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# Wildland Fire Suppression Tactics Reference Guide



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## PREFACE

The Wildland Fire Suppression Tactics Reference Guide is designed to supplement courses that teach tactics in the Wildland Fire Qualification System. It can be used by the beginning firefighter to learn basic tactics as well as a review of fire suppression tactics for the advanced firefighter.

This reference guide was developed under the direction of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group Training Working Team with coordination and assistance of Fire Managers from the following agencies:

United States Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management  
National Park Service  
Bureau of Indian Affairs

United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

National Association of State Foresters

Colorado State Forest Service  
Minnesota Division of Forestry

We appreciate the efforts those people associated with the design and development of this product.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Wildland Fire Suppression Tactics Reference Guide provides basic tactical information on suppressing wildland fires. It also provides information on wildland fire fuels, fire behavior, and tactics by geographic areas of the United States.

It can be used by the beginning firefighter to learn more about tactics or determining exactly where and how to build a control line and what other suppression measures are necessary to extinguish a fire.

It can be used as a review of fire suppression tactics for the advanced firefighter.

The tactics reference guide is intended to be a supplement, but not a substitute for wildland fire training. It does not qualify a person for any wildland firefighting position.

This guide does not include nor address the constraints on firefighting imposed by environmental laws and regulations; i.e., designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, threatened and endangered species, cultural and archeology sites, air quality, etc.



## **FIRE ORDERS**

**F**ight fire aggressively but provide for safety first.

**I**nitiate all action based on current and expected fire behavior.

**R**ecognize current weather conditions and obtain forecasts.

**E**nsure instructions are given and understood.

**O**btain current information on fire status.

**R**emain in communication with crew members, your supervisor and adjoining forces.

**D**etermine safety zones and escape routes.

**E**stablish lookouts in potentially hazardous situations.

**R**etain control at all times.

**S**tay alert, keep calm, think clearly, act decisively.

## **WATCH OUT SITUATIONS**

(Survival Checklist)

Fire not scouted and sized up.

In country not seen by daylight.

Safety zones and escape routes not identified.

Unfamiliar with weather and local factors influencing fire behavior.

Uninformed on strategy, tactics and hazards.

Instructions and assignments not clear.

No communication link with crew members/supervisor.

Constructing fireline without safe anchor point.

Building fireline downhill with fire below.

Attempting frontal attack on the fire.

Unburned fuel between you and the fire.

Cannot see main fire, not in contact with anyone who can.

On a hillside where rolling material can ignite fuel below.

Weather is getting hotter and drier.

Wind increases and/or changes direction.

Getting frequent spot fires across line.

Terrain and fuels make escape to safety zones difficult.

Taking a nap near the fireline.

**LOOKOUTS, COMMUNICATIONS, ESCAPE ROUTES, SAFETY ZONES  
(LCES)**

Figure 1 displays the concept of LCES which is posting lookout(s) if you cannot see the fire, maintaining communications between the lookout(s) and firefighters, and always knowing your escape route(s) and safety zone(s). If LCES is constantly practiced the Standard Firefighting Orders and Watch Out Situations will not be compromised.

Figure 1 – LCES

