

Alert

Updated as of April 13, 2022



Tennessee Wildfires UPDATED

We are continuing our investigation into two major wildfires that occurred in the Sevierville/Gatlinburg, Tennessee area on March 30, 2022.

The fires are the Hatcher Mountain/Indigo Lane fire and the Seymour/Wears Valley fire. The Hatcher Mountain/Indigo Lane fire consumed over 2700 acres of land and damaged or destroyed over 200 structures. The Seymour/Wears Valley fire consumed over 1000 acres of land and is reported to have damaged a handful of structures.

We are working closely with our specially retained investigators and public sector authorities, in coordination with other claimants and interested parties. Preliminary information received is that both fires originated at utility lines, so we are analyzing the potential liability of the utility, Sevier County Electric Systems (SCES), which we have placed on notice of its potential liability for these losses. Part of the potential responsibility of SCES relates to its potential failure to have cleared the area of excessive brush and vegetation that likely were the initial fuels for the fire. We have requested identification of any independent contractors that may have been hired by SCES to perform this function. If any such companies are identified, we will place them on notice as well. Our joint team of investigators is performing a further site inspection for both fires on Friday April 15.

For purposes of identifying your potential claims, the zip codes for the areas damaged by these two fires are 37732, 37738, 37764, 37862, 37863, 37865, 37871, and 37876.

Wildfires swept across eastern Tennessee on March 30 and 31, 2022, causing destruction of thousands of acres of land and damaging hundreds of structures, with the heaviest damage occurring in Sevier County. As of April 5, the majority of the fires have been extinguished or contained. The main fires reportedly are the Hatcher Mountain/Indigo Lane Fire, Millstone Gap/Seymour Fire, Cold Springs Fire, and Wears Valley Fire, with the involved zip codes including 37732, 37738, 37764, 37862, 37863, 37865, 37871, and 37876.

Extremely dry land and severe winds were reported, with high winds knocking down power lines and trees throughout the state. Information on these numerous wildfires is contained at the Tennessee Division of Forestry website. The below map shows the locations of each wildfire.



Map Courtesy of the Tennessee Division of Forestry

Our lawyers and specially retained wildfire investigators are in the process of evaluating the factors involved in the initiation and spread of these fires and the resulting damages, working in tandem



Suzanne C. Radcliff

Member

scradcliff@cozen.com
Phone: (214) 462-3023
Fax: (214) 462-3299



David D. Brisco

**Vice Chair,
Subrogation &
Recovery, West
Region**

dbrisco@cozen.com
Phone: (619) 685-1704
Fax: (619) 234-7831

Related Practice Areas

- Subrogation & Recovery

with state and local authorities. There are numerous potential causes for each fire, including downed power lines resulting from the above referenced high wind conditions. At this time, all of these wildfires are under active investigation.

Protecting Your Interests

It is important that insurers hit the ground running in order to maximize chances of recovery arising from a wildfire. As our investigators acquire additional information on the cause of each of these wildfires, we will place potentially responsible parties on notice of our clients' claims and then coordinate further fire scene analysis. We also will collect and preserve evidence and ensure that prospective adverse parties preserve all pertinent evidence. We then will arrange for interviews of percipient witnesses and obtain appropriate documentation from private and public sector authorities.

Please contact any of the authors should you be interested in having our firm protect your inchoate subrogation interests in connection with these wildfires.