



Evaluation of Risks to Federal Facility Superfund Site Remedies from Wildfires

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Background, Scope, & Methodology

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General initiated an evaluation of the risks to federal facility Superfund site remedies from wildfires. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, which is commonly called Superfund, authorizes the EPA to clean up contaminated sites to protect human health and the environment. The sites that the EPA identifies for cleanup under this program are referred to as Superfund sites. The Superfund sites that have been prioritized for cleanup are included on the EPA's [National Priorities List](#).

A Superfund site can be either a federal facility site that is owned or operated by the federal government or a nonfederal facility site. As of October 2025, there were 157 federal facility Superfund sites on the National Priorities List. Federal facility sites individually average more than 6,000 acres. According to the EPA, about three million people live within one mile of a federal facility Superfund site, while about 13 million people live within three miles of one.

When contaminants remain on a Superfund site at levels that require site-use restrictions after a remedy has been implemented to clean up the site, the EPA requires the lead agency for the site to review the remedy every five years. These five-year reviews assess remedy implementation and performance to ensure that human health and the environment are protected. Agency guidance specifies that the five-year reviews should address impacts from natural disasters, such as increased wildfire risks. A wildfire is an unplanned fire in a natural or wildland area like a forest, shrubland, grassland, or prairie. Because Superfund sites contain toxic materials, a wildfire at such a site could release large amounts of contaminants into the air through combustion. This would threaten the health of not only nearby communities but also communities far downwind. Exposure to wildfire smoke can lead to negative health effects, including pulmonary and cardiac effects, which could be exacerbated by toxics in the air.

We conducted this evaluation from September 2025 to February 2026 in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* published in December 2020 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Those standards require that we perform the evaluation to obtain sufficient and appropriate evidence to support our findings. Using mapping software, U.S. Forest Service datasets, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Risk Index, we identified which federal facility Superfund sites may be at risk from wildfires and examined whether their five-year review reports, if available, addressed potential impacts. Not all the necessary mapping data were available for the U.S. territories. Thus, we were able to map and analyze only the 155 federal facility Superfund sites in the contiguous United States, Hawaii, and Alaska.

Findings

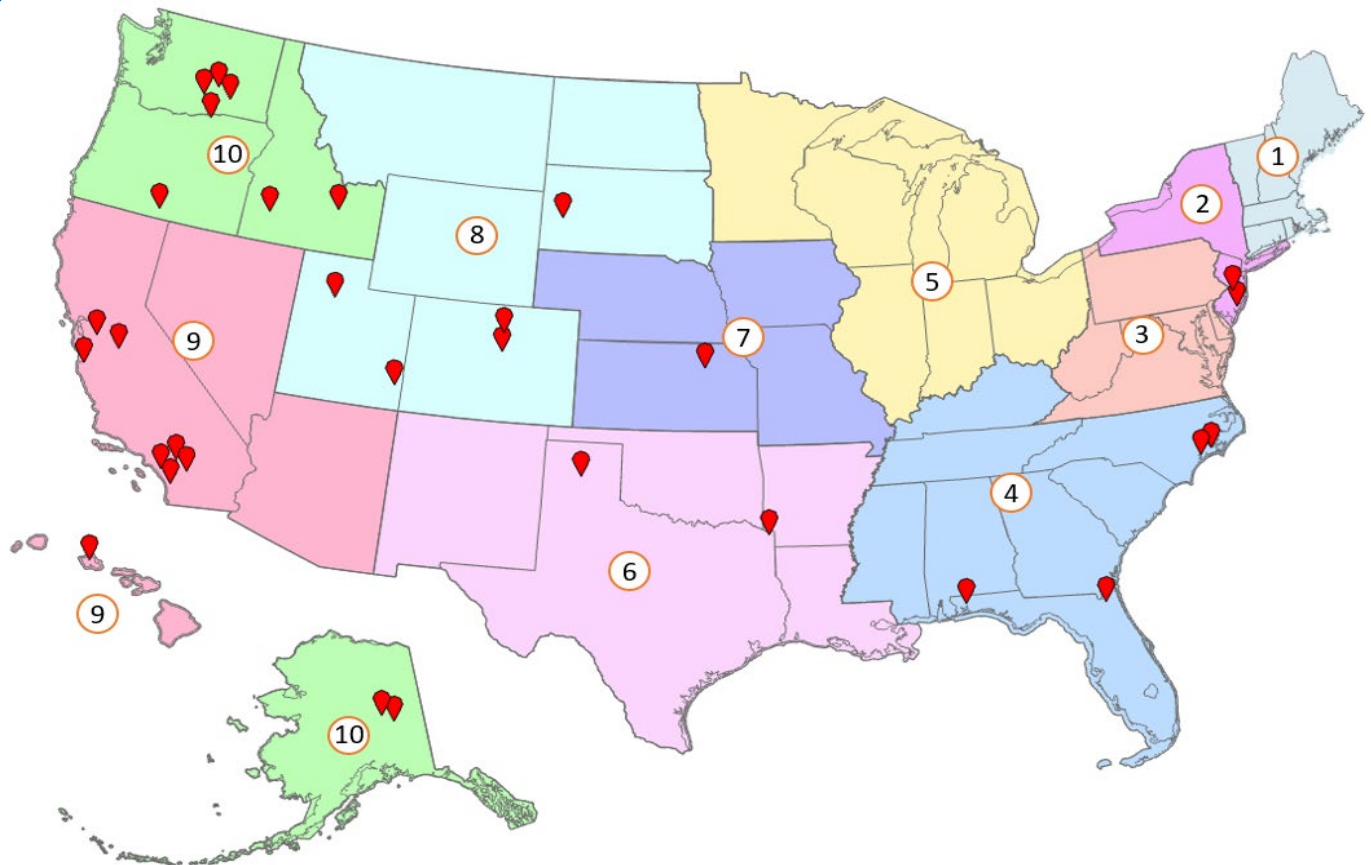
Of the 155 federal facility Superfund sites that we analyzed, 31 of them, or 20 percent, have potential wildfire risks, as shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows that 71 percent of the at-risk sites are in the western United States in EPA Regions 8, 9, and 10. We were able to review a report from the most recent five-year review period, 2021 through 2025, for 24 of the 31 at-risk sites. Eight, or 33 percent, of these 24 reports acknowledged potential impacts from wildfires, adhering to the EPA's guidance. The remaining 16 did not.

