

Wildfire  
Response  
Guide

2013

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Georgia  
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# Wildfire in Georgia



According to a report by the International Association of Fire Chiefs, “The fastest growing problem in the United States is fire in the wildland urban interface.” These fires can affect any community in Georgia, and they can threaten life, property, transportation, health, and commerce. In the first 4 months of 2007, the Southeast was experiencing its’ worst drought in over 100 years. As a result of these dangerously dry conditions, several extremely large wildfires burned freely throughout South Georgia and Northern Florida. Smoke could be seen as far north as Atlanta. In Georgia alone, over 400,000 acres burned in 21 counties resulting in \$61 million worth of timber losses. The fires destroyed 9 homes and forced the evacuation of several thousand people. Wildfire incidents can escalate rapidly and may spread beyond the control of the local fire authorities. As a consequence of the 2007 wildfires, local fire departments personnel, equipment, and resources were **exhausted early in the fight**. Events of this magnitude may require the assistance of the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). Along with the local fire departments and GFC, more than **3,300 firefighters** were brought in from 44 states and the efforts cost over \$40 million. The fires were eventually contained due to the tireless efforts of the agencies involved and the arrival more favorable weather conditions.

**Most wildfires in Georgia are controlled at the local level** utilizing mutual aid, and assistance from the local GFC rangers. Under more severe conditions, fires may extend into multi day events that require a more complex response involving GFC at the district or state level. The local Emergency Management Director or fire chief will coordinate at the regional level to obtain additional resources. This requires an expanded incident management structure such as a type I Incident Management Team (I IMT) or a type II Incident Management Team (II IMT). Deployment of a type I or type II team represents a major milestone in the evolution of the incident and is often coupled with the Governors declaration of a State of Emergency. The IMT will be expecting feedback, guidance, and written authorization from the local agency. The best case scenario is for heavy rain to extinguish the fire or for fire crews to contain the fire to a manageable area. **The worst case scenario is for the fire to spread into populated areas and ignite new fires.** GFC and GEMA are authorized to leverage additional resources from other states as well as FEMA. The local fire authority is responsible for the initial costs, and should appoint an agency member to the finance team at the start of the event.

Wildfire is not always confined to undeveloped areas; they can **be most dangerous in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)**. The WUI refers to the zone between unoccupied land and human development. Georgia fire departments should obtain wildland training, purchase necessary equipment, and established wildland SOP’s. Many Georgia fire departments do not have written policies regarding wildland incidents. Firefighters are far more effective when given the proper PPE, tools, and training for the task. When compared to structure fires, wildfires are often longer in duration and require extended work rotations. The duration and severity of the work requires specialized wildland PPE covered by NFPA 1977, The Standard for Protective Clothing and Equipment for the Wildland Firefighter. The NFPA offers a program called the Firewise Communities that’s encourages civic leaders, municipal planners, developers, and firefighters to work together to prevent losses due to wildfire. Firewise offers training, workshops, and seminars that can educate structural fire departments on topics such as community risk assessment, firefighter safety, and fire behavior in the WUI. Local fire authorities need to know their mutual aid agreements, create a local emergency operations plan (LEOP), and develop relationships with the 15 essential emergency support functions (ESF) to further close the gaps in disaster preparation.

# Wildland Fire S.O.G and Strategic Goals

## **1 Fire Department Strategic goals**

- Develop interagency response relationships with GFC, GEMA, mutual aid partners, and civic leaders regarding wildfire activity.
- Develop community awareness and education programs regarding fire adapted communities.
- Train all suppression personnel in basic wildland firefighting S-130, S-190, and ICS-100.
- Purchase wildland firefighting PPE.
- Develop wildland fire prevention and mitigation goals
- Develop and review tactical wildland response procedures.
- Insure that fire department staff monitors fire weather conditions on a daily basis.

## **2 Purpose**

- It is the purpose of this document to provide guidelines for the prevention, preparation, and mitigation of fire in the Wildland Urban Interface.

## **3 Responsibilities (scope)**

- All personnel: All department personnel shall follow these guidelines when responding to wildland fire incidents

## **4 Policies**

- All personnel operating in a wildland fire environment shall wear NFPA 1977 approved PPE.
- First Arriving Unit will take command of the scene and perform a size up.
- Command shall call additional resources early if necessary.

