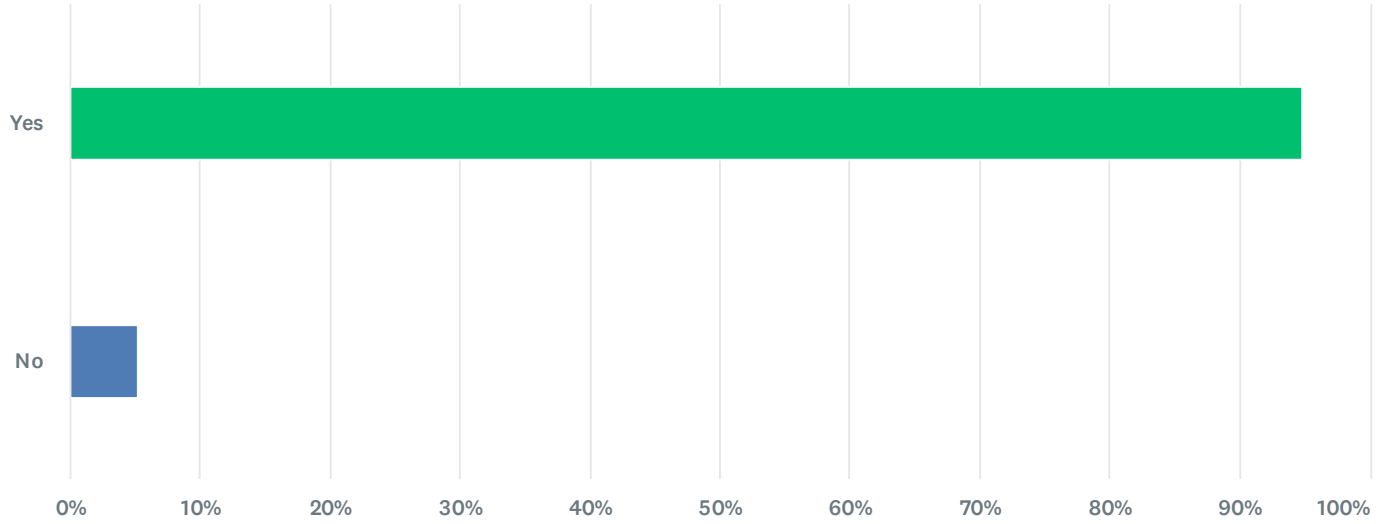
Would you participate if there were more opportunities to train alongside federal or state agencies?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	57.29%	55
Yes, but only a minimal or no cost	33.33%	32
No	9.38%	9
Total		**96**

Q25 96 responses

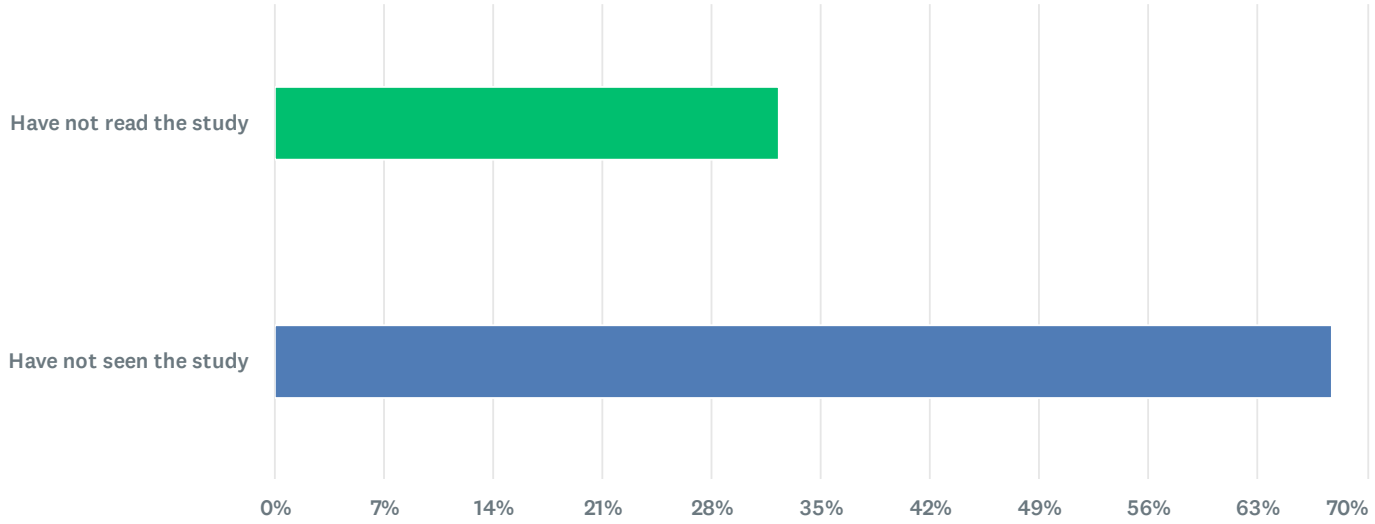
Would you participate if there was an opportunity to purchase required PPE, radios, or other equipment at the government rate through government agencies?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	94.79%	91
No	5.21%	5
Total		**96**

Q26 93 responses

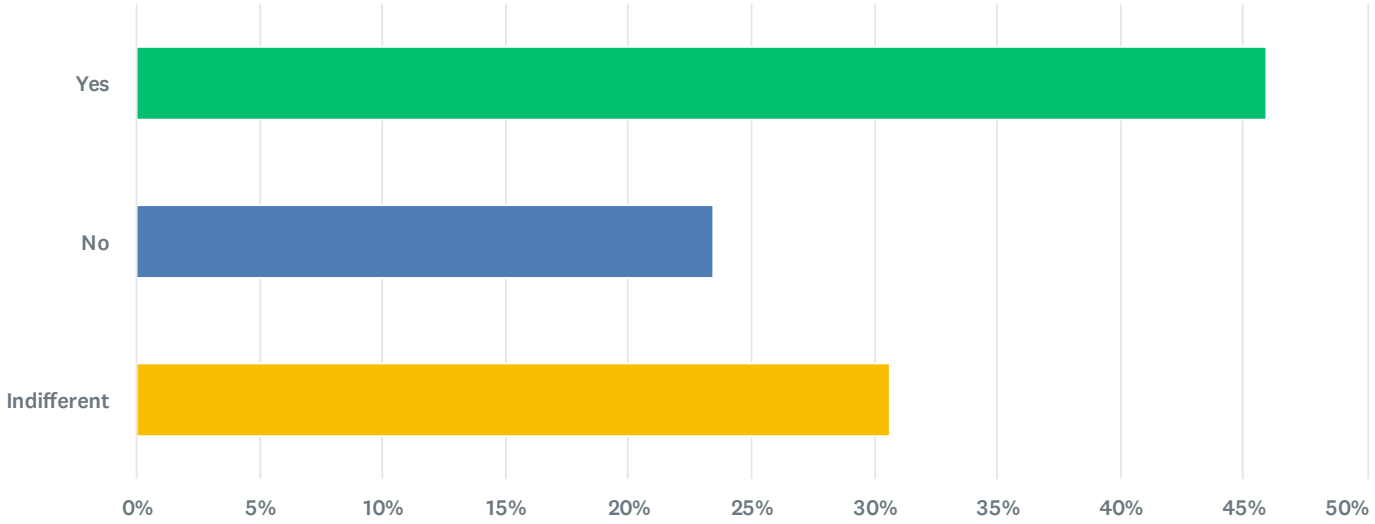
What has improved about the wildland fire contracting business since the Montana Legislature's 2009 study, The Price of Flame?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Have not read the study	32.26%	30
Have not seen the study	67.74%	63
Total		**93**

Q27 98 responses

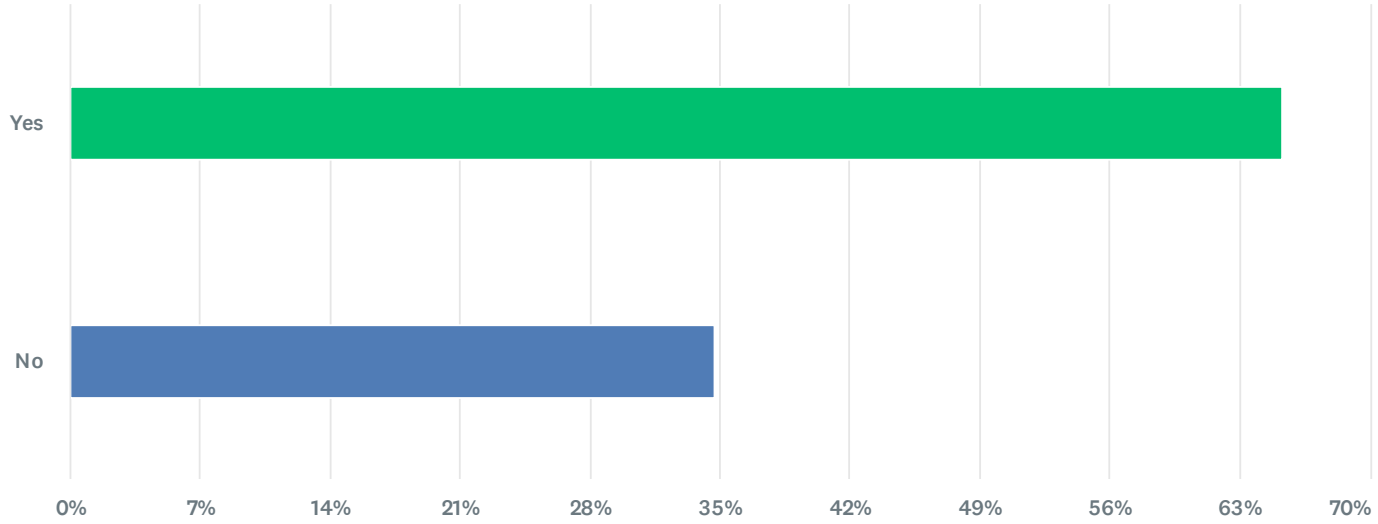
Do you feel there will be an impact on U.S. Forest Service operations by moving their national headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Salt Lake City?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	45.92%	45
No	23.47%	23
Indifferent	30.61%	30
Total		**98**

Q28 98 responses

As a privately contracted resource, do you fear retaliation if speaking out on wildland fire issues?



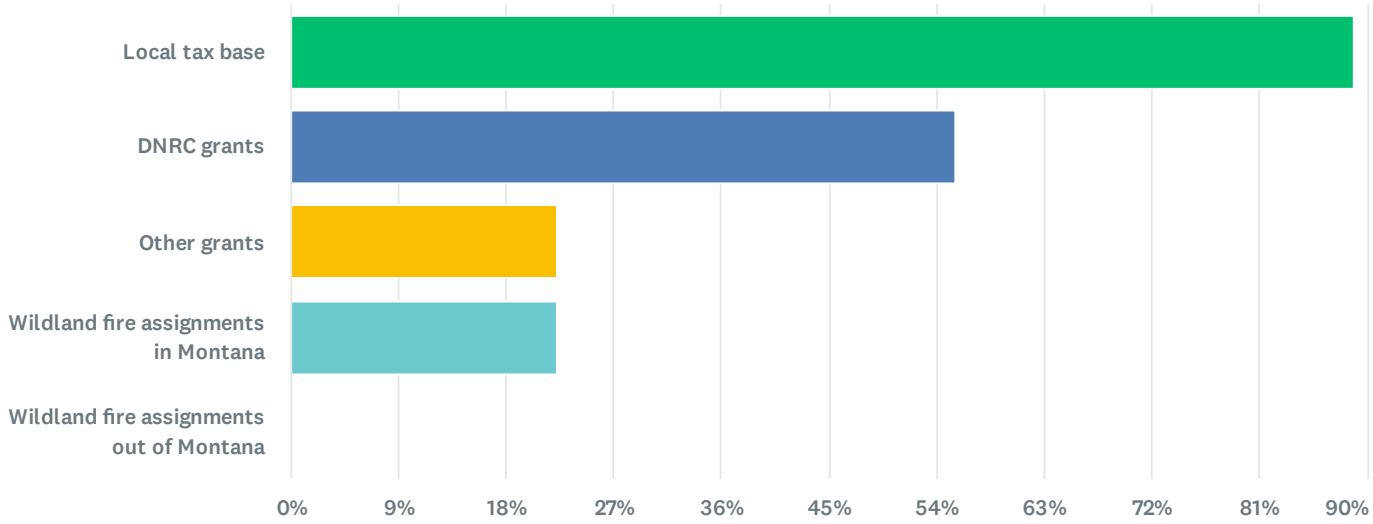
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	65.31%	64
No	34.69%	34
Total		**98**

Q29 Please add any additional comment that pertain to this survey or your business.

