



# WORKING WITH WILDFIRE

## AGENT OF CHANGE

Historically, lightning-caused wildfires naturally burned at a low intensity on a scale of every 2-10 years. Today, wildfires are opportunities to maintain this natural occurrence in the ecosystem.

Fire breaks down forest litter and recycles nutrients into the soil, allowing new vegetation to thrive. Healthy vegetation promotes healthy wildlife habitat and feeding grounds.

The desired result of this type of fire activity is a “mosaic” effect where some areas of the landscape experience slow surface fire that consumes small trees and litter, includes large areas of mixed severity activity which create a diverse landscape and is more resistant to disease, while other small areas encounter high intensity fire that creates openings and kills invasive species.



Fire managers carefully identify areas within which a wildfire can naturally move. As long as conditions allow **and** objectives are being met, crews can actively assist these lightning-caused wildfires by solidifying holding perimeters and keeping flames from moving into undesired locations.

## A RISK INFORMED DECISION PROCESS

Fire managers, along with resource specialists take great care to evaluate multiple objectives when wildfires occur. Strategic and tactical decisions for fire incidents apply deliberate examination and assessment of public values and risk to firefighter and public safety. Steps important to this process include:

- identifying values important to the public and the Forest Service
- considering established land management plans
- utilizing pre-planned decision criteria
- employing fire behavior modeling programs
- considering economic and social impacts
- ensuring that decisions are flexible for changing incident complexity

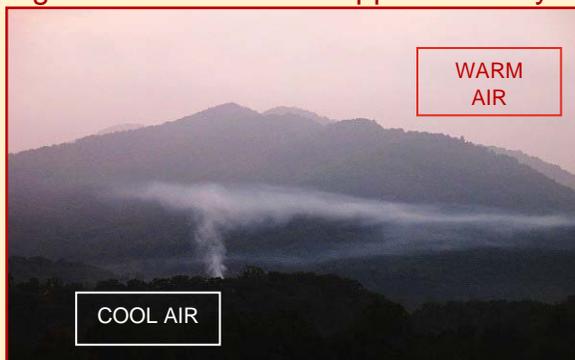


Firefighter safety, public values and forest health are priorities when managing wildfires. To ensure success, decisions are continually evaluated by agency administrators, fire managers, and resource specialists.

## SMOKE IN THE VALLEY

Smoke may hang low to the ground at night and in the early morning due to an occurrence known as a **temperature inversion**. This occurs when *warm* air “caps” *cooler* air, causing smoke to become trapped in valley bottoms—most often at night and in the early morning.

Trapped smoke generally lifts after the sun rises and heats the earth’s surface. Heat from the earth’s surface warms the air near the ground, which rises and mixes with the air above.



As fire moves through the landscape smoke will be very noticeable. Expect reduced visibility along roads and watch for wildfire management personnel and traffic working on or near the road.

## TECHNIQUES

**When accumulated fuels are removed by fire, the risk of uncharacteristically severe and difficult to suppress wildfire is reduced. This is good news for both the public and wildland firefighters!**

**Protecting forest health is important. So is protecting the life and values of the public—values like cultural and historical sites, communities, and recreation areas. Natural and cultural resource specialists are highly engaged in deciding where to suppress or assist the wildfire activity. This ensures that fire management and resource management are one in the same.**



For fire updates, visit <http://indweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4893/#>