



Operational Considerations for Addressing Outdoor Fires

Wildland, brush, grass, woods, forest and other outdoor fires are becoming more prevalent throughout the country. Many communities in the U.S. that have not experienced a lot of outdoor fires are seeing them more often, especially on the east coast and great lakes regions. The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and its Wildland Fire Policy Committee (WFPC) offer the following items as a starting point of ideas and actions for chief and company officers to consider before, during and after an outdoor fire.

In addition to the points for consideration, included where applicable, are references to resources that can help to guide you towards being safer and more effective in addressing outdoor fires.

Before the Fire

- Ensure your members are trained for operations and public education before the event starts.
- Conduct public education programs to raise awareness of outdoor fires using the Ready, Set, GO! Program.
 - www.wildlandfireRSG.org
- Ensure that water supplies are identified and available.
 - NFPA Standard 1144 Section 4.3.5
- Ensure that street address identification is visible.
 - NFPA Standard 1141
- Ensure that access (12' wide X 12' high) is maintained as a minimum for fire trucks as able in your area.
 - NFPA Standard 1141 Section 5.2.1
- Pre-plan evacuation procedures with allied agencies, including routes.
- Create tactical plans to address complex fire protection issues.
 - ICS 300
- Ensure an interoperable communications, planning and command capability.
- Pre-plan your actions and know your environment before entering an outdoor fire situation.
 - National Interagency Fire Center Watch Out Situations at http://www.nifc.gov/safety/safety_10ord_18sit.html
- Provide firefighters with the correct Personnel Protection Equipment (PPE) appropriate to the expected exposure hazard because outdoor and structural fires have unique and different requirements.
 - NFPA Standard 1977
 - PMS 410-1 Fireline Handbook Chapter 1

- Understand fatigue and personal hydration issues in regards to command and firefighter safety.
 - NFPA Standard 1500 Section 8.9

During a Fire

- **Always remember that life (public and firefighter) safety is your #1 priority, structures are secondary.**
- Select protective clothing and equipment based on an assessment of the hazards in operating areas to which firefighters are likely to be exposed.
 - NFPA Standard 1977
- Ensure that an incident command organization is established to meet the complexities of the incident.
 - ICS 200
- Always have a safety lookout to monitor your environment.
 - PMS 410-1 Fireline Handbook
 - NWCG LCES
 - <http://www.nwcg.gov/branches/pre/rmc/htsc/lessons-learned/sofr-safetymsg.pdf>
- Triage structures to determine suppression priorities.
 - PMS 410-1 Fireline Handbook, Chapter 6, pgs. 136 – 145
- When spotting equipment in hazardous environments, locate your resources so they have an escape route.

Recovering from a Fire

- Watch for falling trees, rocks and downed electrical lines.
- Inspect bridges or sub-structures before driving over them.
- Inspect all vehicles safety systems prior to returning to public roadways.
- Attempt to return evacuees as soon as possible following a fire, but ensure that their safety has been addressed.

For more information on the IAFC, the WFPC and additional resources, please go to: <http://www.iafc.org/wildland>



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