West Virginia University to host 10th Mid-Atlantic Wildfire Training Academy

MORGANTOWN, W.Va.— West Virginia University will host the 10th annual Mid-Atlantic Wildfire Training Academy June 4 through June 10. The academy is presented by the Mid-Atlantic Forest Fire Compact, West Virginia University Division of Forestry and Natural Resources, and the U.S. Forest Service.

The academy will host 11 classes this year that are essential to wildland firefighting. Topics include fire behavior, equipment use, and leadership development. These classes and their instructors meet National Wildfire Coordinating Group standards.

“The academy provides important training to give Federal, state, and local firefighters the skills they need to battle wildland fires,” said Cooperative Fire Specialist Maureen Brooks with the U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry.

Beyond the normal offerings, this year’s academy will have a Helicopter Crewmember class. This course will instruct participants about the use of helicopters during wildfires, including safety and transport of external materials and life support equipment.

Over 180 people have registered for the academy, according to Academy Coordinator John Howell. “This year’s academy has a very diverse set of students from the entry level to those taking advanced classes. This should be exciting to be a part of, not only for the exceptional classes but the myriad of experience and networking opportunities,” said Howell.

MORE
Most participants are from state and Federal agencies that are members of the Mid-Atlantic Forest Fire Compact. “Over half of those attending the training academy come from our member states. The rest represent volunteer fire departments, state organizations outside the Compact like Florida, or are unaffiliated,” Howell noted.

Seven states make up the Mid-Atlantic Forest Fire Compact: Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia. Compact members promote effective fire prevention and the control of wildfires in the Mid-Atlantic region. Collectively, these states are responsible for protecting more than 35 million acres of woodland.

The compact reduces wildfire suppression costs for local, state, and Federal jurisdictions by allowing states to share personnel and equipment. The compact also minimizes the firefighting burden on any one state when many fires occur at once.

Note to Editor:

The Work Capacity Test (Pack Test) will be held on the rail trail near Star City on June 5 at 6:00 p.m. to test firefighters’ endurance and strength by hiking the trail with various pack weights in a timed distance hike.

The Basic Firefighter course will include field exercises on June 6 at the WVU Research Forest near the Westvaco Natural Resource Center. Participants will learn to construct a fire line using various methods and to extinguish a fire with or without water.

The Portable Pumps and Water Use course will hold a field exercise at the WVU Research Forest pond just beyond the Westvaco Center on June 9 to demonstrate operation of pump equipment and use.

The Firing Operations class will include a field exercise on June 8 behind the Star City VFD. The cadets will learn about various types of firing devices like drip torches and flame throwers used for backfiring and burning out procedures when fighting wildfire.

MORE
The Helicopter Crewmember class will hold field exercises June 8 and 9. This course will instruct cadets about the use of helicopters during wildfires, including safety and transport of external materials and life support equipment.

The Wildlands Fire Chain Saws class will have field practice exercises June 6 and 7 at the WVU Research Forest. This course provides hands-on cutting experience in surroundings similar to fire line situations.

Contact John Howell at (304) 288-3451 to make arrangements for media opportunities.