In this same five-year period, the Los Angeles metropolitan area experienced catastrophic wildfires. Figures 1 and 3 show that a cluster of federal facility Superfund sites, some of which addressed wildfire risks in their five-year reviews, are located near that area. Figure 3 shows all federal facility Superfund sites in the area, highlighting that even sites not identified as threatened may still face wildfire risks as site conditions change and wildfires increase. Figure 3 also shows that since 2020, fires have occurred within the boundaries of three federal facility Superfund sites in California: March Air Force Base, El Toro Marine Corps Air Station, and Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base. These fires underscore the need for all Superfund sites to conduct comprehensive five-year reviews that address such threats to the efficacy of their site remedies meant to protect human health and the environment.

Conclusion

We issued this report to highlight the threat posed to federal facility Superfund sites and their surrounding communities by wildfires. If these sites do not analyze wildfire risks, there is an increased risk that toxic contaminants may be released, threatening the health and environment of millions of U.S. residents. The EPA can help keep cleanup remedies effective and viable in the long term by ensuring that federal facility Superfund sites assess wildfire risks as part of their five-year reviews. The EPA did not provide a formal response to our draft report but did provide technical comments, which we incorporated into this report as appropriate.

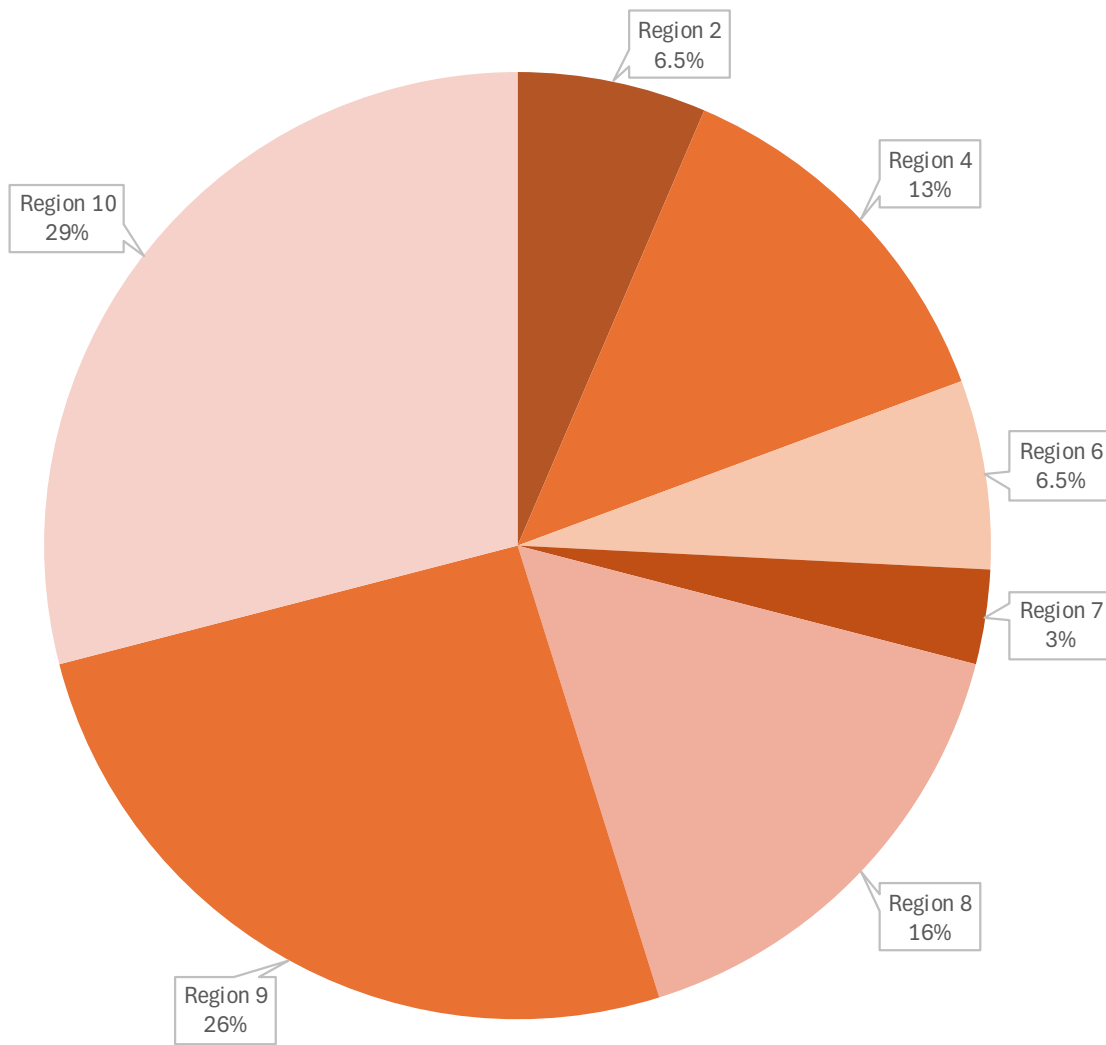
Figure 1: Federal facility Superfund sites threatened by wildfires by EPA region



Source: EPA, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service datasets. (EPA OIG image)
 Note: Wildfire mapping data were not available for the U.S. territories. For the purpose of this evaluation, we designated a federal facility Superfund site as one “threatened by wildfires” if any portion of the site fell into an area that the Forest Service classifies as having “high” or “very high” wildland fire potential and if the Federal Emergency Management Agency rated the census tract that the site is located in with a wildfire risk of “relatively moderate,” “relatively high,” or “very high.”

