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Senate

IN RECOGNITION OF DELAWARE FIREFIGHTERS SELFLESSLY FIGHTING NATIONAL BLAZES

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the status of the National Fire Plan, the 2002 Wildfire season and the Delawareans who risked their lives to save others. Since January 1, over 47,000 wildfires have burned more than 3,200,000 acres around the country. The vast majority of these fires have been small, just a few acres at most; however, several have been massive fires consuming hundreds or thousands of acres. To those living nearest these fires, they have suffered a tremendous loss. But thanks to the outstanding effort and tireless dedication of firefighters from around the country, many of these large wildfires have been suppressed, and the smaller fires have been prevented from growing larger.

While wildfires tend to be a greater problem in the West, concern for the residents, for their health, for their safety, and for their homes extends nationwide. In Delaware, we have not experienced the devastating effects of fires seen in other states, yet men and women from my state have been willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with their brothers and sisters in helping fight these devastating fires.

The Delaware Wildfire Fire Crew, a 20-member advanced firefighting group made up of eight Department of Agriculture Forest Services employees and twelve volunteers has been on the road for two weeks, battling

fires in Wyoming, South Dakota, and Virginia. Most recently, the crew helped put out a lightning sparked fire that burned approximately 850 acres of the George Washington National Forest in Virginia.

Their heroism and their selflessness were apparent. I want you to know that my heart was filled with pride when I learned this convoy of Delaware firefighting personnel was en route to offer assistance. These men and women were willing to stop what they were doing at a moment's notice. They were willing to put their own lives on hold, leave their own families, and help those who needed help.

At some point, all of us need to look back and take stock of where we have been and where we are going. Have we lived our lives in the service to others, or merely for ourselves? Have we made clear our commitments and worked with purpose to fulfill them, or simply meandered in search of a cause? At the end of the day, can we say with confidence that we did our best and worked to our fullest potential?

For these firefighters, and the thousands of others fighting this season's wildfires, the answers are clear. They live a life of service. They embody a commitment to excellence that serves as an example and an inspiration to us all. Whether working to protect those of us here in Delaware, or risking their lives to fight the raging wildfires of the West,

they proved to us that if a family is in trouble, if a fire threatens a home-- Delaware's volunteer firefighters will be there for us--and for America--leading the way.