

Firestorm

How Southern Linc supported interagency response to a wildfire emergency.

On the Fire Line

The horizon glows orange through a curtain of smoke. Engines navigate hazy roads and helicopters thunder overhead. Radios erupt with calls as firefighters, spread across miles of terrain, battle to suppress the blaze. Wildfire suppression is controlled chaos—a constant battle against heat, terrain, time and exhaustion. Conditions change by the minute. Decisions are made in seconds. In an environment where confusion can place crews and communities at risk, communication is as critical as water and manpower.

Escalating Conditions

During the spring of 2026, historic drought conditions across Georgia and North Florida helped fuel the most destructive wildfire event in the region in 20 years. By late April, major wildfires across South Georgia had burned more than 50,000 acres, destroyed more than 100 structures and triggered air quality alerts hundreds of miles away, including metro Atlanta.

As emergency crews mobilized across the region, Southern Linc mobilized alongside them, providing the mission critical communications infrastructure first responders needed to coordinate operations, maintain interoperability and stay connected through rapidly changing conditions.

Holding the Line

Governor Brian Kemp declared a state of emergency across 91 counties, as the Georgia Forestry Commission responded to more than 800 wildfires during a 30-day period. Two large incidents in South Georgia—the Pineland Road Fire (Clinch and Echols Counties) and the Highway 82 Fire (Brantley County)—stretched resources, forced evacuations, threatened infrastructure and required continuous coordination among Georgia State Patrol (GSP), Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC), Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other assisting agencies.

Real-time coordination was essential to help teams manage rapidly changing conditions. Aircraft needed reliable air-to-ground communications. Mobile command centers required dependable connectivity to monitor conditions, direct resources and respond to evolving threats. With multiple agencies responding simultaneously, interoperability became essential. Southern Linc stepped in to provide this critical coverage when and where it was needed most.

Standing Ready

As wildfire activity intensified, Southern Linc mobilized resources and technical personnel to help support emergency operations in some of the hardest hit areas. All Southern Linc cell sites in the area remained operational throughout the response, while teams deployed multiple Cell-on-Wheels (COWs), Satellite-on-Wheels (SOWs) and Generators-on-a-Trailer (GOATs) near active fire zones to strengthen coverage and support field operations.



In addition, Southern Linc insured interoperable communication among agencies operating across different systems, frequencies and jurisdictions. Using Southern Linc's Catalyst interoperability solution, teams established seven MCPTT (Mission Critical Push-To-Talk) interagency talk group patches for those involved in fire suppression and emergency response. Additional VHF repeaters and patches were installed at COW locations to support interoperable air-to-ground communications between U.S. Forest Service aircraft and GSP personnel using Southern Linc devices.

Rising to the Occasion

As conditions shifted across the region, Southern Linc personnel remained embedded near response operations to provide ongoing technical and communication support. Bi-directional amplifiers were installed to improve coverage inside the GFC Mobile Command Center and GSP Command Bus. GOAT units provided supplemental power support for the Mobile Command Center.

In total, nearly 200 radios were programmed and delivered to the GFC and other supporting agencies during the response effort.

"We are incredibly proud of the heroic efforts of our Southern Linc team members and the firefighters who have worked in dangerous conditions to protect lives and communities during these wildfires," said Southern Linc President and CEO Bentina Terry. "The courage, commitment and rapid response of our team made it possible to deliver critically needed communications support when it mattered most."

The impact of that support was directly felt by the agencies operating on the front lines.

"I can't say thank you to Southern Linc enough, for the timely, dependable support you provided during this time," said Kelly Towe, LTE & LMR System Manager, Georgia Forestry Commission. "It means a lot to us here at the Georgia Forestry Commission, that you take the safety of our firefighters as seriously as we do."

Built for Critical Moments

Even after rainfall helped slow fire growth in some areas, firefighting crews continued burn restrictions and mop-up efforts in many communities across North Florida and South Georgia, particularly along the I-10 corridor. "Mop-Up" is the final stage of wildfire fighting where crews extinguish any remaining hot spots, smoldering material or burning debris after the main fire is contained. Dry conditions persisted, and officials warned that new ignitions remained possible across the region.

For emergency responders, wildfires don't end when flames disappear from the headlines. The work continues long after containment lines are established.

So does the need for mission critical communications.

From interoperability to on-site technical support, Southern Linc helped provide a beyond reliable communications infrastructure during one of the most demanding wildfire responses in state history.