

Tahoe firefighters in SoCal ready for action

By Melissa Pinion-Whitt, San Bernardino County Sun

Dozens of out-of-state firefighters have come to the Inland Empire to help protect the San Bernardino National Forest from potential wildfires during expected high winds and dry weather.

Five Lake Tahoe-based engine crews and two hot shot crews from the U.S. Forest Service – totaling about 70 extra firefighters – traveled to the area on Thursday in preparation for the season's first round of Santa Ana winds. Extra aircraft have also been requested.

“We’re now at the very peak of our fire season and at this time of the year, we operate at a high state of readiness,” said U.S. Forest Service spokesman John Miller. “When a citizen dials 911 for the possibility of fire, our response is going to be very aggressive.”

The National Weather Service issued a Red Flag Warning for the San Bernardino Mountains and other parts of the Inland Empire on Thursday. The warning is in effect until Saturday afternoon.

“We’re looking at wind gusts of 55 mph, and locally wind gusts could get as high as 65 mph,” said Phil Gonsalves, a Weather Service meteorologist.

Because vegetation has been drying out all summer long and there was less-than-average rain and snowfall last winter, firefighters say the potential for brush fires is high.