

State of Vermont
Commissioner's Office
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Agency of Natural Resources
Danielle Fitzko, Commissioner

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June 24, 2026

Dear Town Forest Fire Wardens and Deputy Town Forest Fire Wardens,

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation (FPR) would first like to thank you for your service in protecting Vermont's communities and forest resources. This letter is meant to serve as formal communication regarding recent legislative changes related to the Town Forest Fire Warden system. The recently enacted law ([Act 162](#) of 2026), passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor, updates Vermont's forest fire and fire prevention statutes (10 V.S.A. Chapter 83, Subchapter 4) and the responsibilities and authorities related to the town forest fire warden and deputy town forest fire wardens.

Effective July 1, 2026, the chief of the fire department, fire district, or private fire department with primary responsibility for fire response within a municipality shall serve as the town forest fire warden. In municipalities with multiple fire departments, the municipality shall designate a single fire chief to serve in this role. In some cases, a Fire chief may be the town forest fire warden for multiple towns if they have multi-town primary responsibility. If you are not currently the fire chief, you are no longer the town forest fire warden or deputy town forest fire warden appointed in your town.

The new statutes allow fire chiefs in the role of town forest fire wardens to designate one or more deputy town forest fire wardens. Deputy town forest fire wardens have the authority to issue permits to kindle a fire, much like a Key Person did before.

FPR recognizes that for some, this may be a significant change and difficult to hear. This change is not a reflection of the dedicated service of current town forest fire wardens and deputy town forest fire wardens. The previous forest fire statute, established in the early 1900s, identified a forest fire warden for each town and reflected the needs and realities of Vermont at that time, when communities were smaller and local fire protection systems were far less developed than they are today. Since that time, those statutes have remained largely unchanged while the current fire response systems have evolved around them. Fire chiefs have responsibility for fire suppression; however, the town forest fire wardens still had statutory authority for wildland fire suppression. Aligning the town forest fire warden with the fire chief role places fire suppression responsibilities with the fire chief, who oversees fire department resources. This change is intended to improve coordination, accountability, and the safe and effective management of wildfire incidents, while ensuring that those responsible for deploying local resources have an appropriate role in decisions that may affect costs and response capacity.

FPR encourages those whose role is changing to reach out to the fire chief for their respective town to explore opportunities to continue supporting their community as a deputy town forest fire warden. For those who already serve as both the fire chiefs and town forest fire wardens, further guidance will be provided by FPR's Wildland Fire Team as we work through this transition together.

The State of Vermont truly thanks you for your dedication and service to our communities.

Sincerely,



Danielle Fitzko, Commissioner
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