Answered: 30 Skipped: 74

Q4 9 responses

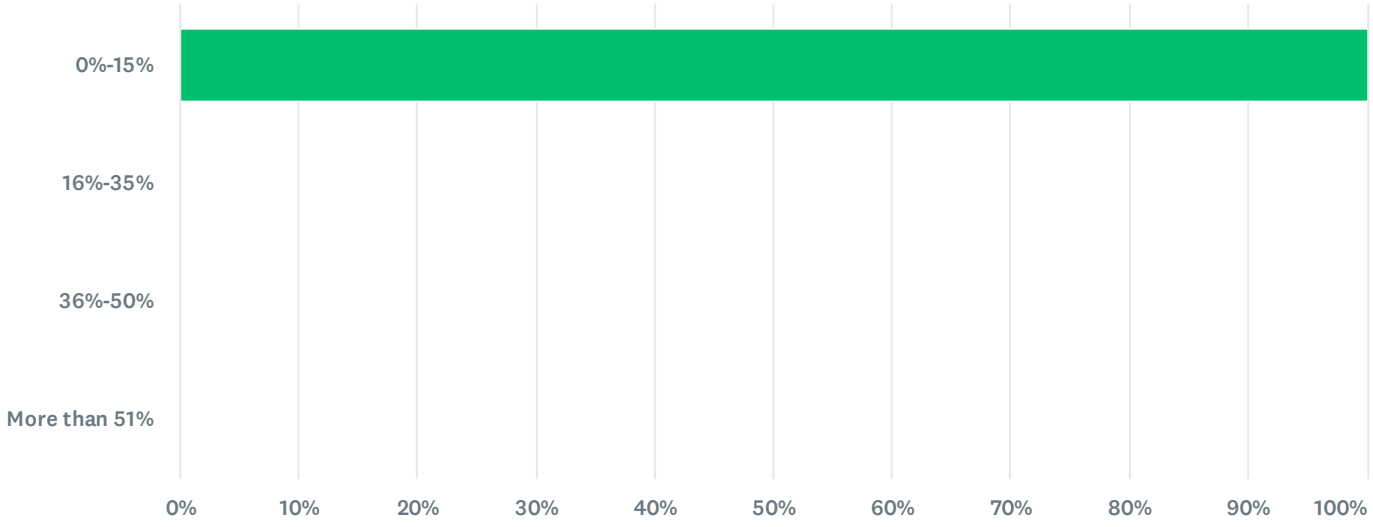
How is your department funded to address wildland fire in your district? (Please check all that apply.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Local tax base	88.89%	8
DNRC grants	55.56%	5
Other grants	22.22%	2
Wildland fire assignments in Montana	22.22%	2
Wildland fire assignments out of Montana	0%	0
Total		**17**

Q5 10 responses

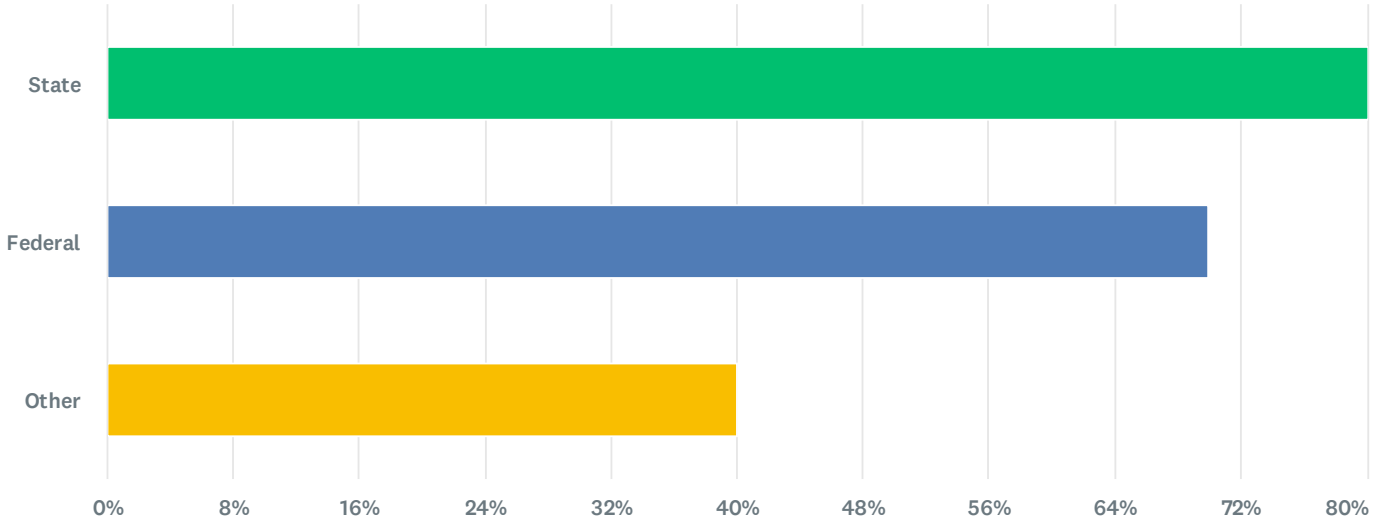
What percentage do grants contribute to your dept.'s budget?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
0%-15%	100.00%	10
16%-35%	0%	0
36%-50%	0%	0
More than 51%	0%	0
Total		**10**

Q6 10 responses

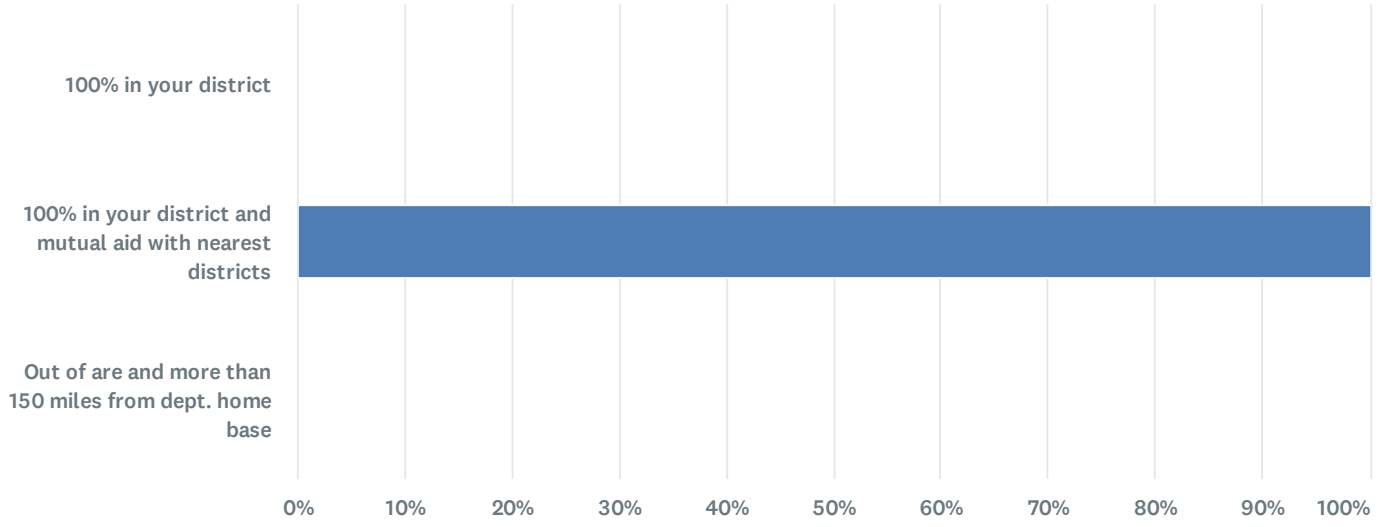
What types of grants would you like to see more of? (Check all that apply.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
State	80.00%	8
Federal	70.00%	7
Other	40.00%	4
Total		**19**

Q7 10 responses

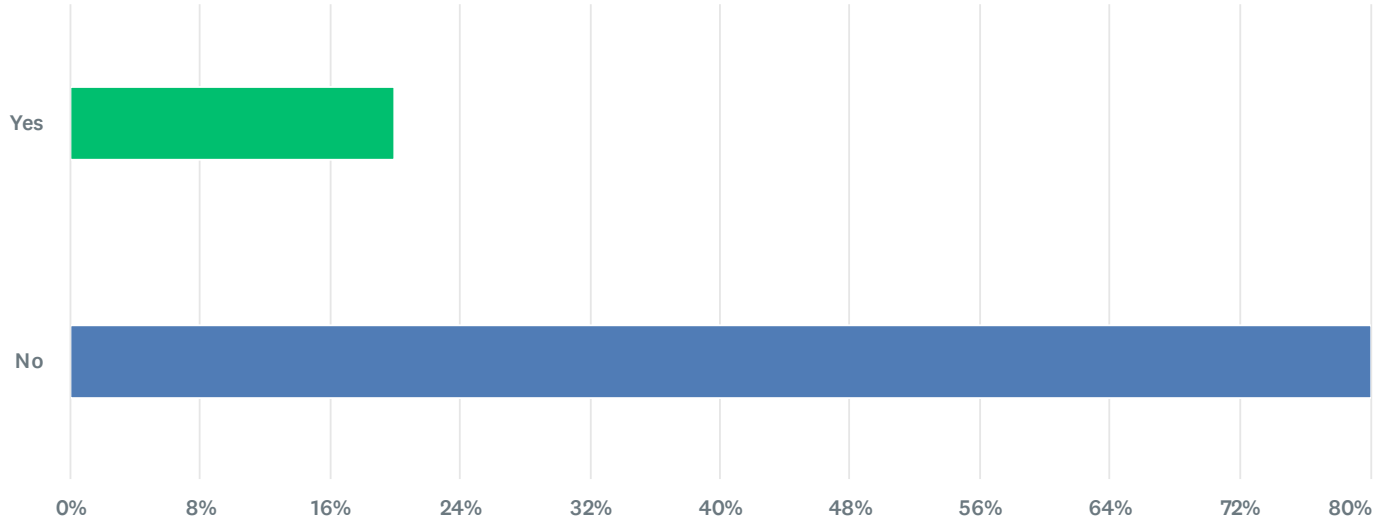
Where does your fire dept. mostly use grant equipment?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
100% in your district	0%	0
100% in your district and mutual aid with nearest districts	100.00%	10
Out of are and more than 150 miles from dept. home base	0%	0
Total		**10**

