

Halifax Fire Department

January 21, 2004

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

Wildland Fires

12.01 PURPOSE

To establish guidelines that will provide the Incident Commander and fire personnel with a safe and effective way of handling fires involving forest, brush, and/or ground cover.

12.02 POLICY

In the event of a forest, brush and/or ground cover fire the following guidelines have been established.

12.03 PROCEDURE

- A. The first Fire Department Officer or member arriving on scene shall transmit a Brief Initial Report on conditions and;
 - 1. Establish Command.
 - 2. Determine actual location and size of fire.
 - 3. Direction and characteristics of fire travel.
 - 4. Type of fuel burning (light grass, heavy brush etc.)
 - 5. Exposures.
 - 6. Action being taken by first arriving unit.
- B. Determine plan of action based on priorities and resources.
- C. Request additional resources if needed.
- D. Determine and setup a staging area for additional resources.

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12.04 COMMAND

- A. Fires requiring the coordination of two or more units, shall have the Incident Command system put into effect. (SOG 0)
- B. Establish a Command Post as soon as possible.
- C. The Incident Commander has responsibility for the entire operation. He/she also has the responsibility for assigning on an “as needed” basis the following positions during wildland fire operations:
 - 1. Operations
 - 2. Support
 - 3. Sectors/Divisions
 - 4. Liason positions between agencies

12.05 CONTROL

- A. Base all actions and strategy on current and expected behavior of the fire.
- B. Life Safety and structural protection take ***priority*** over extinguishment of forest, brush and/or ground cover.
- C. If offensive attack (direct attack) is indicated, attack the head of the fire first, if possible. If that is not possible, attack the flanks and work toward the head.
- D. If the fire is large and fast moving, then a direct attack may not be possible. In such cases, an indirect and/or parallel attack may be utilized by cutting a fire line a distance ahead of the fire (or utilizing natural fire breaks, such as roadways) to halt the progress of the fire.
- E. Different methods of attack may be used simultaneously according to the situation.
- F. If you are assigned to structural protection, keep hose lines flexible enough to be able to quickly break away in the event of being over run.
- G. If additional resources are needed, contact the IC and request them.

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12.06 SAFETY

- A. All members shall wear necessary Personal Protective Equipment and clothing in accordance with the hazard(s). (see SOG 2)
- B. Safety rules for operating vehicles “off road”.
 - 1. Before taking a vehicle “off road”, you must know the location and direction of the fire travel.
 - 2. Determine a means of escape should your position be over run.
 - 3. Be cautious of soft or unstable footing, it is not uncommon for heavy fire vehicles to become stuck.
 - 4. If you must travel through a homeowners property all means shall be taken to preserve that property (septic, lawns, shrubs)
 - 5. Avoid commitment of vehicles on narrow roads in heavy brush that’s involved in fire.
 - 6. Fire Department vehicles shall NOT be used to knock trees down.
- C. Safety when advancing and manning hose lines in brush areas.
 - 1. Be cautious of spot fires below you and your crew.
 - 2. Be cautious of frequent “flare ups”.
 - 3. Be cautious of equipment and personnel working above and around your crew (falling rocks, trees etc.).
 - 4. Be cautious of changes in wind direction and velocity.
- D. A means of escape shall be made known to all fire personnel working in brush areas. Stay close to burned area.
- E. All personnel should know the location and direction of travel of fire head(s).
- F. The Incident Commander should not allow fire personnel to become exhausted. The IC should provide rest and rehab periods on a rotating basis. Frequency will depend upon topography, weather and personnel condition.
- G. Be alert to the possibility of downed electrical wires; there may be energized fences, trees, or ground as a result.
- H. If at all possible do not attack brush fires downhill.