

Santa Barbara City Fire Department - Standard Operating Procedures Emergency Operations	Code: E-IV-3
Tactics and Strategy	
Chpt: IV Wildland	Revised: 1/16/12 Pages: 4

I. COMMAND

A. On major incidents, establish a Command Post and geographic divisions as soon as possible.

1. Geographic divisions around the fire will be designated by letter (i.e. division A)
2. Command should give consideration to labeling divisions from both ends of the alphabet. (I.e. left flank division A, right flank division Z) This allows divisions to be filled in if the incident grows.
3. If the number of divisions grows beyond the span of control, command may have to establish Branches to oversee divisions.

B. The Command Post should be in a location, which will be safe and not have to be moved if the fire changes direction. Divisions must be mobile. Supporting elements should be able to set up at the Command Post.

C. The Command Post will need maps in order to plot fire progress, exposures and access.

D. The units in the field, particularly geographic division, will have to report this information to Command via radio or personal contact. On fires involving large areas, topographic or ortho-photo maps should be used.

II. TACTICS AND STRATEGY

A. The basic wildland fire philosophy is to attempt, by aggressive attack, to stop the forward progress of fire whenever possible.

B. Protection of exposures is the primary goal when immediate control is not possible.

C. A direct attack, using water, is the fastest control evolution possible to counteract wildfire spread. Clearly, many situations will not support this possibility and Command must be prepared to re-adjust strategy which may make it necessary to develop a defensive mode to protect exposures while allowing the fire to burn to a location better suited for control. In these cases, it may be best to use vehicle access to position apparatus to protect exposed structures and allow the main body of fire to pass by.

D. When water is in short supply, it is usually most effective when applied to burning material instead of wetting fuel in advance. Seriously exposed structures should be kept wet while exposed.

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E. As fire spread becomes more critical, Command must be prepared to special call additional units and to initiate pre-planned responses. This determination must be made early.

F. On large, open grass fires, Command must take advantage of natural fire barriers that will assist in control measures, such as: roads, trails, outcroppings, patchy fuels, etc.

G. Command must quickly develop a fire fighting plan. The following is a list of size-up considerations that greatly affect tactics and strategy:

1. Life Safety and Evacuation.
2. Location of fire head or heads;
3. Pertinent burning conditions - weather, time of day, etc.
4. Type of fuel - light, heavy fuel;
5. Exposures - improvements, buildings, orchards;
6. Size of fire and rate of spread;
7. Special hazards - hot spots, spot fires, developing heads:
8. Manpower needs;
9. Fuel continuity;
10. Accessibility of fire area;
11. Water resources - equipment, hydrants, reservoirs, etc.;
12. Escape route;

III.MOP-UP

A. Mop-up should begin as soon as manpower is available. Do not wait until the fire is completely contained, unless it is absolutely necessary. Mop-up must be thorough. If there is a very large fire area, mop-up as far as is necessary or practical into the burn from the perimeter. Use water whenever possible to assist in the mop-up operation. Dirt will also work well.

B. Remember that perimeter fire control only contains the fire, it is not out until every ember is cold. Embers can be blown over the perimeter and quickly start spot fires. If warranted a fire watch shall be posted.

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IV. SAFETY

- A. L.C.E.S. (See [S-V-7](#) L.C.E.S.)
 - 1. Lookouts
 - 2. Communications
 - 3. Escape routes
 - 4. Safety zones
- B. Be familiar with the 10 standard firefighting orders and the 18 “Watch out” situations.
- C. Firefighters and machines shall not work above one another on a hill or at close intervals. Hand crews must watch out for heavy machinery and yield right-of-way.
- D. 100' separation between firefighters and machine should be maintained.
- E. Pass burning or weakened trees on uphill side. Caution should be given to loose rocks and rolling debris.
- F. Watch for fast runs in fast burning fuels.
- G. Watch for spot fires behind your line so you do not become trapped.
- H. Never try to out-run the head of a fast moving fire. Attempt to get on the fire flank if you cannot safely reach the "black line".
- I. If you are surrounded or cut off by the fire, take the following precautions:
 - 1. Follow the Captain's instructions.
 - 2. Move to barren area; if slope is flat, dig-in as much as possible.
 - 3. On ridge top, keep on opposite side of fire.
 - 4. On roads, lie down inside cut bank. Keep face buried in arms.
 - 5. Use fire shelter when escape seems impossible.
- J. Do not allow firefighting personnel to become exhausted.
- K. Provide drinking water.
- L. Wear proper clothing consistent with approved brush uniform - including fire shelter.
- M. Use hand tools correctly.

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- N. Remember, fire can burn against the wind.
- O. Keep your equipment and yourself in good condition.