Q8 10 responses

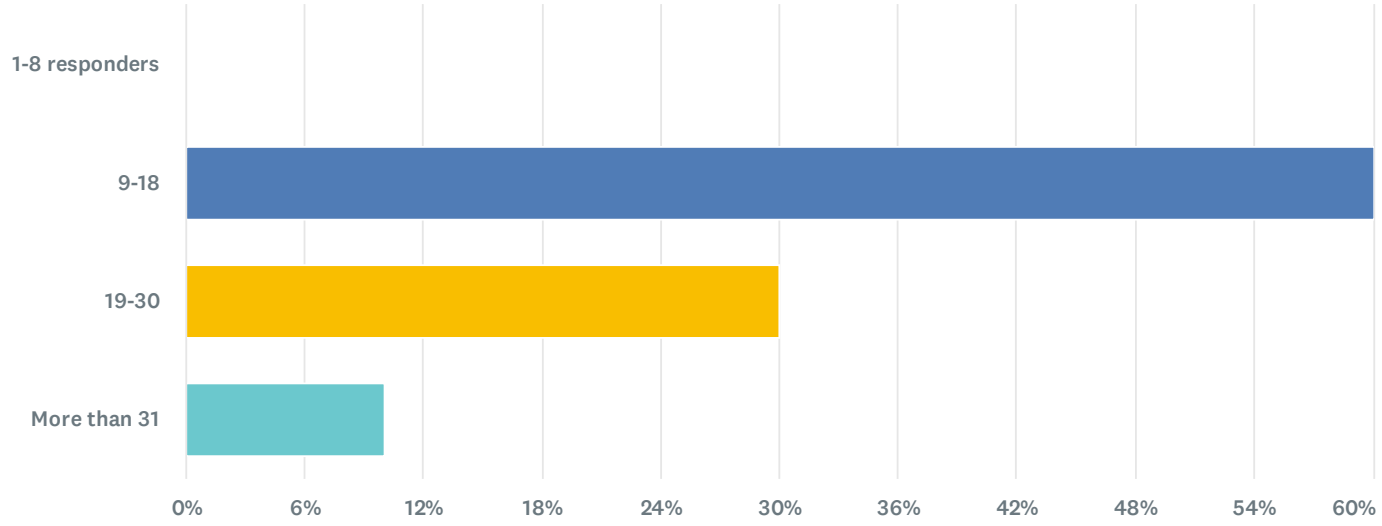
Do you feel your dept. is adequately staffed?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	20.00%	2
No	80.00%	8
Total		**10**

Q9 10 responses

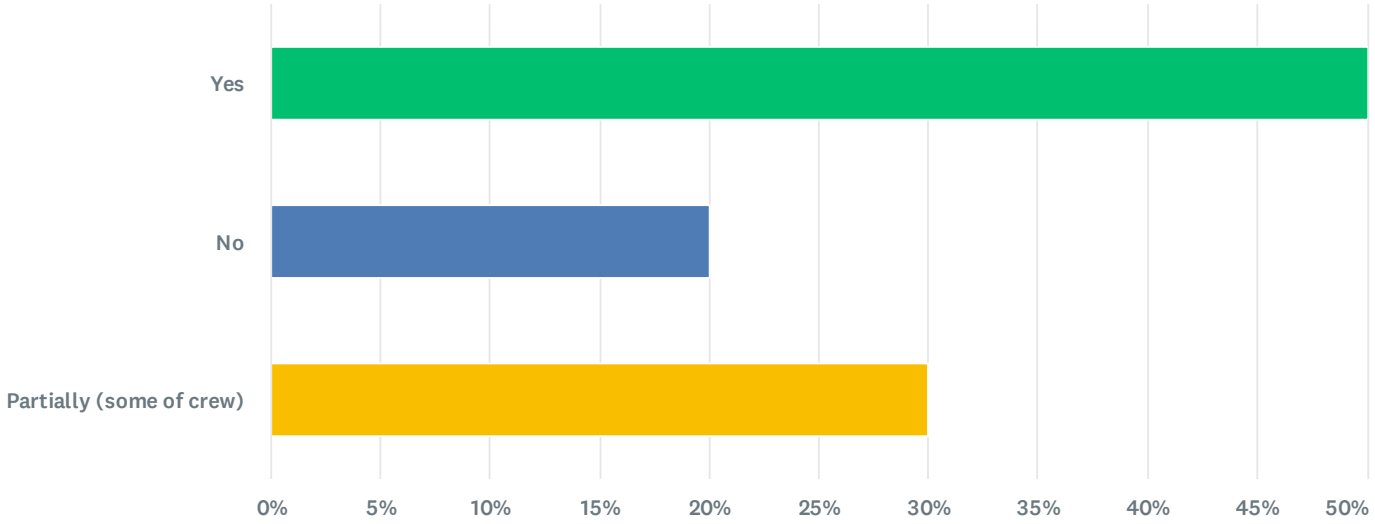
What would be the optimal number of responders for your dept.? (In the comment box, please provide the population number that your dept. serves, and if they are paid or volunteer.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
1-8 responders	0%	0
9-18	60.00%	6
19-30	30.00%	3
More than 31	10.00%	1
Total		**10**

Q10 10 responses

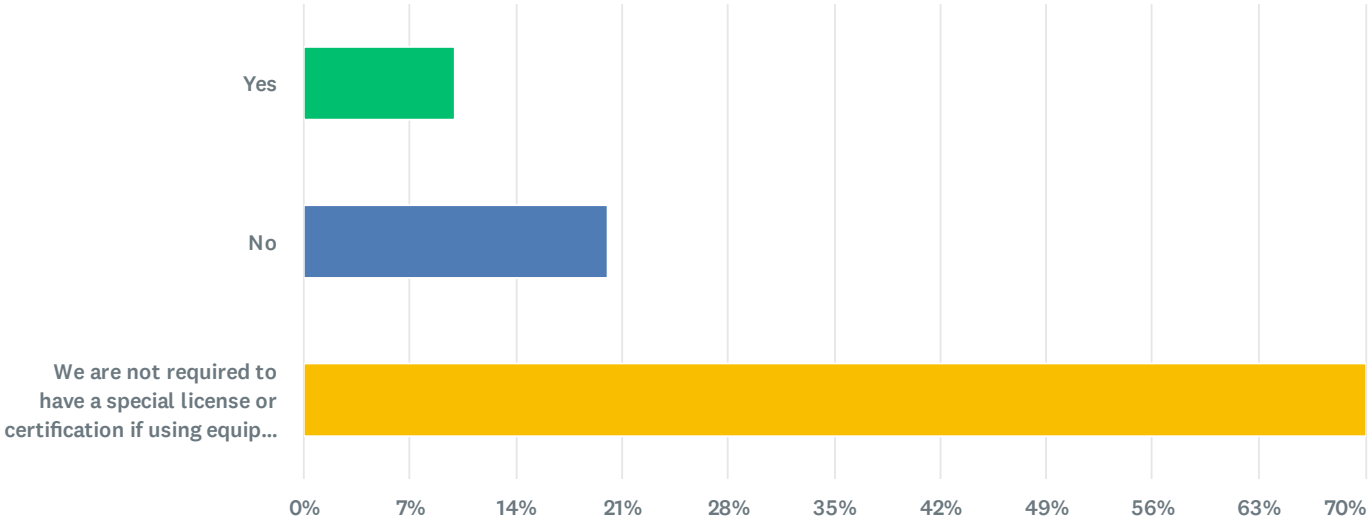
Does your dept. follow the recommended NRCG guidelines for task books and wildland certification classes?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	50.00%	5
No	20.00%	2
Partially (some of crew)	30.00%	3
Total		**10**

Q11 10 responses

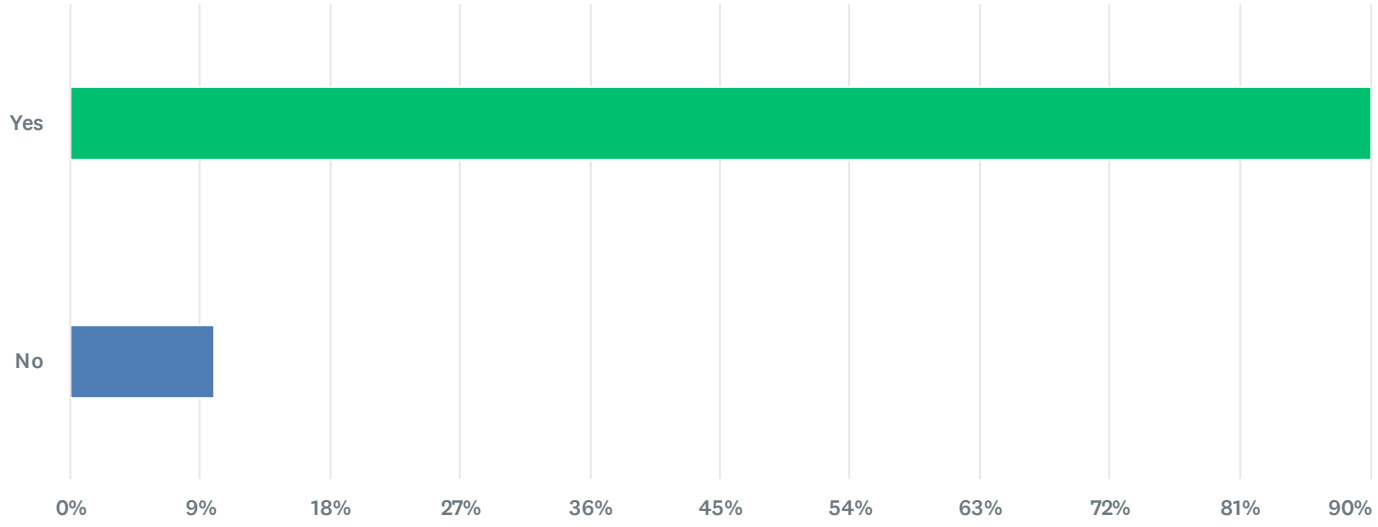
Does your dept. operate heavy equipment or trucks that require a special license or classes to run for wildland firefighting?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	10.00%	1
No	20.00%	2
We are not required to have a special license or certification if using equipment within our district	70.00%	7
Total		**10**

Q12 10 responses

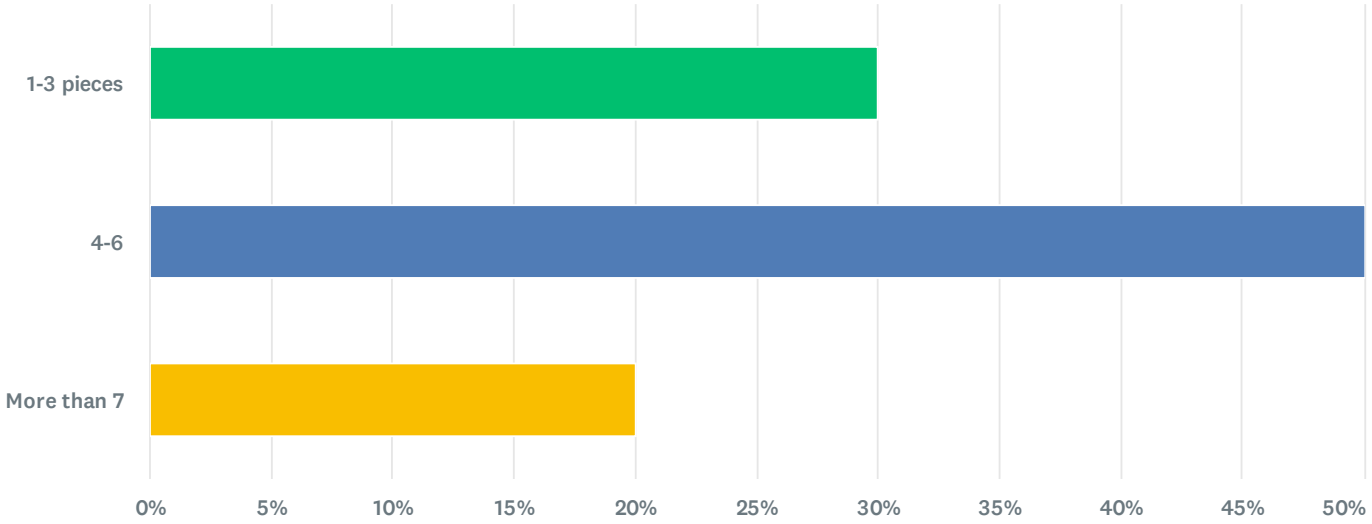
Would it be helpful to have classes to operate equipment over 26,000 lbs.?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	90.00%	9
No	10.00%	1
Total		**10**