## **5 Guidelines**

### **5.1 Assessment**

- Size up the scene
- First arriving unit shall take command of the scene.
- Assign a safety officer
- Assess fire weather and fire conditions
- Assess potential exposures (consider aerial imagery if available)
- Consider evacuations if needed.
- Consider possible effects of smoke on traffic and health

## **5.2 Planning**

- Determine if an adequate amount of qualified personnel and equipment are on scene to mitigate the incident.
- Determine if suppression of the fire requires the assistance of forestry personnel and equipment.
- Communicate with local forest ranger to determine fire risk and ETA if necessary.
- Know how to activate mutual aid partners and train with them regularly.

## **5.3 Safety Considerations** (Standard advice given to wildland firefighters)

### **10 Standard Fire Fighting Orders (National Wildfire Coordinating Group)**

1. Keep informed on fire weather conditions and forecasts.
2. Know what your fire is doing at all times.
3. Base all actions on current and expected behavior of the fire.
4. Identify escape routes and safety zones and make them known.
5. Post lookouts when there is possible danger.
6. Be alert. Keep calm. Think clearly. Act decisively.
8. Give clear instructions and insure they are understood.
9. Maintain control of your forces at all times.
10. Fight fire aggressively, having provided for safety first.

### **Be aware of the 18 Watch out situations (National Wildfire Coordinating Group)**

1. Fire not scouted and sized up.
2. In country not seen in daylight.
3. Safety zones and escape routes not identified.
4. Unfamiliar with weather and local factors influencing fire behavior.
5. Uninformed on strategy, tactics, and hazards.
6. Instructions and assignments not clear.
7. No communication link with crewmembers/supervisors.
8. Constructing line without safe anchor point.
9. Building fire line downhill with fire below.
10. Attempting frontal assault on fire.
11. Unburned fuel between you and the fire.
12. Cannot see main fire, not in contact with anyone who can.
13. On a hillside where rolling material can ignite fuel below.
14. Weather is getting hotter and drier.
15. Wind increases and/or changes direction.
16. Getting frequent spot fires across line.
17. Terrain and fuels make escape to safety zones difficult.
18. Taking a nap near the fire line.

**Building Knowledge = Firefighter Safety**



#### **5.4 Wildfire Escalation Procedures** (Events requiring mutual aid)

- Activate and utilize resources within your jurisdiction.
- Activate local mutual aid to build additional capacity.
- Review the initial plan and utilize mutual aid accordingly.
- Establish a basic level of National Incident Management command structure that will support the evolving incident and prepare for further escalation.
- Conduct a situational briefing with state and local officials.
- Prepare a briefing for the media.
- Document resources used and the costs incurred.

#### **5.5 Severe Fire Conditions Escalation Procedures** (Events requiring GFC)

- Establish Communications with GFC incident commander.
- Assign a public information officer to communicate with media.
- Plan and perform evacuations and sheltering as needed.
- Prepare a written situational report as necessary.
- Create a listing of anticipated resources.
- Assist GFC, GEMA, or FEMA with grant application if applicable.

#### **5.6 Events with Complex Incident Management Team** (type I or Type II IMT)

- Appoint an agency administrator to represent the local authority in to the IMT.
- Provide a written delegation of authority to the IMT describing what authority they are given in terms of priorities for the incident, levels of responsibility, and geographic area to cover.
- Participate in a unified command if the incident is shared with additional jurisdictions.
- Provide local expertise to the operations division and maintain communications.
- Appoint a liaison to attend and participate in all briefings.
- Coordinate with the local EMA Director to find out what additional resources are available and the protocols to request additional assistance from GEMA.

#### **5.7 Mop-up and Incident Termination** (the decline and termination of the event)

- Maintain situational awareness during the de-escalation of the incident.
- Reassess weather and fire condition with GFC.
- Do not release resources until fire is under control.
- Take accountability of all personnel.
- Maintain a safety officer until command has been terminated.
- Maintain communications with agencies involved.
- Maintain accounting of equipment used and financial costs associated with the event.
- Inventory equipment that needs to be replaced or repaired.
- Have a debriefing with all agencies and perform an after action review.

