

**Mike Crapo**  
**United States Senator**  
239 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**James E. Risch**  
**United States Senator**  
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Washington, D.C. 20510



**Russ Fulcher**  
**Member of Congress**  
1514 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20515

September 23, 2024

The Honorable Randy Moore  
Chief  
United States Forest Service  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Moore,

Last year, the Elkhorn Fire burned over 26,000 acres in Idaho, destroying seven privately owned structures. While the fire response and resolution have been well documented, the identity of the party or parties responsible for igniting the fire is still under investigation. We write to request a status update on this investigation, and to renew the sense of urgency in finding resolution on this matter.

The Elkhorn Fire was first reported on July 24, 2023. On July 27, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) investigators arrived to begin an effort to determine the fire's origin. The local community has cooperated with the USFS investigation, providing several key details indicating that the fire could not have been started by lightning.

It is our understanding that a suspect may have been identified and the investigation turned over to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of General Counsel. Our offices were not directly notified of such an update, nor were the property owners. This investigation, which was originally meant to take only a few weeks, has been ongoing for well over a year now. As such, our offices need to be apprised of critical developments such as the identification of suspects and the transferal of the investigation to another agency.


For victims of wildfire, life does not move on after the fire burns out. Losses must be documented, insurance claims filed, and to the extent possible, infrastructure that was destroyed must be rebuilt. Property and business owners have been unable to file insurance claims – their recovery held hostage by the ongoing, and unusually long, USFS investigation.

We request a response to the following:

1. Please provide, in detail, any updates you have on identifying the party responsible for starting the Elkhorn Fire.

- a. If a suspect has been identified, what is the status of your investigation of this individual?
- b. Have you received an update from the DOJ Office of General Counsel?
2. What steps have been taken over the last year to resolve this investigation?
3. Please provide us with your fire investigation report.

Sincerely,



James E. Risch  
United States Senator



Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



Russ Fulcher  
Member of Congress