



National Fire Plan

Managing the Impact of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment

Ohio's Wildland Personal Protective Equipment Grant Program

■ The Challenge

Recent wildland firefighter safety studies have shown the importance of wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) designed for the job. An alarming number of heat stress injuries and fatalities are occurring among wildland firefighters who are wearing PPE designed for structural fires. In Australia, a recent study looked at the physiological effect of PPE on firefighters, and concluded that the majority of heat stress was internally generated from the firefighter's body. The study found that PPE should be "designed to let heat out, not keep heat in".

Rural and volunteer fire departments battle the vast majority of the more than 1,000 wildfires that occur in Ohio annually. Very few of these departments have the funds to purchase wildland fire PPE—they fight wildfires wearing their structural fire PPE.

■ The Solution

Wildland fire protective clothing that complies with 1977 National Fire Protection Act standards protects wildland firefighters without causing undue heat stress or fatigue. In 2002 and 2003, the Ohio Division of Forestry used program dollars from the National Fire Plan portion of the Volunteer Fire Assistance grant program to purchase wildland PPE for rural and volunteer fire departments. To further assist and to encourage 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 (GSA) and distributes it to fire departments.



Firefighter in Wildland PPE

■ Resulting Benefits

- Ten complete sets of wildland PPE were issued to each fire department selected to receive a grant. Each set consists of nomex pants and shirt, hardhat, fire shelter, gloves, and goggles.
- In 2002, PPE was awarded to more than 80 Ohio fire departments. More than 50 fire departments are scheduled to receive grants in 2003.
- The departments receive this critical equipment with no out of pocket expense thanks to the Division of Forestry matching funds. This has saved the fire departments close to \$350,000.

■ Sharing Success

This grant program has been a tremendous success in Ohio. More than 500 fire departments have applied for the PPE, and approximately 130 received 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 or the USDA Forest Service:

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