Q13 10 responses

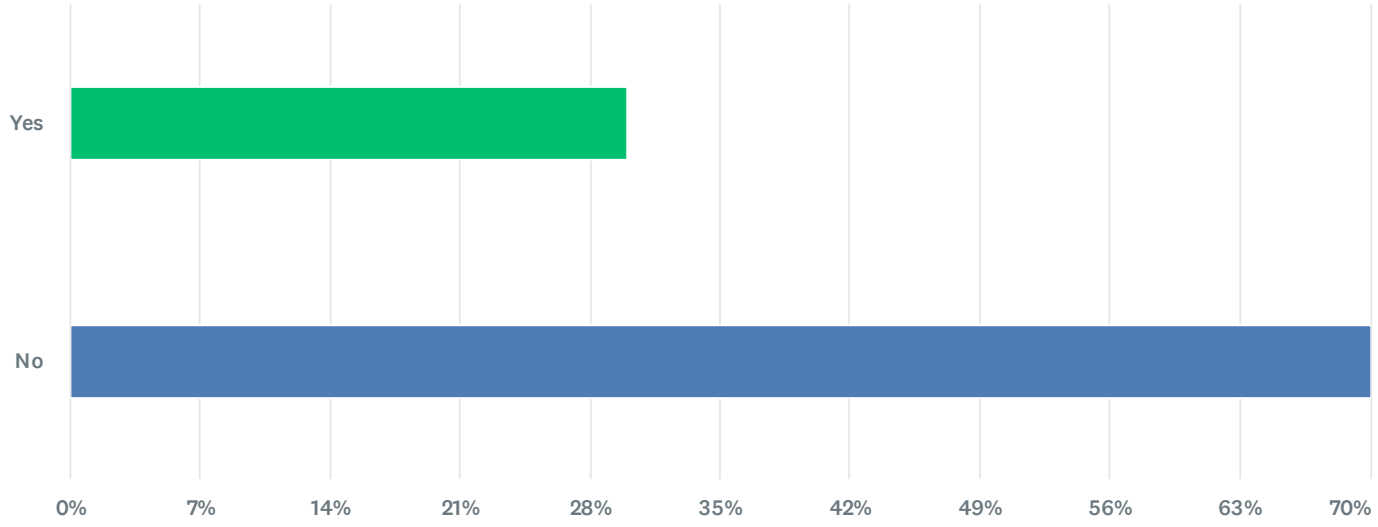
How many pieces of equipment does your dept. have dedicated to wildland firefightings?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
1-3 pieces	30.00%	3
4-6	50.00%	5
More than 7	20.00%	2
Total		**10**

Q14 10 responses

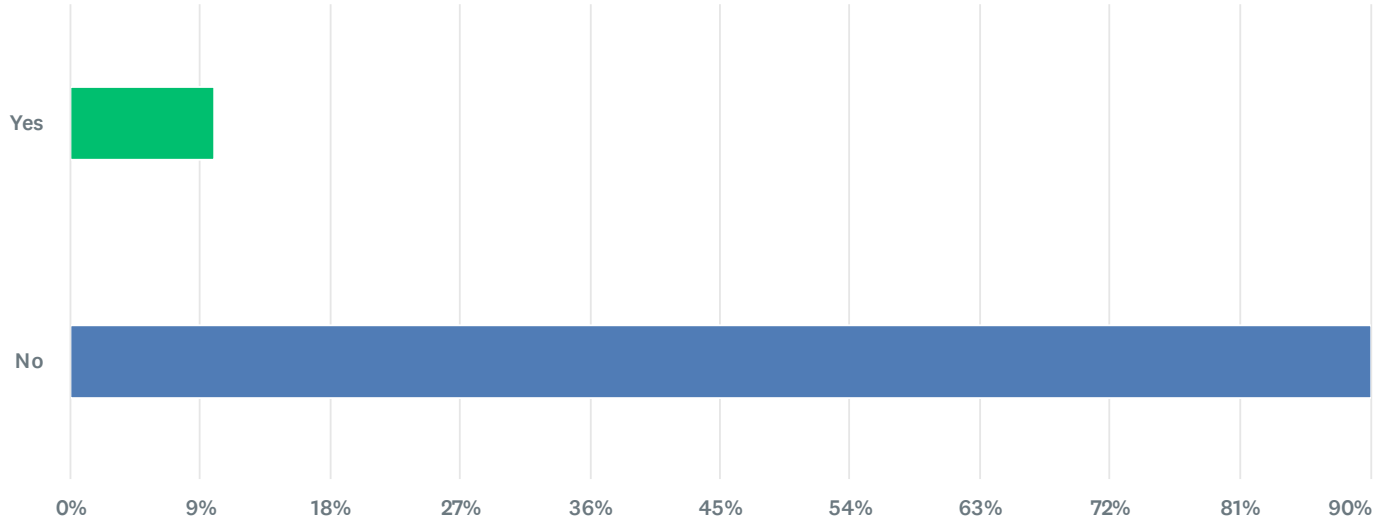
Does your dept.have any DNRC-county co-op engines?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	30.00%	3
No	70.00%	7
Total		**10**

Q15 10 responses

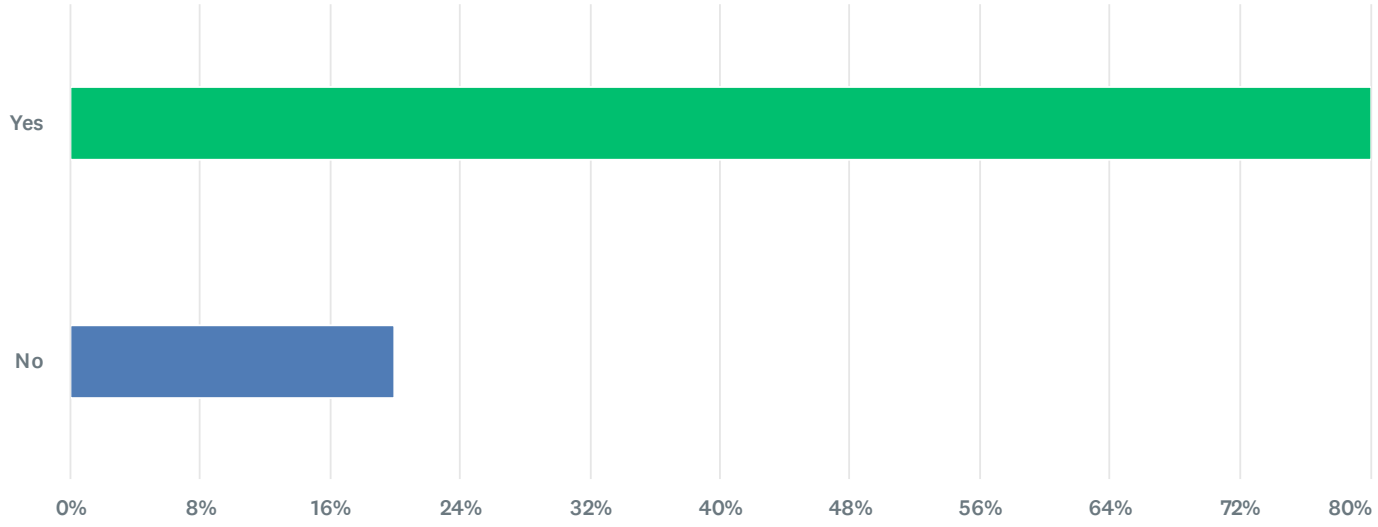
Does your dept. have hybrid DNRC engines?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	10.00%	1
No	90.00%	9
Total		**10**

Q16 10 responses

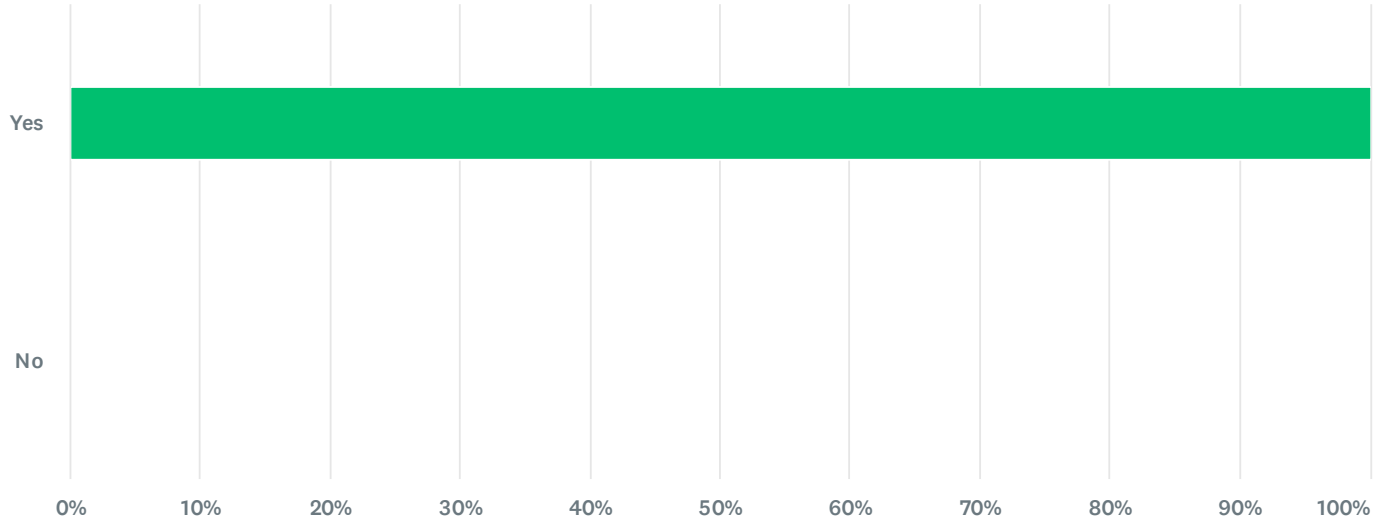
Are these DNRC programs beneficial to your dept.?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	80.00%	8
No	20.00%	2
Total		**10**

Q17 9 responses

If your dept. has not been a recipient of DNRC equipment, would it like to?



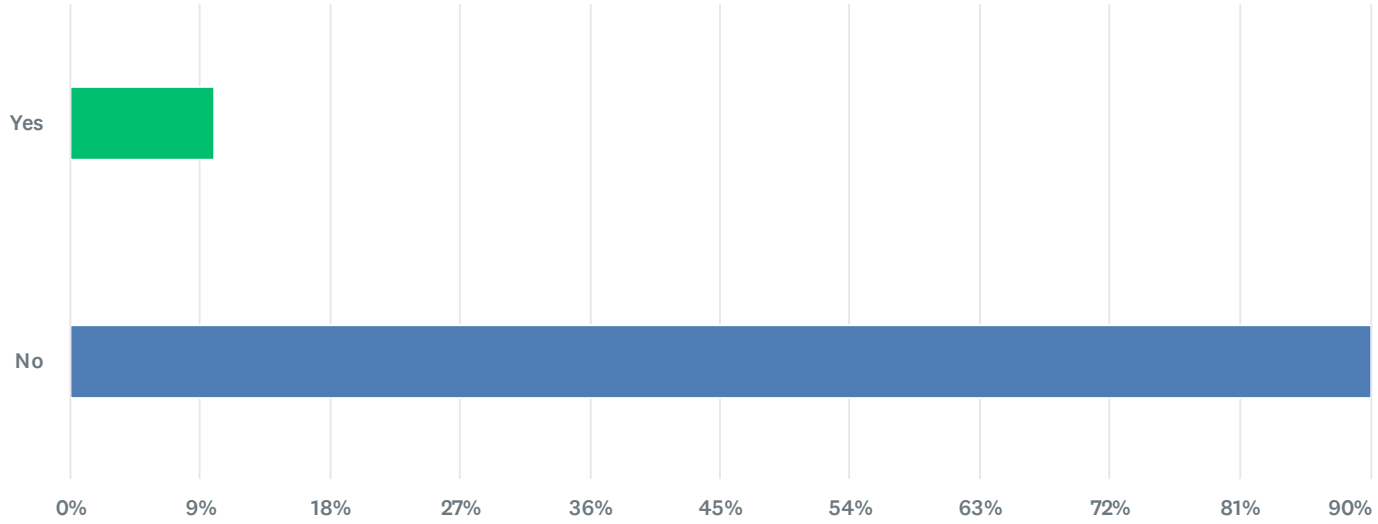
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	100.00%	9
No	0%	0
Total		**9**

Q18 Please provide a copy of your dept.'s mission statement.

