

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Demands answers on Army's prescribed fire protocol in light of recent fire at Fort McCoy

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) sent a letter to Army Secretary Christine Wormuth about the Army's risk assessment and mitigation measures for prescribed burns on installations. While no definitive cause of the recent fire on Fort McCoy's north and south borders has been determined yet and an investigation is ongoing, Senator Baldwin is calling on the Army to answer questions about its level of coordination with state agencies when conducting prescribed burns and what the Army is doing to clean up the area in the aftermath of the fire.

"It is imperative that we protect the areas both in and around our military installations, and that the Department of Defense use all resources available to ensure appropriate risk mitigation when conducting operations that have a direct impact on the environment and communities," **wrote Senator Baldwin.**

Full text of the letter is available [here](#) and below.

April 24, 2023

Dear Secretary Wormuth:

I write to you today to inquire about the Army's risk assessment and mitigation measures for prescribed burns on installations. I am also requesting additional information regarding the recent wildland fires on Fort McCoy's north and south borders, as well as results of the investigation into the cause of the outbreaks.

I am aware that no definitive cause of the fires has been determined yet and that

the investigation is ongoing. Nevertheless, it is reported that Fort McCoy had been conducting prescribed burns in the area to control brush and other plants, and to prepare training areas for the summer influx of military units, when fires broke out on April 12th. It took emergency services two days to extinguish the almost 3,000-acre fire. I am particularly concerned because the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources placed central and southern portions of Wisconsin, including the area around Fort McCoy, under a “very high” fire danger risk on April 10. Governor Evers had declared a state of emergency due to fire danger risk on April 12th, the day the prescribed burns took place.

- 1. What authority level approves prescribed burns at the varying levels of assessed risk?**
- 2. Can you describe the Department of the Army’s regulations for risk assessment in the context of prescribed burns, including any calculation measures utilized to assess associated risks? How does the Army apply this risk assessment measure to other activities that pose a fire hazard, such as pyrotechnic training?**
- 3. How does the Army coordinate with state agencies, such as the Department of Natural Resources, when conducting prescribed burns and other activities that pose a risk to the environment (such as weapons ranges, live fire exercises, etc.)?**
- 4. With the fires at Fort McCoy now 100% contained, what is the Army is doing to clean up the area and measure the environmental impact and damage? What resources are being allocated to support the aftermath of the fires?**

I appreciate your timely response to this request, and further request the full results of the investigation into the April 12th fires once complete. It is imperative that we protect the areas both in and around our military installations, and that the Department of Defense use all resources available to ensure appropriate risk mitigation when conducting operations that have a direct impact on the environment and communities.

Sincerely,

An online version of this release is available [here](#).