



Wildland Firefighter Personal Protective Equipment Grant Program Ohio 2006

Recent studies of wildland firefighter safety have shown the importance of wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) designed for fighting wildland fire. An alarming trend of heat stress injuries and fatalities is developing from wildland firefighters wearing PPE designed for fighting structural fires.

The vast majority of the more than 1,000 wildfires 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—they fight wildfires wearing their structural fire PPE.

Wildland fire protective clothing that complies with 1977 National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards offers adequate levels of protection for wildland firefighters without causing undue heat stress or fatigue. Since 2002, the Ohio Division of Forestry targeted program dollars from the National Fire Plan (NFP) portion of the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) grant program to purchase wildland PPE for rural and volunteer fire departments in Ohio. To further assist and also encourage the fire departments to apply for this equipment, the Division of Forestry provided the match 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.

- Ten complete sets of wildland PPE are issued to each fire department selected to receive a grant. Each set consists of protective pants and shirt, hardhat, fire shelter, gloves, and goggles. This meets the requirements outlined in the NFPA 1977 standard.
- Fire departments receive this critical equipment with no out-of-pocket expense due to the Division of Forestry matching the grant funds. The grants and matching funds have resulted in a cost savings to the fire departments of more than \$800,000.

This grant program has been a tremendous success in Ohio. More than 600 fire departments have applied for the PPE and approximately 195 have received grants since 2002. The program will continue until all 800 rural volunteer fire departments in the state have been outfitted with wildland PPE.

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*A wildland firefighter in PPE prepares a fuel break.
Photo courtesy Ohio DNR*