Answered: 7 Skipped: 7

Q19 10 responses

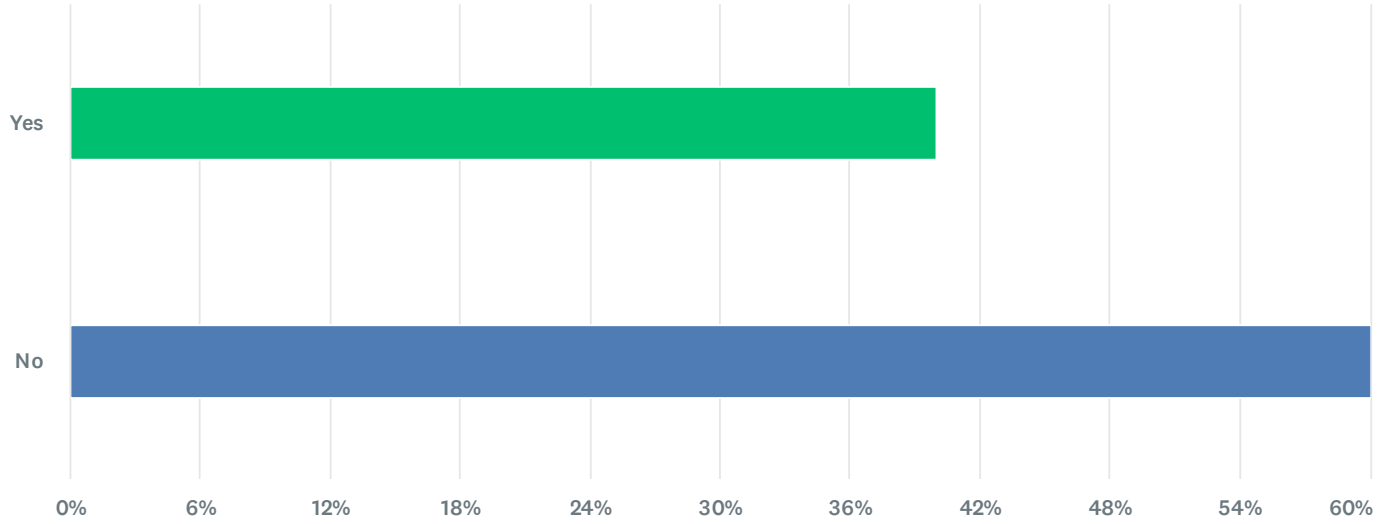
Do you feel it is your dept.'s obligation to respond to fires outside your jurisdicitional area (more than 150 miles)?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	10.00%	1
No	90.00%	9
Total		**10**

Q20 10 responses

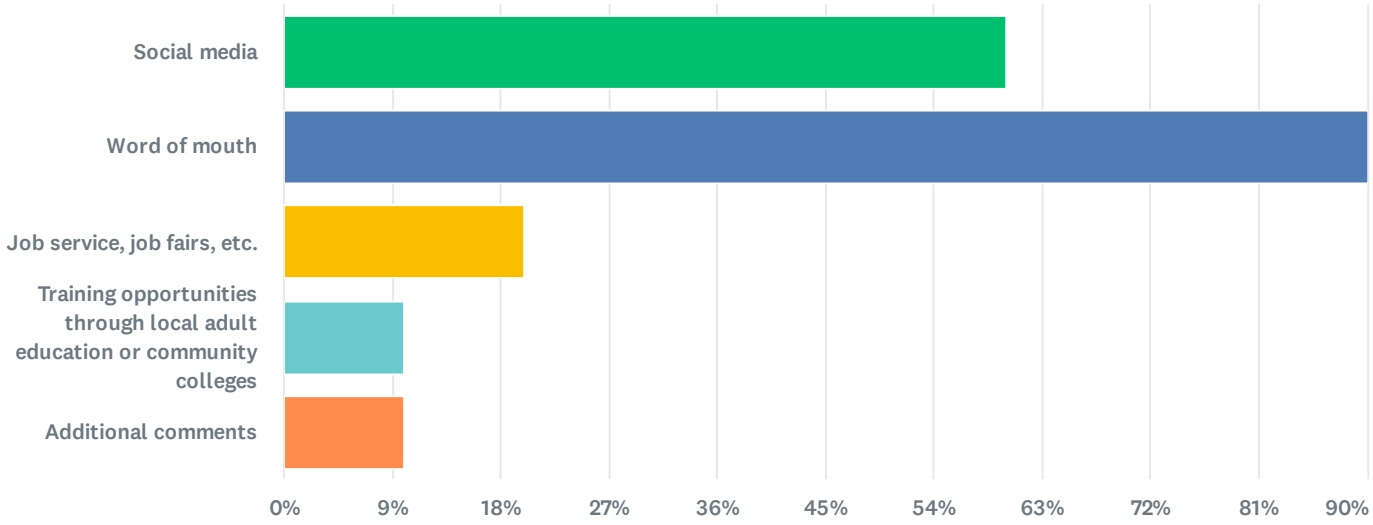
Does your department have staff to cover your district, if responding to a wildfire more than 150 miles away?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	40.00%	4
No	60.00%	6
Total		**10**

Q21 10 responses

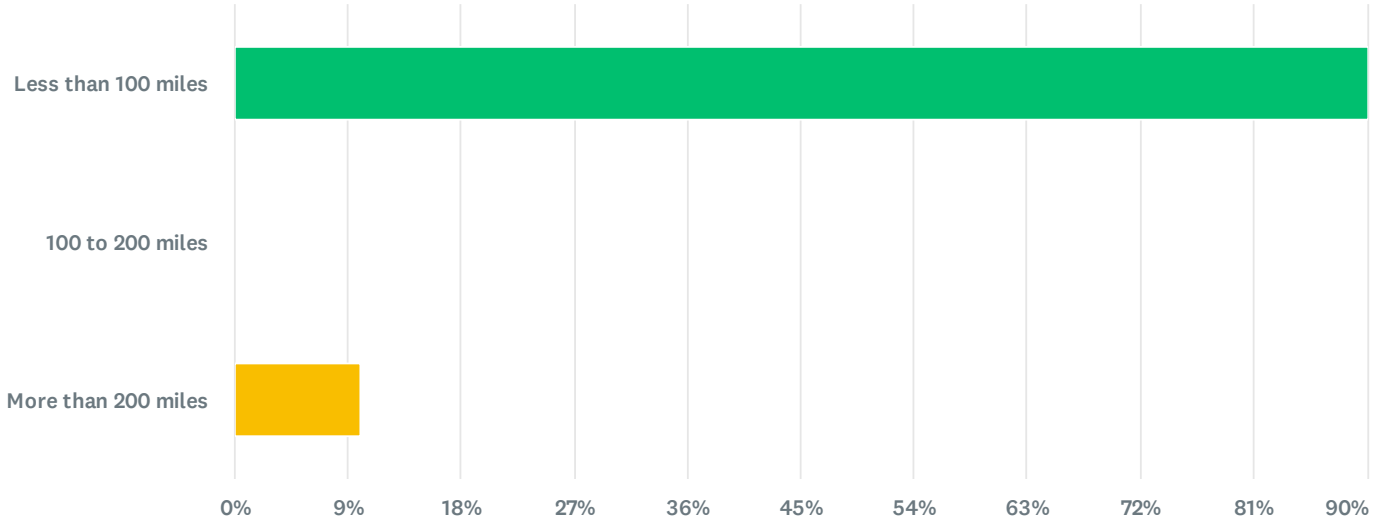
What types of recruitment tools are you using to bring in new members?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Social media	60.00%	6
Word of mouth	90.00%	9
Job service, job fairs, etc.	20.00%	2
Training opportunities through local adult education or community colleges	10.00%	1
Additional comments	10.00%	1
Total		**19**

Q22 10 responses

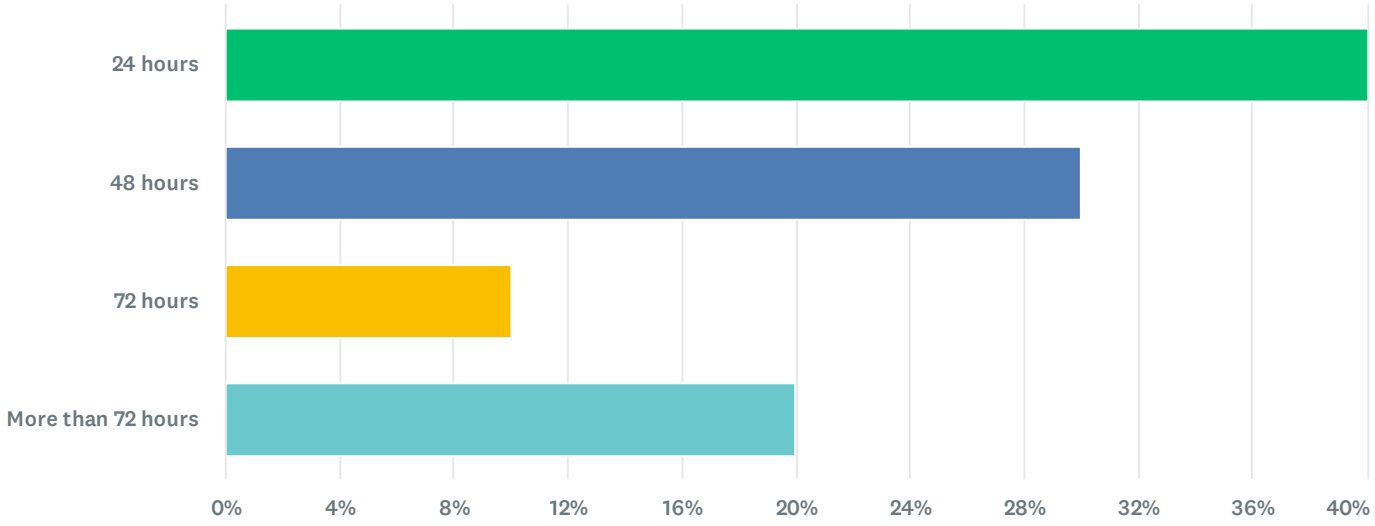
When responding to a mutual aid call, what is the acceptable distance for your dept. to respond?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Less than 100 miles	90.00%	9
100 to 200 miles	0%	0
More than 200 miles	10.00%	1
Total		**10**

Q23 10 responses

If your dept. is responding to a wildfire outside your jurisdictional area, how long can your dept. be on that call without impacting responses within your jurisdicational area?