<p>EPA Region 1: None</p> <p>EPA Region 2: 1. Federal Aviation Administration Technical Center, NJ 2. McGuire Air Force Base #1, NJ</p> <p>EPA Region 3: None</p> <p>EPA Region 4: 3. Cecil Field Naval Air Station, FL 4. Whiting Field Naval Air Station, FL 5. Camp Lejeune Military Reservation, NC 6. Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station, NC</p> <p>EPA Region 5: None</p> <p>EPA Region 6: 7. Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant, TX 8. Pantex Plant, TX</p>	<p>EPA Region 7: 9. Fort Riley, KS</p> <p>EPA Region 8: 10. Rocky Flats Plant, CO 11. Air Force Plant Peter J. Kiewit and Sons, CO 12. Ellsworth Air Force Base, SD 13. Monticello Mill Tailings, UT 14. Tooele Army Depot, UT</p> <p>EPA Region 9: 15. Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base, CA 16. Castle Air Force Base, CA 17. El Toro Marine Corps Air Station, CA 18. Fort Ord, CA 19. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, CA 20. March Air Force Base, CA 21. Norton Air Force Base, CA 22. Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station Eastern Pacific, HI</p>	<p>EPA Region 10: 23. Eielson Air Force Base, AK 24. Fort Wainwright, AK 25. Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, ID 26. Mountain Home Air Force Base, ID 27. Fremont National Forest/White King and Lucky Lass Uranium Mines, OR 28. Umatilla Army Depot, OR 29. Hanford 100-Area, WA 30. Hanford 200-Area, WA 31. Hanford 300-Area, WA</p>
