



# OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

## Heavy Equipment Operator Academy

Georgia Forestry Commission  
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Dry Branch 31020  
[Facebook.com/HeavyEquipAcademy](https://www.facebook.com/HeavyEquipAcademy)

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### HEAVY EQUIPMENT ACADEMY PROVIDES HANDS-ON TRAINING FOR WILDLAND FIREFIGHTERS

*Dry Branch, GA.* - For the fifth consecutive year, heavy equipment operators will have the opportunity for hands-on learning in "real life scenarios" during special training at Georgia Forestry Commission headquarters in Dry Branch. The Southern Area Geographic Area Heavy Equipment Operator Academy (GHEOA), will take place June 3-June 13, 2019. The GHEOA creates an avenue for interagency partners to receive consistent heavy equipment training, which helps improve and standardize education for the wildland firefighting community. This course is designed to be a hands-on, seat-in-the-equipment, multi-scenario training, with individual coaching and guidance. The GHEOA is managed by a Type-3 Interagency Management Team that encourages collaboration between several state and federal agencies throughout the Southeast, including the Georgia Forestry Commission and the US Forest Service.

"This Academy is designed to provide hands-on training that will improve firefighting skills of operators and heavy equipment bosses," said Mark Munns, Incident Commander for the event. "Operators get a chance to perform in various fuel types and terrain using different sizes and types of equipment. They get the opportunity to hone their tactical skills, which improves the overall capability of the firefighting community, and may help them get out of a critical situation in the future. The safety and training benefits of attending the GHEOA are invaluable for wildland firefighters," Munns said.

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**NOTE:** Members of the media interested in seeing how heavy equipment is used to fight wildfires may schedule tours and interviews for Saturday, June 8. Contact Byron Haire, Public Information Officer, 912-536-9352 or email [bhaire@gfc.state.ga.us](mailto:bhaire@gfc.state.ga.us).