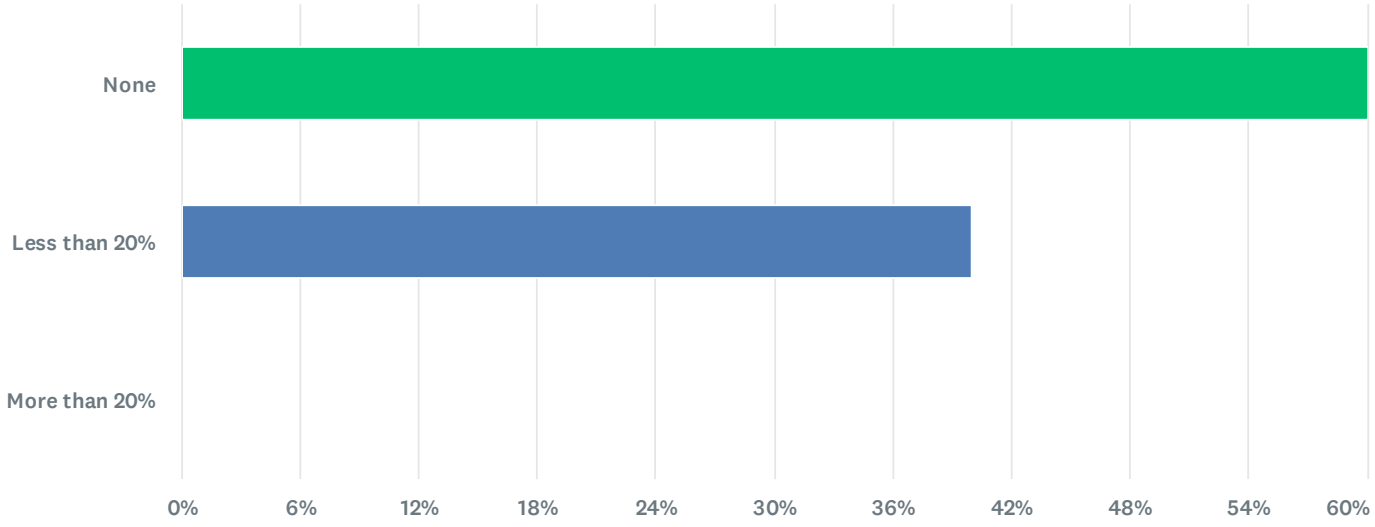
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
24 hours	40.00%	4
48 hours	30.00%	3
72 hours	10.00%	1
More than 72 hours	20.00%	2
Total		**10**

Q24 Is your fire department a member of an organization that supports fire depts.? If so, please list in the comment box.

Answered: 5 Skipped: 9

Q25 10 responses

What percentage of your dept. funding comes from wildland fire assignments



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
None	60.00%	6
Less than 20%	40.00%	4
More than 20%	0%	0
Total		**10**

Q26 What is the distribution of your dept.'s response calls? Please assign approximate percentages for each.

Answered: 9 Skipped: 5

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Structure fires	100.00%	9
Vehicle accidents	100.00%	9
Medical calls	88.89%	8
WUI/wildland fires	100.00%	9
Other calls	66.67%	6

Q27 Please describe any other issues and concerns your dept. faces?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 4

Q28 What percentage of your district is grasslands?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 4

Q29 What percentage of your district is timbered lands?

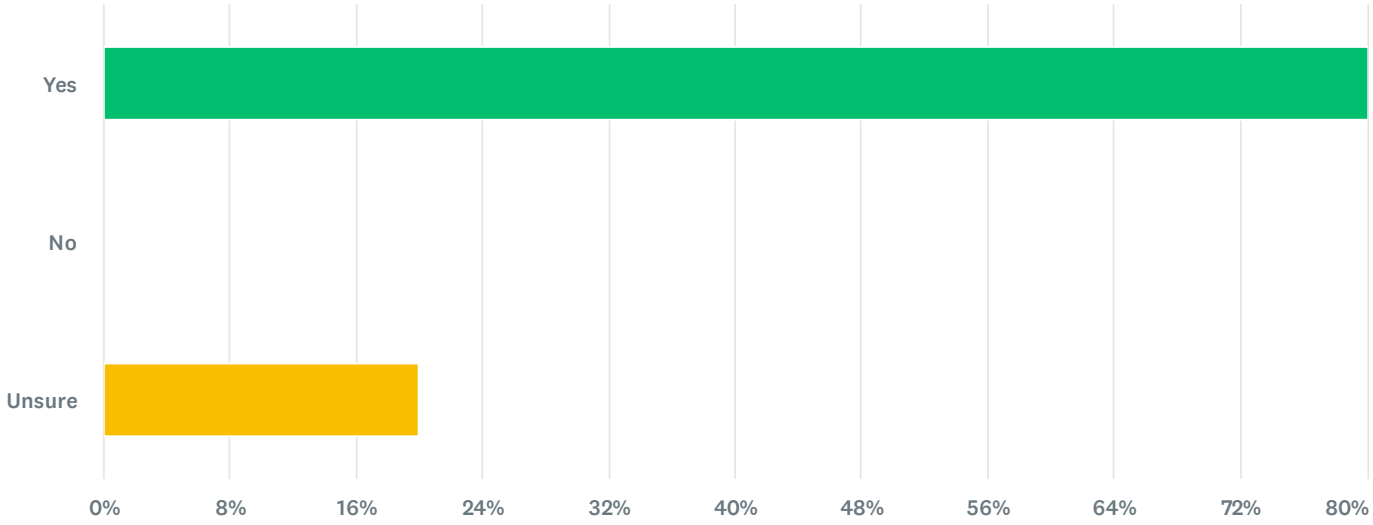
Answered: 10 Skipped: 4

Q30 How can the Montana Legislature help Montana firefighters be more successful?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 5

Q31 10 responses

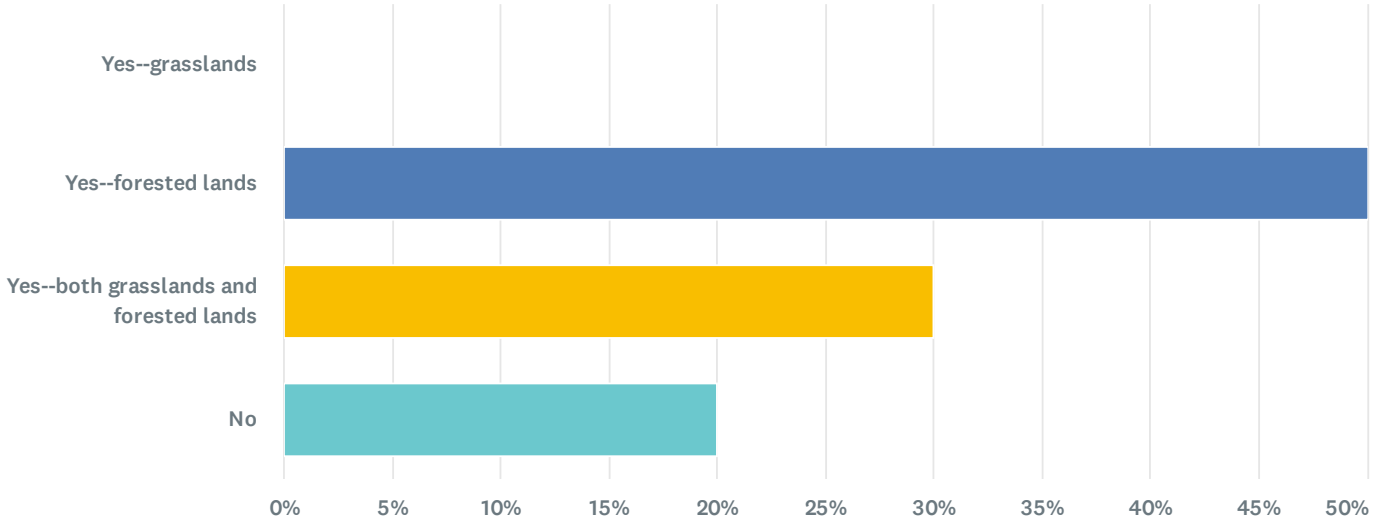
Have wildland fires affected homeowners' insurance rates in your district



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	80.00%	8
No	0%	0
Unsure	20.00%	2
Total		**10**

Q32 10 responses

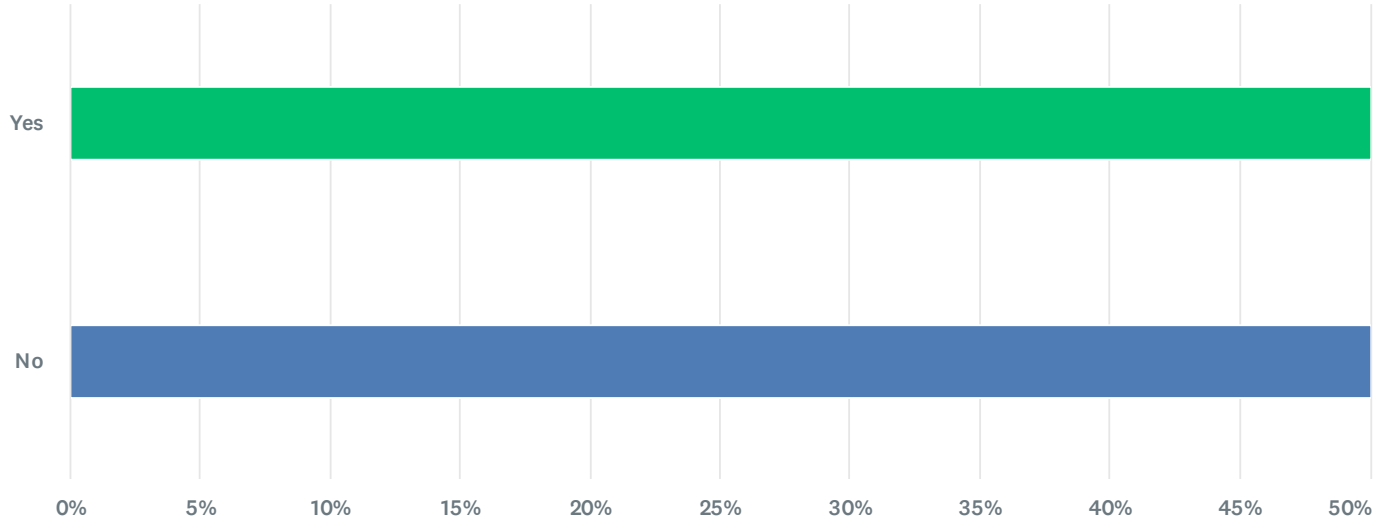
Would if be helpful to your dept. if more fuels reduction work was done in your district on forested lands or grasslands?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes--grasslands	0%	0
Yes--forested lands	50.00%	5
Yes--both grasslands and forested lands	30.00%	3
No	20.00%	2
Total		**10**

Q33 10 responses

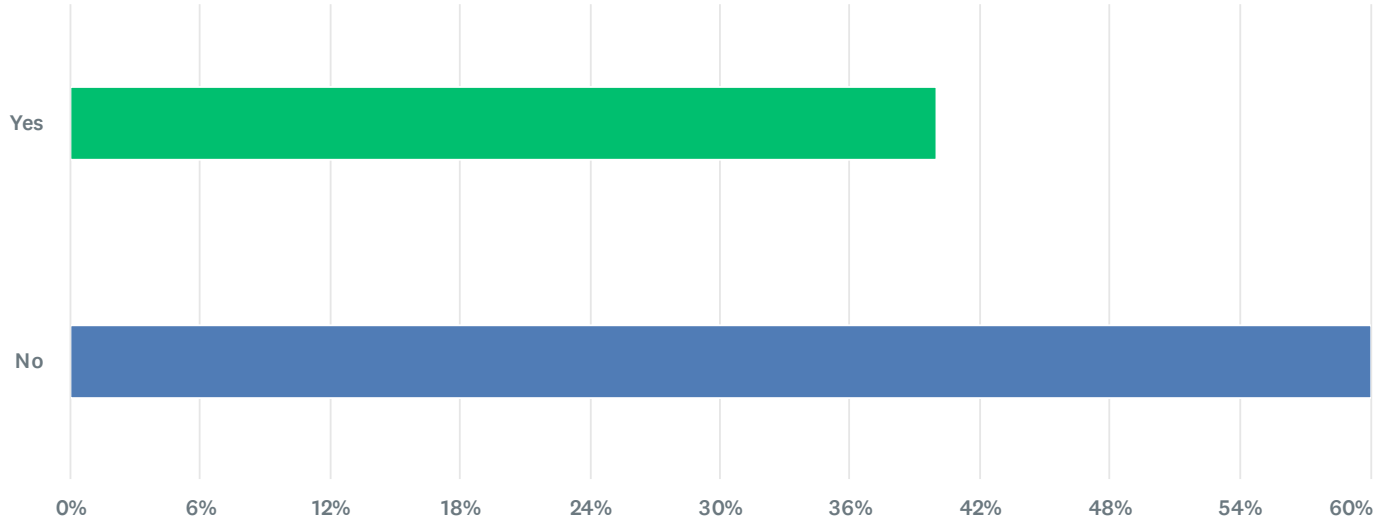
Does your district have community evacuation plans in place for wildland fire events? Please give a brief description.



