

Wildland FireFighter Safety and the Mountain Pine Beetle

Author(s):

Sonny Stiger, FireSafe Montana

Matt Wolcott, FireSafe Montana

Abstract:

This presentation addresses the controversy over the effect the current Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic is expected to have on fire behavior. It summarizes observations by experienced firefighters and fire managers on recent fires in the Tri-County area of Lewis & Clark, Broadwater, Jefferson and the SW portion of Cascade Counties. The paper provides safety "Watch Out" scenarios by comparing fuel and expected fire behavior differences between Lodgepole Pine and Ponderosa Pine in the Tri-County area and advocates the more extensive use of the Probability of Ignition.

Presenter Bio: Everett M. "Sonny" Stiger Retired after 26 years with the U.S.F.S as a Fire and Fuels Management Specialist, followed by ten years with Montana Prescribed Fire Services in the same capacity-a period of 36 years from 1956 to 1994. Primary author of the original fire use management plans for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and the Anaconda Pintler Wilderness. Active as a Fire Management Consultant for the Tri-County FireSafe Working Group headquartered in Helena, MT, and Fire Behavior Analyst for the Lewis and Clark County Fire Council. Wolf Creek Fire Chief from 1989 through 1997 and Chairman of Fire Service Area Board of Trustees from 1997 through 2005. Founder of the Tri-County Fire Working Group in 1984 and received the Keep Montana Green Association Fire Prevention Wildland Fuel Management Award in 2001 for his efforts in that arena. Currently on the Board of Directors for Plan Helena, a Smart Growth advocate for planned development in the Greater Helena Area including the Wildland/Urban Interface. Taught courses and lectured on fire and fuel management regionally, nationally, and internationally and authored articles for Fire Management Notes, Fire Management Today, and Montana Outdoors. He also co-authored a paper for the 11th Conference on Fire and Forest Meteorology entitled Projecting Free-Burning Prescription Fires Using Pre-Season and Pre-Fire Indicators.

Dialogue on Safety

Author(s):

Anne Black, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station
James Saveland, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain

Research Station

Dave Thomas, Renoveling

Abstract:

There are many reasons to hold a conversation, among them: information download, information exchange, selection of a course of action, consensus-building, and exploration. Dialogue is a particular type of conversation that seeks to explore a subject in order to generate new ideas and insights. It is based on the recognitions that (1) the critical issues of today are so complex that it is impossible for one person to comprehend, let alone solve and (2) game-changing insights, new behaviors and new organizational structures can emerge from a diverse group of people thinking together.

Dialogue has been used to break significant impasses between entrenched parties. Obviously, such dramatic results do not occur as the result of a single conversation, nor is every dialogue 'successful'. Dialogue requires a particular kind of presence – one that values equally the sharing of one's own experiences, and a deep, respectful curiosity about another's. It is in this quality of listening and inquiry into what is actually occurring - in ourselves and in others - beneath

the normal story-line that it is possible to discover a unifying, underlying song-line that leads to new constructions of reality. It's not a common way of 'showing up' to a meeting! It requires practice. It's kind of fun.

We are proposing to host a 'dialogue on safety' to which all Safety Summit attendees are invited. We envision this would be held early one evening and last for an hour. There is no set agenda, just a space set aside for participants to raise and explore issues. We will introduce a couple of conversational tools to assist, then participate in the session ourselves.

Presenter Bio: Dr. Black, a Social Science Analyst with the Human Factors and Risk Management RD&A, is interested in understanding and facilitating sustainability in human-ecological systems. She has been studying fire management through various lenses that reflect on organizational performance (high reliability, safety, organizational learning) in the wildland fire community since 2002. Previously, she focused on landscape ecological perspectives to understand and help managers guide interactions of humans and our environment.

2005-2006 Oklahoma and Texas Grass Fires: 25 Lives Lost, Lessons Learned—and Re-learned

Author(s):

Robert W. Mutch. Fire Management Applications

Abstract:

Strong winds, prolonged drought, and extreme fire danger produced wildfires that ravaged the grasslands of Oklahoma and Texas in 2005 and 2006, killing 25 people, destroying numerous homes, and killing thousands of livestock. A disaster of this magnitude is more reminiscent of the outcomes of the Fire Siege of October 2003 in southern California where 14 major fires burned 750,043 acres, destroyed 3710 homes, and killed 23 people. Because the fires in Oklahoma and Texas, unlike the high intensity fires in southern California chaparral, burned in short grass, mixed grass, and tall grass prairies, the Lessons Learned Center in Tucson, Arizona, sponsored an in-depth review of the grass-fueled wildfires to achieve the following objectives:

- To explain the circumstances of the victims and survivors at the time of their entrapment.
- To use the victims' and survivors' stories as a catalyst to motivate firefighters and interface residents to modify their behaviors to become more fire safe.
- To derive wildland-urban interface lessons learned insights.

The disturbing part of this wildfire assessment is the finding that some very basic fire safety tenets must be re-learned and applied to prevent future injuries and deaths.

Presenter Bio: Robert W. Mutch retired from a 38-year career in forest fire research and fire management with the U.S. Forest Service in 1994. Areas of special interest include forest fuel management, fire ecology, fire behavior prediction, wildland fire training, public and firefighter safety, wildland fire suppression, prescribed fire in wilderness management, fire safe strategies for the interface, and international assistance.

Since 1994 he has served as a fire management consultant with assignments in Brazil, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, India, Italy, and Mongolia for the United Nations and the World Bank, as well as domestic projects in the United States.