



**Northumberland
Fire Group**

2008

Wildfire Standard Operating Procedures Handbook



northwoods
The North East's Woodland Initiative

This document is intended to be used by land-owning bodies and the Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service as a guide for conducting wildfire suppression operations. It provides specific “wildfire” checklists for conducting an initial attack risk analysis, safety analysis, situational briefing, wildfire safety, working together on a wildfire and hazardous wildfire situations. It is meant to be used as a guide for incident commanders, agency representatives and team leaders, but it also provides practical advice and guidelines for any person working on a wildfire ground.

© Rural Development Initiatives 2008

No reproduction without permission.

This publication was researched and compiled by the Northumberland Fire Group. Any comments regarding the content of this document or to request additional copies of this publication please contact:

Ethan Bigelow
Project Officer

Rural Development Initiatives Ltd

E-mail: ethan.bigelow@ruraldevelopment.org.uk

Office: +44 (0) 1670 790 444

www.northwoods.org.uk

www.ruraldevelopmentinitiatives.org.uk

Emergency Contacts

I. Primary Contact Information

A. Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service

Emergency Contact Number: **999**

Information to provide to dispatch:

- ✓ Location of the Wildfire
- ✓ Best Access to the Wildfire
- ✓ Approximate Size of the Wildfire

B. If known, contact the estate land manager or owner who has jurisdiction of the wildfire.

II. Secondary Contact Information

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Northumberland Fire Control Centre..... | 01670 534699 |
| Durham County Fire Brigade..... | 0191 3843381 |
| Cumbria Fire Brigade..... | 01900 822503 |
| Northumbria Police..... | 01661 872555 |
| Highways Department..... | 0808 1008910 |
| Environment Agency | |
| Northumberland and Durham..... | 08708 506506 |
| Emergency #..... | 0800 807060 |

Initial Response to Wildfire

Upon arrival to an unattended wildfire incident consider the following while calling **999**:

- Location of the Wildfire
- Approximate Size of the Wildfire
- Best Access to the Wildfire

Before the Fire & Rescue Service arrives on scene, and without putting yourself at risk, find out the following information to pass along to the Fire and Rescue Service:

- Is there a Fire Plan for the site?
- Type of Vegetation on Fire/Surrounding Vegetation
- Terrain Type
- Fire Behaviour
 - Rate of Spread
 - Direction of Spread
- Current/Expected Weather Conditions

- Priority Areas at Risk
- Hazards or Safety Concerns

Wildfire Safety (LACES)

The elements of **LACES** provide a safety guideline for fire fighters working on a wildfire:

Lookouts

- Appoint lookouts to observe fire behaviour
- Lookouts should communicate any development of the fire that might endanger operational teams

Awareness

- All personnel should remain alert to any changes on the wildfire ground that might affect their safety.

Communications

- Remain in communication with team members, supervisors and incident commanders

Escape Routes

- Identify and communicate accessible escape routes that lead to a place of safety

Safety Zones

- Safety Zones must be identified and their location understood by everyone on the wildfire ground

Wildfire Site Briefing Checklist

It is imperative that contact is made by the land manager, or delegated representative, with the first Fire Brigade to attend the wildfire. An exchange of information about the wildfire **must** occur between the land manager, or delegated representative, and the Fire Brigade to establish a working relationship.

All new resources arriving on a wildfire site **must** make themselves known to the incident commander, or delegated official, to receive permission to act on the wildfire site. Incident commanders **must** provide a formal briefing and establish a working relationship with all new resources that arrive on the wildfire site. The hand-over or site briefing should include the following:

Land Manager to provide briefing to Fire Brigade:

- Location (Map orientation if possible)
- Personnel or resources on site
- Vegetation Type & Terrain
- Weather Conditions (Current & Expected)
- Fire Behaviour (Current & Expected)
- Priority Areas

Incident Commander (or delegated official) to provide briefing to new resource:

Strategy/Tactics

Working Together on a Wildfire Incident

One of the goals of the Northumberland Fire Group is to increase cooperation between land-owning bodies and the Fire and Rescue Services. Working together will increase the effectiveness of wildfire suppression operations by:

- Allowing for the planning and execution of a coordinated *incident action plan*
- Making use of local and specialist knowledge
- Increasing available resources
- Increasing communication between organisations and individuals on the fire ground
- Providing safer working conditions through increased communication and coordination

Follow the guidelines below to ensure good teamwork on a wildfire incident:

- Upon arrival all personnel must establish and maintain effective liaison with the Incident Commander or delegated official.
- Rural organisations and the Fire and Rescue Service must establish and maintain effective communication for the duration of the wildfire.

- When appropriate, the Fire and Rescue Service shall incorporate rural organisation personnel into the command structure at all pertinent levels and delegate tactical assignments.

Hazardous Wildfire Situations

- Attacking a wildfire without having contacted the emergency services
- Attacking a wildfire without a plan that has been agreed and is understood by all attending parties
- Tactical assignments are unclear or not known
- *Escape routes* and *safety zones* are not known or are difficult to reach because of terrain or vegetation
- Uninformed of current and expected weather
- Wind increases and/or changes directions
- No communication link with team members, team leaders, or incident commanders
- Working with unburned fuel between you and the fire
- Working on steep slopes or in gullies
- Working in light or fine fuels

- Fire Behaviour is increasingly erratic and unpredictable
- Working without the correct Personal Protection Equipment

Northumberland Fire Group Funding Bodies





northwoods
The North East's Woodland Initiative