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	50.00%	5
No	50.00%	5
Total		**10**

Q34 10 responses

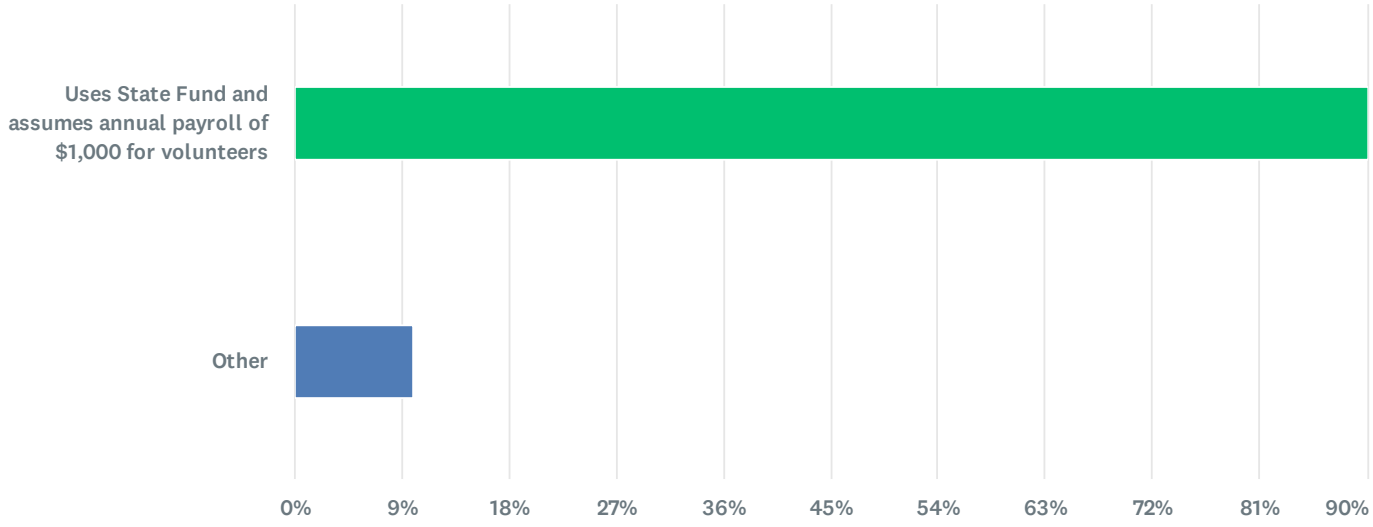
Does your district need help creating or updating evacuation plans?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	40.00%	4
No	60.00%	6
Total		**10**

Q35 10 responses

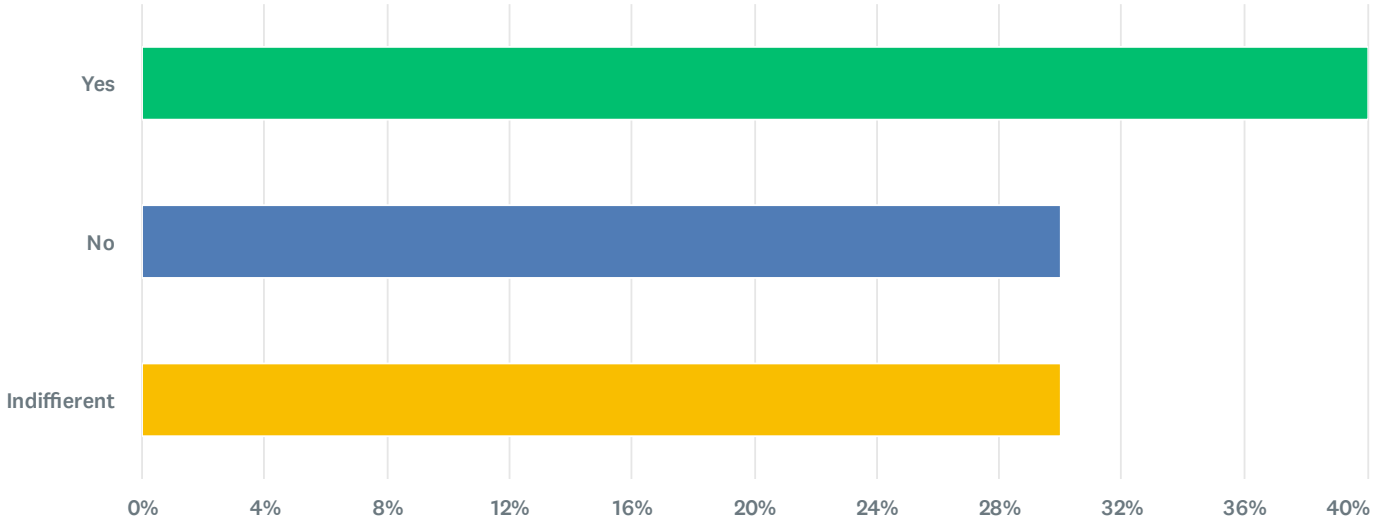
How does your district handle workers compensation insurance?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Uses State Fund and assumes annual payroll of $1,000 for volunteers	90.00%	9
Other	10.00%	1
Total		**10**

Q36 10 responses

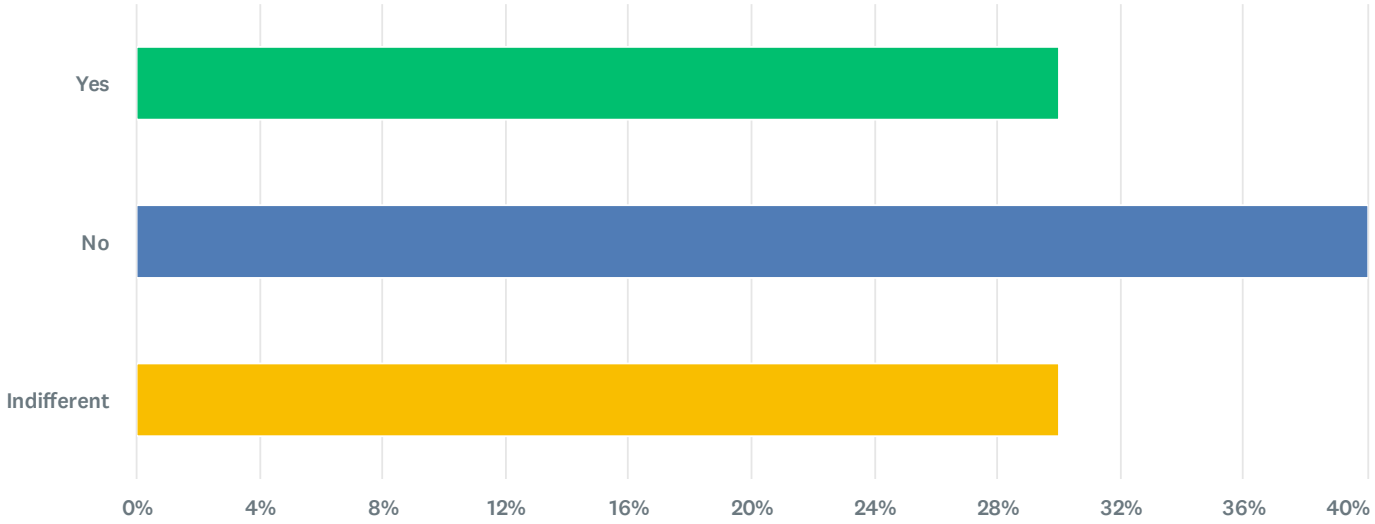
Do you feel relocating the Forest Service headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Salt Lake City will have an impact?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	40.00%	4
No	30.00%	3
Indiffierent	30.00%	3
Total		**10**

Q37 10 responses

Do you believe merging federal wildland fire agencies will help with Montana wildfires?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	30.00%	3
No	40.00%	4
Indifferent	30.00%	3
Total		**10**

#1

COMPLETE

Collector:	Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started:	Wednesday, April 29, 2026 3:35:48 PM
Last Modified:	Wednesday, April 29, 2026 3:56:10 PM
Time Spent:	00:20:21
IP Address:	69.146.225.203

Page 1

Q1

Has there been progress to decrease fuel loads on the land? Please specify progress on public vs. private ground?

Yes, I think there has been progress, probably more on private land than public. More needs to be done and at an accelerated rate. It is in the public narrative.

Q2

Is it possible for new industries in wood product development or processing to open and flourish in our current climate?

It is very challenging, I am not sure it is possible currently.

Q3

How much impact does the available work force weigh on business expansion and development?

Certainly some impact.

Q4

Is there capital available for new businesses or expansion in the wood products industry?

Respondent skipped this question

Q5

What action does the wood products industry need specifically to increase production or generate economic activity?

access to public forests and a stop to excessive litigation that stalls public land projects.

Q6

Is it possible to make fuel reduction projects profitable?

yes

Q7

Do you see any change in environmental groups being more supportive of land mangement, specifically in the area of logging and fuels treatment projects on public lands?

No, they continually use the ESA and particularly grizzly bears and bull trout to stop action.

Q8

Can marketing play a role in the public's perception of land management?

Maybe but challenging. Those opposed to management are effective at using the media, i.e. Missoulian.

Q9

How does conifer encroachment affect the use of land?

Due to lack of fire and managment in places, conifers have encroached on specific types of habitat, aspen groves, grasslands, etc.

Q10

Are federal lands making any progress in better management?

it is slow

Q11

Is there a market for small mills to compete with the larger mills?

Respondent skipped this question

Q12

Does Montana have a product that is desirable for framing construction?

Respondent skipped this question

Q13

Is there a market for timber charred in wildfires?

Respondent skipped this question

Q14

Is there revenue to be made in bio char?

Possibly, research is on-going regarding the benefits of bio char but whether it is a money maker, seems that is a ways a way.

Q15

What is known about wood/juniper used as cattle supplements, soil amendments, and jet fuel?

I know the Forest Service has been researching jet fuel for many years. Not sure where that stands.

Q16

Where are the strategic areas for mills to be located?

Western MT. Seeley Lake

Q17

Respondent skipped this question

How do private landowners find markets for products from their fire mitigation efforts?

Q18

Respondent skipped this question

What are the current costs to build a state-of-the-art wood products facility?

Q19

Respondent skipped this question

What efforts are being made in coal generation? How is it best to cooperate with NorthWestern Energy to move forward?

Q20

What opportunities exist for the timber industry to collaborate with others to complete fuels treatment projects (i.e. local communities, private landowners, local, county, state and federal agencies, etc.)?

