



National Fire Plan

Wildland Fire Protective Equipment Grant Program

Ohio

2002



The Challenge

The vast majority of the over 1,000 wildland fires that occur in Ohio annually are battled by the rural and volunteer fire departments. Very few of these departments have the funds to purchase wildland fire PPE and fight these fires wearing their structural fire PPE.

Recent studies of wildland firefighter safety have demonstrated the importance of wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) designed for the job. An alarming trend of heat stress injuries and fatalities is developing from firefighters wearing structural fire PPE on wildland fires. In Australia, a recently completed study looked at the physiological effect of PPE on firefighters, and concluded that the majority of heat stress on a firefighter was internally generated. The study found that PPE should be “designed to let heat out, not keep heat in.”

The Solution

Wildland fire protective clothing that complies with National Fire Protection Association 1977 offers adequate levels of protection for the wildland firefighter without causing undue heat stress or fatigue. The Ohio Division of Forestry targeted program dollars from the National Fire Plan portion of the Volunteer Fire Assistance grant program to purchase wildland PPE for the rural and volunteer fire departments in Ohio during 2002 and 2003. To further assist and also encourage the fire departments to apply for this equipment, the Division of Forestry matched to the VFA-NFP dollars. The Division of Forestry purchases the PPE in bulk through the General Services Administration and distributes it to fire departments.



Resulting Benefits

- Ten complete sets of wildland PPE issued to each fire department selected to receive a grant. Each set consists of nomex pants and shirt, hardhat, fire shelter, gloves and goggles. This meets the requirements outlined in NFPA Standard 1977.
- In 2002, ten complete sets were awarded to over 80 fire departments across Ohio. Over 50 fire departments are scheduled to receive grants in 2003.
- The departments receive this critical equipment with no out of pocket cost due to the Division of Forestry matching grant program. This has resulted in a cost savings to the fire departments of more than \$350,000.

Sharing Success

This grant program has been a tremendous success in Ohio. Over 500 fire departments have applied for the PPE to date with approximately 130 receiving grants. The program will continue until all 800 rural volunteer fire departments in the state have been outfitted with wildland PPE.

For more information about Ohio's Wildland Fire PPE Grant Program, contact Mike Bowden, Fire Supervisor at Michael.Bowden@dnr.state.oh.us.