
Theme E: Protection of Life and Property in Forested Areas

GOAL

FIRE, SAFETY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT: Human life, property, and forest resources are at reduced risk of harm or loss.
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STRATEGY

48. Improve safety for the forest-based workforce and forest users.

Many occupations in the field of forestry and law enforcement can be dangerous and require appropriate training. Fires not only put the fire fighter in dangerous situations but people and their homes. Visitors to public forests must have a safe experience. Urban forests can have hazard trees that are dangerous for the public and the resources are needed to monitor these trees. Although not all accidents can be prevented, education, training, and actions to mitigate hazards make visiting and working in a forest setting safer.

Possible Actions:

- Make firefighter and public safety the number one priority in protecting life and property from wildland fire.
- Ensure safety training opportunities are available to all occupations within the forest workforce (e.g. fire, logging, industry, and arborists).
- Work with insurance companies to develop affordable insurance rates for forest workers.
- Ensure use of risk management processes prior to all activities to identify and assess hazards, establish controls, make decisions and evaluate success.
- Investigate, report, and mitigate accidents and fatalities. Develop lessons learned products to share situational awareness messages.
- Manage urban hazard trees to reduce risk to citizens.
- Ensure visitors' safety and protection on rural lands with public access as well as urban areas such as community sidewalks, streets, trails, and parks.

STRATEGY

49. Provide for early detection and rapid initial attack for all forest fires within the state.

Detecting, managing and suppressing all forest fires within the state is possible by using an interagency approach in a coordinated, efficient and effective manner. Because fighting wildfire is resource intensive, it is essential that the greatest strengths and most optimum roles of all stakeholders/protection agencies be used to maximize their capabilities.

The most cost effective approach to support general suppression capabilities in areas of lower wildland fire risk and exposure is to enhance the capacity of agencies such as local fire departments. The areas with a high risk of large, destructive wildland fires, from an ecological, social and/or historical perspective, should have the greatest wildland fire-specific capabilities. The Division of Forestry has highly specialized

wildland fire equipment and is uniquely qualified to meet important aspects of wildland fire needs.

One of the key data gaps preventing effective appraisal of the wildland fire situation across the state involves the lack of accurate, reliable wildland fire data occurrence in the part of Wisconsin outside of the Division of Forestry's organized protection, commonly referred to as the cooperative area.

Possible Actions:

- Employ an efficient and effective fire preparedness process that meets fire readiness standards.
- Enhance statewide forest fire suppression coordination and capabilities by utilizing partnerships between state and federal agencies and local volunteer fire departments to provide wildland fire suppression assistance.
- Ensure that wildland fires and natural resource disasters are managed with the Incident Command System (ICS), through trained and qualified Incident Management Teams (IMT).
- Focus wildland-specific suppression capabilities in areas identified as having the greatest risk/exposure to wildland fire.
- Establish a mechanism to track and monitor wildland fire occurrence information statewide, to enable continuous assessment of changes in wildland fire risk/exposure.

STRATEGY

50. Reduce wildland fire ignitions and minimize loss from fire.

Educating the public on wildland fire risks and applying fire prevention and mitigation measures reduces wildland fire ignitions and minimizes the loss from fire. The broad objective of this strategy is to grow greater understanding of the problems surrounding wildland fire, including its causes, with the public, the group that is responsible for most of the preventable wildland fires in Wisconsin. Enhancing the public's understanding of the causes of wildland fires, the conditions that enhance the likelihood of their starting and the extent of the damage that can result, will contribute to a reduction in activities by the public that historically result in damaging wildland fires.

The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) presents greater exposure of life and property to a wildland fire. Educating property owners on ways to lessen WUI associated risks will decrease the danger, both to the public and to suppression personnel. Partnerships with the towns and counties can address the dangers of WUI situations before they occur. Zoning can be used to influence at the town and county level to direct the development of platted communities toward less WUI oriented situations and within, or at least nearer to already established incorporated areas. The development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans deliberately involves all the most important stakeholders in the community and has the capacity to generate enthusiasm and momentum to comprehensively address dangers in a coordinated fashion, and in priority order.

Possible Actions:

- Landowners are educated about wildland fire and effectively mitigate the dangers of wildfire on their property.
- Encourage wildland urban interface-preventative local zoning ordinances that direct development away from fire prone areas.
- Encourage owners/builders to conduct hazard reduction before selling or constructing.
- Increase the number of Community Wildfire Protection Plans.
- Work with insurance industry to provide economic incentives for landowners to conduct fire protection practices.
- Encourage the inclusion of wildland urban interface objectives in incentive programs to make the area adjacent to the home Firewise (e.g. limited stocking, branches pruned, ground fuels cleared, etc.)
- Develop and conduct fire prevention messages and education programs targeted at the highest human caused fire problems.
- Develop and implement a methodology for analysis of fire occurrence.
- Develop voluntary fire best management practices to reduce risk and losses from fires.
- Develop burning permit systems that are easily available to people.

STRATEGY

51. Protect the public and natural resource from unlawful practices.

Public land managers are required to provide safe visits to public forests. Higher profile presence of and actions by fire suppression/law enforcement personnel stimulates communication with citizens and citizens thinking about safety and compliance with laws. Educating the public on practices they can take to prevent illegal harvesting, like harvesting contracts, is a proactive step. Specialized law enforcement personnel are needed to investigate and enforce timber theft cases.

Possible Actions:

- Gain compliance in forest recreation and protection laws by investigation, enforcing violations, and charging fire suppression costs.
- Take a proactive approach to preventing illegal harvesting through contracts and other mechanisms.
- Investigate illegal harvesting and other unlawful business practices to protect landowners and the forest resource.
- Develop materials that educate the public on forest based laws and administrative rules while also encouraging voluntary compliance.
- Educate K-12 students on the value and importance of urban forests, and laws governing these forests.