

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3202

July 19, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Haaland and Secretary Vilsack:

We write requesting your urgent attention to potential fuel shortages that if realized leave California and the Western United States without full aerial capabilities to address wildfires.

Leading into what all available data indicates is likely to be a severe season for wildfires, key officials are reporting that they are facing the real possibility of severe jet fuel shortages. This would mean they would have to wave off and decline the service of specialized planes and helicopters that drop fire retardants – endangering millions of Americans across a substantial number of communities.

This is an unacceptable risk for our communities and represents a dangerous and vulnerable posture that is potentially catastrophic for lives, homes, property, public lands and millions of people throughout the western United States and one that needs your immediate attention.

The *Associated Press* reported July 13 that fire officials are warning of dangers “they have not run into before,” and that this challenge is a “scary thought with all the shortages going on right now,” according to a spokesperson for the National Interagency Fire Center. The same report concluded that “The worry is that multiple bases go dry simultaneously during what is shaping up to be a very busy wildfire season in the West. Tanker bases in Arizona, where many large fires are burning, have also had jet fuel supply issues in the last month.”

This is especially relevant because the Biden Administration has pledged to dramatically reduce the production and use of fossil fuels. While we recognize the potential benefit of renewable fuels as part of our future, the fact remains: For the foreseeable future, heavy equipment, personnel transports, aircraft, pumps, generators, saws and other tools that help firefighters do their jobs all require fossil fuels. If firefighters do not have fuel to fight fires, the Administration is not doing its job to ensure that those on the front lines are properly equipped for their essential, life-saving work.

Please respond to us no later than July 26, with an update on the following:

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Page Two

- Status of current aviation fuel availability and any observed or anticipated shortages or supply constrictions.
- Status of aviation fuel distribution and support components along with pre-positioned and anticipated placement of personnel and other firefighting equipment throughout the western states.
- Logistical operations planned and challenges anticipated to ensure adequate aviation fuel supplies for fixed wing and helicopter firefighting needs.
- An update on the role of private sector suppliers and contractors and their role in meeting projected agency and partner needs.
- An accounting of any statutory or regulatory obstacles that are preventing the successful deployment and quick-strike capability for any aviation firefighting resources relied upon by your agencies and partners.
- A review of contingency plans available to rapidly mobilize, concentrate supplies and equipment, and shift aviation assets and required fuel supplies in the event of a catastrophic event in one part of the west, while resources are amassed in other areas.
- Most critically, your actions to date and plan for immediate action to address any fuel shortages.

That fire is a threat in the West is not new, and it is not a surprise. The only surprise is that our reactions and preparedness continue to fall short.

Our fire prone communities need your urgent review of this challenge and your attention to pair with state, local and private-sector partners to ensure that our front-line responders have the fuel they need to carry out their essential missions in the days ahead.

Sincerely,



DARRELL ISSA
Member of Congress



Kevin McCarthy
House Republican Leader

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Rep. Tom McClintock
Member of Congress



Rep. Devin Nunes
Member of Congress



Rep. David Valadao
Member of Congress



Rep. Mike Garcia
Member of Congress



Rep. Jay Obernolte
Member of Congress



Rep. Michelle Steel
Member of Congress



Rep. Young Kim
Member of Congress



Rep. Ken Calvert
Member of Congress



Rep. Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress