

East Helps West Northeast and National Capital Region Parks, Maine to Virginia National Fire Plan – Firefighting

Well over 200 firefighters and support staff from NPS sites throughout the two regions answered calls for help during the summer Western fire season of 2006. Hundreds of others made it possible for them to go.

Even before the nation moved the highest level of firefighting response, Preparedness Level 5, people readied themselves for what became a record western fire season. Many of the same folks had fought fire earlier in the year, in late winter and spring when eastern forests, fields and marshes tend to burn. In summer, the West warmed up, dried out and caught fire. So, they repacked their gear, put their names on the list and awaited the call.

No matter what part of the country they are from, firefighters, their families and friends must be prepared for the firefighter's absence of at least 16-days. The standard fire assignment is two weeks, plus at least a day of travel at each end. How well the challenges of the departure are met affect relationships. Couples remember their vows of, "for better or for worse." And, it is a true friend who cleans out the refrigerator of the firefighter who dashes out the door without tossing out the milk.

Park managers and co-workers must also, "deal with it." At smaller parks, just one person's assignment means a huge staffing reduction. Those who remain, work to ensure the best possible experiences for visitors and best possible care for the park. From Virginia to Maine, NPS employees did their part in a record fire year.

Contact: Barb Stewart, Northeast Region Fire Education, Prevention and Information Specialist

Phone: 434-977-1375 x3365

