



Wildland Fires



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at www.redcross.org/disaster/masters

Glossary

abiotic: nonliving

adaptation: the process by which an organism becomes better suited to its environment, thus increasing its chance of survival

aerial fuel: combustible materials in the crowns of trees that can create a fast-moving fire

ash pit: holes created by burned trees and stumps that are full of hot ashes

BAER team: Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team that assesses fire damage and implements rehabilitation plans to prevent loss of life and property and reduce further damage to natural resources

biological treatment: the management of fuel buildup by relying on animals to eat plants

biotic: living

building codes: the regulations that govern the design, materials, construction and occupancy of any structure to ensure human health and safety

construction materials: materials, such as wood and brick, used to build structures

contour line: a line on a map that connects points of equal height

controlled fire (prescribed burn): the deliberate setting of wildland fires to reduce excessive fuel buildup and thus reduce the effects of a wildland fire should one occur. This practice is used only by wildland firefighters and only under certain conditions.

cost-to-benefit: a way of determining cost-effectiveness by measuring how much something costs against the benefits gained

debris flow: a common type of fast-moving landslide. Sometimes called a “mudslide,” it is frequently associated with flash floods in areas recently burned by wildland fire.

defensible space: the space around a home that is landscaped to reduce the threat of wildland fire reaching the home

duff: decaying vegetation on the floor of a wooded area



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ecological succession: the process in which an ecological community changes over a period of time; slow, orderly changes in an ecosystem that result in the gradual replacement of one species by another

ecology: the study of the interactions of organisms with each other and with their environments

ecosystem: a self-sustaining community of living organisms and the environment that surrounds them

emotional trigger: an image, sound, scent or other memory prompt that recalls the emotions experienced during a traumatic event, such as a fire

erosion: the wearing away of soil by water, wind or ice

evacuation: the act of leaving a place for safety

fire-resistant: does not burn easily

fire triangle: the three elements needed to make a fire—oxygen, fuel and heat

fuel: a material that can be burned

fuel load: the amount of combustible fuel that has accumulated in a specific area

hazard: danger

heat: the transfer of energy from one system to another as a result of a difference in temperature

heat source: a place or object from which heat arises, for example, flames

hydrophobic: repels water

ignition (kindling) temperature: the temperature at which a specific material will combust

ladder fuel: naturally occurring fuels that allow flames to move upward from grasses to bushes to trees

mechanical treatment: the cutting down or cutting away of combustible fuels to decrease the amount of fuel in an area

mulching: the application of material, such as straw, to a burned area to replace lost ground cover

oxygen: an element present in the air that is essential to combustion



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propane tank system: a heating method that uses propane gas

Santa Ana winds: hot, dusty, desert winds that blow through southern California

scarification: contour plowing to break up the hydrophobic layer of soil so it can absorb water

snag: falling, burned trees

specific heat capacity: the ability of a substance to absorb heat energy

stump hole: roots burning underground; a hole filled with hot ashes from a burned tree stump

surface fuel: combustible materials, such as grasses, plants and fallen tree limbs, found on the surface of the ground

temperature: the property of a body determining the rate at which heat will be transferred to it or from it; the measure of how warm or cool an object is in reference to a standard value

topographic map: A map that uses contour lines to show the size, shape and elevation of natural and human-made features

topography: the shape and description of the features of the earth's surface, for example, lakes and mountains

wattle: a biodegradable plastic mesh filled with straw and placed along the contour of a hill to collect soil and slow erosion

wildland: areas not regularly inhabited by humans, such as forests, prairies, grasslands, swamp and deserts

wildland fire: fire that occurs in wildlands, including forest fire

wildland fire fuels: naturally occurring fuels that contribute to wildland fires, for example, wood, shrubs, plants and grass

wildland-urban interface: any area where wildland fuels threaten to ignite combustible homes and structures; the areas in which urban land joins wildland. In some areas, residential housing is encroaching upon wildland areas, creating interface zones.



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