

## MASSACHUSETTS FIRE DEPARTMENT WILL EXPERIENCE "DEVASTATING" LAYOFFS



The Massachusetts state Department of Conservation and Recreation announced yesterday that it will be reducing the state's capacity to combat forest fires. Next week, the agency will send out as many as 55 layoff notices to employees in order to account for the \$11 million in budget cuts necessary to balance the state's budget. Those cuts will see the Bureau of Forest Fire Control's payroll reduced by at least half. "It's going to be devastating," said Dennis Annear, president of the Massachusetts Forest Fire Council and fire chief for the town of Orange. "This bureau will have a lack of ability to do its job in supporting municipalities in detection, prevention and suppression." Annear added that the cuts would result in few programs which would teach residents how to avoid forest fires. The cuts will reduce the amount of fire officials trained in fighting forest fires to about one in each of the 14 districts trained in fighting forest fires. According to Annear, "If there's a large wildfire, we're going to have to pull people from other [districts], and we're not going to have anyone to respond to fires in those areas."

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