Montana Forest Collaboration network brings agencies, a few NGO's and local forest collaboratives together. This issue is at the top of their list.

Q21

What state regulatory or litigation barriers exist or need to be overcome to accelerate fuels treatment? What about at the federal level?

We need a fix to the 9th circuit cottonwood ruling as well as a modification of the Equal Access to Justice Act at the federal level. Greater use of the Good Neighbor Authority at the state level would help. Increased state funding for active management on the ground.

#2

COMPLETE

Collector:	Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started:	Tuesday, June 02, 2026 9:08:00 AM
Last Modified:	Tuesday, June 02, 2026 10:00:11 AM
Time Spent:	00:52:10
IP Address:	184.166.6.145

Page 1

Q1

Has there been progress to decrease fuel loads on the land? Please specify progress on public vs. private ground?

There has been progress on both ends. However, that progress is outpaced by the rate of decline in forest health.

Q2

Is it possible for new industries in wood product development or processing to open and flourish in our current climate?

There is a huge demand for products that utilize small diameter logs and trees, as well as products that utilize non-standard merchantable material (non-saw). There is no shortage of supply of the raw materials of this kind. However, the end product (Ex: CLT, Cogen, pellets, wood fiber insulation, non-commodity lumber) needs more market development to justify investment.

Q3

How much impact does the available work force weigh on business expansion and development?

In rural areas where many facilities and contractors are located, it is a substantial amount of impact. Locating facilities and hubs in more urban areas will be key to recruiting and maintaining necessary workforce.

Q4

Is there capital available for new businesses or expansion in the wood products industry?

Very little. Banks are hesitant to lend in this industry. There are some government programs, but they also require a willing lender to partner. Private investment is scarce currently, many who have the capital are in survival mode. New investment is hard to recruit with little market development of new wood products.

Q5

What action does the wood products industry need specifically to increase production or generate economic activity?

A state revolving investment (not loan). If the state invests in infrastructure, they can expect return in income tax, corporate tax, wildfire mitigation costs (currently grant funded), wildfire suppression savings, revenue on state trust lands, and downstream tax revenue in builders, architects, engineers. For every $ invested, the state can expect over $4 in return if done at scale.

Q6

Is it possible to make fuel reduction projects profitable?

Fuels reduction needs to be looked at as profitable through savings. Forests and the management of them need to be viewed as critical infrastructure, just like highways.

Q7

Do you see any change in environmental groups being more supportive of land mangement, specifically in the area of logging and fuels treatment projects on public lands?

No. Litigation comes from 6-7 main groups (Alliance of the Wild Rockies, Friends of the Swan, Friends of the Bitterroot, Lolo-Bitterroot Citizens Task Force, etc.). They refuse to sit at the table even when invited. The majority of true environmental groups choose to sit and be a part of the collaborative process and generally find middle ground with all of the other interests. The few bad eggs have developed litigation as a business model. Until something is fixed congressionally with Equal Access to Justice, this will continue and we should not continue to put resources towards this effort. I don't see this being fixed congressionally, they have tried for 35 years and it affects other industries too. We have to find a way to get around these environmental groups. Further, Judge Christiansen is a major impediment in these cases. There is speculation of collusion between him and Garrity (Alliance of the Wild Rockies).

Q8

Can marketing play a role in the public's perception of land management?

Yes. But, sadly wildfire and dying trees are the best marketing there is. I have never seen public acceptance in such a good place as it is right now.

Q9

How does conifer encroachment affect the use of land?

Dramatically. Not only does it stress surrounding forests and rangelands, but it reduces downstream water supply to ag producers, forests, and rangeland. It contributes significantly to drought and resource scarcity.

Q10

Are federal lands making any progress in better management?

I believe Chief Schultz is making big moves to get more work done on the ground and streamlining processes internally. He can only work on the inside matters of the USFS, the outside matters are up to us.

Q11

Is there a market for small mills to compete with the larger mills?

There is no need for competition. Large mills are making commodity lumber. Supply is not an issue. The few small mills we have are doing very good for themselves. They make different products. I believe there is a lot of room for many more small mills that can complement the big mills.

Q12

Does Montana have a product that is desirable for framing construction?

Montana's wood is some of the clearest, tightest-grained wood in the world. It is special, strong, and beautiful. Our diversity in species, growth rates, and moisture content gives us a variety of wood products that can be made into virtually anything.

Q13

Is there a market for timber charred in wildfires?

Large mills are able to turn this into 2x products. However, the recovery is very low and there is a limited time window to harvest until the wood drastically loses structural integrity. There is also a fine line between charred and too charred. The cambium still needs to be intact.

Q14

Is there revenue to be made in bio char?

No. I don't see this as a profit maker. It is a great product and should be looked at as supplementary use.

Q15

Respondent skipped this question

What is known about wood/juniper used as cattle supplements, soil amendments, and jet fuel?

Q16

Where are the strategic areas for mills to be located?

Seeley Lake, Bonner, Hamilton, St. Regis, Libby, Eureka, White Sulphur Springs, Lewistown, Whitehall

Q17

How do private landowners find markets for products from their fire mitigation efforts?

Through consultants and loggers. This is very tough for private landowners.

Q18

What are the current costs to build a state-of-the-art wood products facility?

Depends on scale. 100 MBF of logs/year will be ~$200 million. 10 MBF of logs/year will be ~$5million.

I believe our way out is many, many small mills in strategically located places. We need wood basket analysis by county that can support investment efforts. Rather than designing a mill and then justifying how to feed it, we need to understand what the capacity for management is in each area and then design a mill that fits that need.

For decades, we have managed our forests to meet the demands of our infrastructure. We need to build infrastructure that meets the demands of our forests.

Q19

What efforts are being made in coal generation? How is it best to cooperate with NorthWestern Energy to move forward?

Forceful hand. They are not cooperating with industry. Period.

Q20

What opportunities exist for the timber industry to collaborate with others to complete fuels treatment projects (i.e. local communities, private landowners, local, county, state and federal agencies, etc.)?

It's already happening, beautifully. Everyone is aligned. We just need infrastructure to compliment it.

Q21

What state regulatory or litigation barriers exist or need to be overcome to accelerate fuels treatment? What about at the federal level?

We need more coordination between $ and what it goes to. Federal funding should be allocated towards treating acres (management), state funding should be allocated toward our ability to manage that land (capacity and infrastructure).

**** BILL NO. ****

INTRODUCED BY ****

BY REQUEST OF THE ****

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT CREATING THE MONTANA WILDFIRE RESILIENCY TASK FORCE; PROVIDING A TERMINATION DATE."

WHEREAS, the Montana Legislature finds that the increased cost of catastrophic wildfires poses an immediate and growing threat to communities, infrastructure, and property in all regionals of Montana; and

WHEREAS, changing climate conditions, declining forest health, and development patterns in the wildland urban interface increase both the likelihood and severity of wildfires capable of consuming entire communities in a single event;

WHEREAS, unmitigated risk is destabilizing the property insurance market, threatening the long-term affordability and availability of coverage, and imposing enormous fiscal liabilities on local governments and taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the Montana Legislature further finds that the state must enact policies that both mitigate wildfire risk and prepare Montana to respond effectively before and after catastrophic wildfires using all available resources.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Wildfire resiliency task force -- membership.** (1) There is a Montana Wildfire Resiliency Task Force consisting of 17 voting members. The task force is attached to the department of commerce for administrative purposes only, as prescribed in 2-15-121. The task force operates as a independent body, subject to legislative review for extension of its service.

(2) The governor shall appoint 17 members to represent each of the following groups:

(a) Five members representing local government, including:

(i) a county commissioner from a county within each of Montana's United States congressional

district, as nominated by the Montana association of counties;

(ii) two land use-planning professionals with experience adopting policies and codes for wildfire-resilient structures and best practices, as nominated by the Montana association of planners; and

(iii) one representative of a municipality, as nominated by the Montana league of cities and towns;

(b) one representative of a tribal government recognized by the state;

(c) one firefighting professionals with expertise in wildland fire behavior or wildfire mitigation science and containment strategies, such as a local fire chief, fire marshal, or wildland firefighter nominated by Montana state volunteer firefighters association;

(d) a member of a housing organization;

(e) four members representing private industries, including representatives from a commercial and residential development or building company, a licensed architect experienced in wildfire-resilient design and practices, a contractor with experience in forestry, fuels mitigation, or home-hardening, or a representative of a building trades association;

(f) one member representing the property and casualty insurance industry, as nominated by the independent insurance agents association of Montana, and a licensed real estate agent, as nominated by the Montana association of realtors; and

(g) a member of the senate and a member of the house of representatives, including one each from the majority part and the minority party.

(3) Nonvoting members of the task force may be appointed respectively by the:

(a) forestry and trust lands division of the department of natural resources and conservation;

(b) department of commerce;

(c) office of state auditor;

(d) building codes program of the department of labor and industry;

(e) office of the state fire marshal; and

(f) Montana disaster and emergency services.

(5) The department of commerce shall create a task force administrator position to support the task force.

(4) A majority of the voting members of the task force constitutes a quorum.

(5) A vacancy on the task force must be filled in the same manner as a regular appointment.

(6) The task force shall select a presiding officer from among its members.

(7) Task force members are entitled to reimbursement of travel, meals, and lodging expenses while engaged in task force business, as provided in 2-18-501 through 2-18-503.

NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Duties of the task force.** (1) The task force shall develop recommendations for Montana's wildfire safety standards. These standards must provide a comprehensive administrative and technical system to reduce inefficiencies and allow for voluntary adoption by a local jurisdiction. An approved system must be based on consistent, performance-based components that maximize local effectiveness and simplify review and enforcement challenges.

(2) Wildfire safety standards must address risk factors in the wildland-urban interface. Standards for:

(a) construction and building materials must include recommendations for use of ignition-resistant construction materials such as flooring, siding, vents, and decks based on risk science;

(b) defensible space must include recommendations for vegetation management and fuel reduction in the home ignition zone and in areas around housing developments;

(c) access and egress must include recommendations for emergency vehicle access, such as road widths, load limits, vehicle turning radius, and evacuation routes; and

(d) water supply must include guidance on establishment of emergency water sources in new housing developments.

(3) The task force shall publish guidance on how the adoption of wildfire safety standards may be used to clarify state law and reduce statutory conflict.

(4) The task force shall recommend programs to support wildfire resilience through:

(a) technical assistance, which would allow state agencies to provide technical assistance and training to local jurisdictions, such as land-use planners and building inspectors, to support mitigation practices and access to federal grants;

(b) a voluntary certification program, which may:

(i) formally recognize a property or community that meets or exceeds wildfire risk mitigation

standards and provides tangible benefits related to property insurance; and

(ii) establish a verification method for an individual property or community that has met the wildfire risk mitigation standards;

(c) a standardized risk assessment, which would provide a state-approved, transparent, wildland-urban interface risk assessment methodology for the calculation of property insurance rates;

(d) data and mapping to provide publicly available, state-supported wildland-urban interface risk data and analysis using the best-available science to inform local jurisdiction planning and property owners;

(e) incentives for wildfire mitigation on private property, including fiscal strategies for homeowner retrofits in high-risk areas, low-interest loan programs, tax credits or deductions, local option wildland-urban interface resilience special districts, matching grant funds, or other incentives. The recommendations must provide criteria for measuring the impact of these incentive programs.

(f) identifying reforms in the federal funding reauthorization process and how state-funded programs should be considered by the legislature, including transparency and cost containment.

(2) In accordance with the reporting requirements in 5-11-210, the task force shall:

(a) within one year of establishment, issue a preliminary report with the task force's findings and recommendations to the governor and the environmental quality council; and

(b) within three years of establishment, issue a final report to the governor and the environmental quality council.

NEW SECTION. **Section 3. Termination.** [This act] terminates June 30, 2030.

- END -