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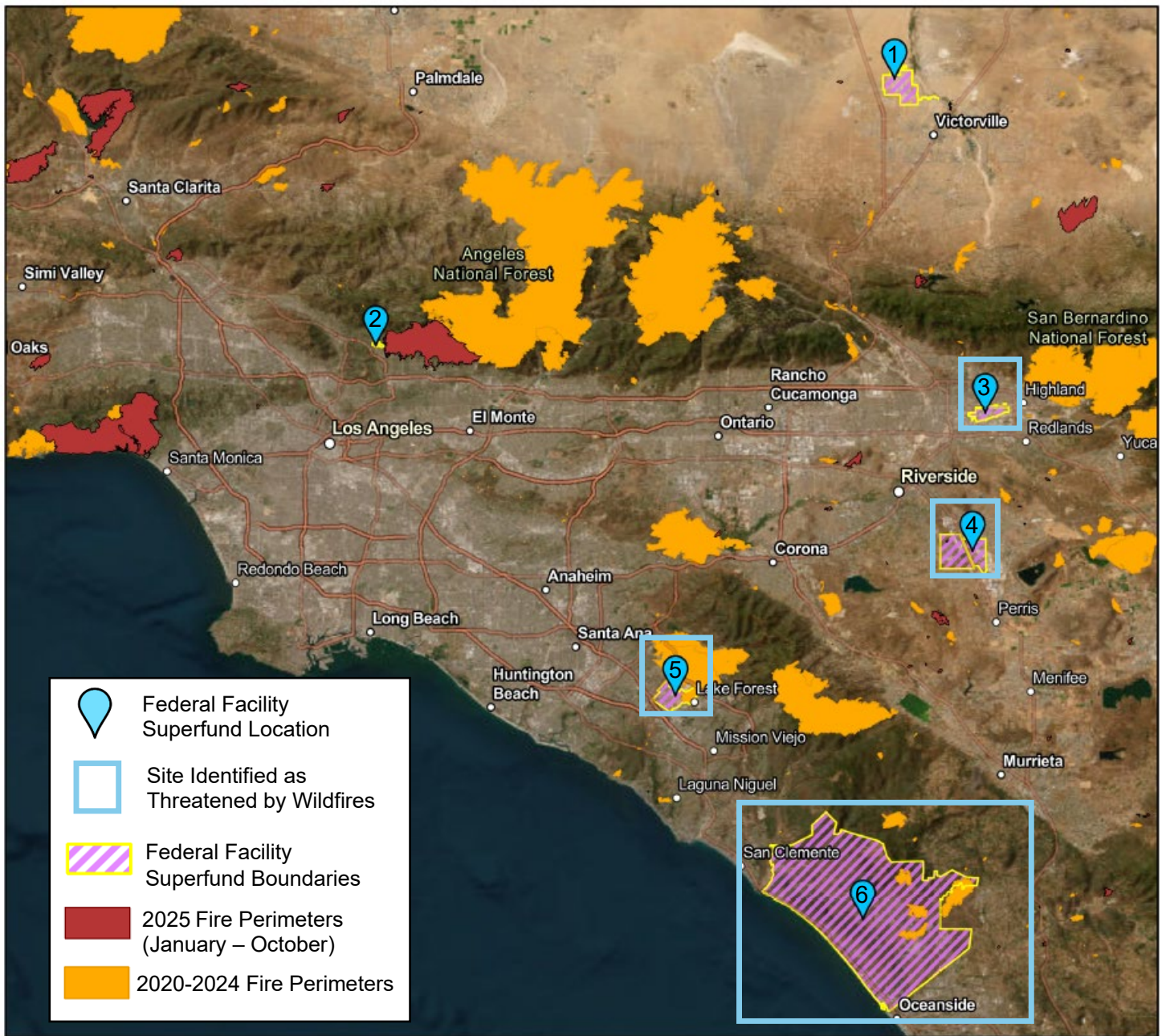
Figure 2: Percentage of the 31 federal facility Superfund sites threatened by wildfires in each EPA region



Source: EPA, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Department of Agriculture Forest Service datasets. (EPA OIG image)

Notes: Regions 1, 3, and 5 are not featured in this figure, as we did not identify any at-risk sites in those regions. For a list of the at-risk sites in each region, see Figure 1.

Figure 3: Federal facility Superfund sites in Southern California and boundaries of wildfires in 2020 through 2025



Source: EPA and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection datasets. (EPA OIG image)

Note: The federal facility Superfund sites identified as threatened by wildfires, as shown in Figure 1, are depicted in light blue boxes. The other sites shown on this map may still face wildfire risks as site conditions change and wildfire risks increase.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. George Air Force Base 2. National Aeronautics and Space Administration Jet Propulsion Laboratory 3. Norton Air Force Base | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. March Air Force Base* 5. El Toro Marine Corps Air Station 6. Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base |
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* The size and resolution of Figure 3 obscures the red shading within the boundaries of this federal facility Superfund site.