# Suggested Wildland Fire Equipment List

## Personal Protective Clothing (All items should be NFPA 1977 approved)

- Helmet with chinstrap
- Nomex or 100% cotton long sleeved shirt
- Nomex or 100% cotton pants
- Leather work gloves
- Cotton undergarments
- Wildland Fire Boot (non-steel toed)
- Leather Boot Laces
- Goggles and Hearing protection
- Fire Shelter

## Suggested Items

- Wildland style backpack
- Radio
- Whistle
- Energy bars
- Two canteens
- Headlamps and flashlights
- Flagging tape
- Multi tool and knife
- Pulaski
- Fire rake
- Macleod
- Backpack pump
- Optional Wildland apparatus (brush truck-tender-tanker-ATV)



## Equipment Vendors

### National Fire Fighter Corp (PPE-apparatus-equipment)

Website: [nationalfirefighter.com](http://nationalfirefighter.com)

Address: P.O. Box 21107, Eugene, Oregon 97402

Phone: 1-800-423-8347

### The Supply Cache (PPE-equipment)

Website: [firecache.com](http://firecache.com)

Address: 1980 Caribou Drive, Fort Collins, Colorado

Phone: 1-800-839-0821



# Wildland Training and Education

## **Federal Emergency Management Agency**

Disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery, and education

Website: [fema.gov](http://fema.gov)

Address: P.O. Box 10055 Hyattsville, MD 20782-8055

Phone: 1-800- 621-FEMA

## **Georgia Forestry Commission**

Basic Wildland Firefighter Certification **required Classes**

S-130 Firefighter Training (ICS-100 prerequisite)

S-190 Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior

Field Day Exercise (Accredited by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG))

Website: [gatrees.org](http://gatrees.org)

Address: P. O. Box 819 Macon, Georgia 31202-0819

Phone: 1-800-GA-TREES (428-7337)

## **Georgia Public Safety Training Center**

Georgia Fire Academy Wildland training

Intro to the Wildland Urban Interface for the Structural Company Officer

Website: [gpstc.org](http://gpstc.org)

Address: 1000 Indian Springs Drive Forsyth, Georgia 31029

Phone: 478-993-4670

## **International Association of Fire Chiefs**

Wildland Urban Interface Conference by IAFC

Website: [iafc.org](http://iafc.org)

Address: 4025 Fair Ridge Drive, Fairfax, VA 22033 |

Phone: 703-273-0911

## **NFPA Wildland Fire Operations Division and Firewise Communities Program**

Training, workshops, and seminars related to fire in the Wildland Urban Interface

Website: [firewise.org](http://firewise.org)

Phone: 617-984-7486

**United States Department of Agriculture**, Forest Service (rural fire grants-training-information)

2012 Wildland Fire PPE Grant assists fire departments protecting less than 10,000 people.

Website: [usda.gov](http://usda.gov)

Address: 1400 Independence Ave., S.W. Washington, DC 20250

Phone: (202) 720-2791

# References

## **Federal Emergency Management Agency**

Website: [fema.gov](http://fema.gov)

Address: P.O. Box 10055 Hyattsville, MD 20782-8055

Phone: 1-800- 621-FEMA

## **Georgia Forestry Commission**

Website: [gatrees.org](http://gatrees.org)

Address: P. O. Box 819 Macon, Georgia 31202-0819

Phone: 1-800-GA-TREES (428-7337)

## **International Association of Fire Chiefs, Wildland Fire Policy Initiatives and Action Plan**

Website: [iafc.org](http://iafc.org)

Address: 4025 Fair Ridge Drive, Fairfax, VA 22033 |

Phone: 703-273-0911

## **NFPA Wildland Fire Operations Division and Firewise Communities Program**

Website: [nfpa.org](http://nfpa.org)

Address: 1 Batterymarch Park Quincy Massachusetts 02169

**NFPA 1977**, Standard on Protective Clothing and Equipment for Wildland Firefighting

**NFPA 1051**, Standard for Wildland Firefighter Professional Qualifications



**FEMA**



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