



HOT TOPICS

The latest news and updates from the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's office



Wildland Fire Destruction

photos by
ND SFM Deputies



FIRE MARSHAL MUSINGS

Doug Nelson



With the change of the weather, we are also welcoming some big changes at the State Fire Marshal's Office. Senate Bill 2211 passed with great support. This bill made the Fire Insurance Tax distribution a continuing appropriation to fire departments, moved the North Dakota Firefighters Association's funding to the Insurance Reserve Trust Fund, and relocates the State Fire Marshal to a Division under the Insurance Department. Wow! A lot of important changes for

the fire service in North Dakota. The State Fire Marshal's Division will officially be a part of the Insurance Department on August 1, 2023, when policy bills take effect in North Dakota.

Senate Bill 2010 also passed this month. This is the Insurance Department's budget and contained an increase of two additional Deputy Fire Marshals for our division. Though we did not achieve the full increase we were requesting, this is a welcome change and a help with our level of staffing. The State Fire Marshal's Division has not increased in full-time staff since prior to 1988, so an exciting change that we haven't had the opportunity for in almost 40 years!

With both of these big changes, it will take time for the dust to settle and to get resources located in these places. The changes will lead to improvements in our service and abilities to the fire departments of North Dakota. The State Fire Marshal's Office appreciates all of the support from the fire service during session. We are stronger when working together and look to continue to build and improve fire safety in the state.

Please remember that the summer wildfire season is approaching and don't forget to review where you can find information that can help you monitor conditions, know the current burn restrictions, be aware of open burning regulations and fire codes. See the following sections of the newsletter for more on those topics. If you have any questions regarding outdoor fires, please do not hesitate to contact our office and we can help answer or direct you to the right place.



from left: State Fire Marshal Doug Nelson, Deputy Insurance Commissioner John Arnold and Insurance Commissioner Jon Godfreed



Ceremonial signing of SB 2211.



BURNING NEWS FROM THE CHIEF DEPUTY

Kimberly Ersland



May is National Wildfire Awareness Month. We often focus on prevention of wildland and grass fires but it might be interesting to discuss investigations as well. Chapter 27 of NFPA 921 is dedicated to wildfire investigations if you want to delve into more detail.

Wildfire investigations employ the same methodology and adherence to the scientific method. There may be times that a 360 degree walk around of the perimeter is limited or not possible due to size, accessibility or active fire. It is often helpful to have unmanned aircraft footage or photographs to get a 'birds eye' view of the overall fire pattern to identify the heel (rear), flanks and head of the fire. There may be fingers, islands or spot fires that can also be seen with an overhead view.

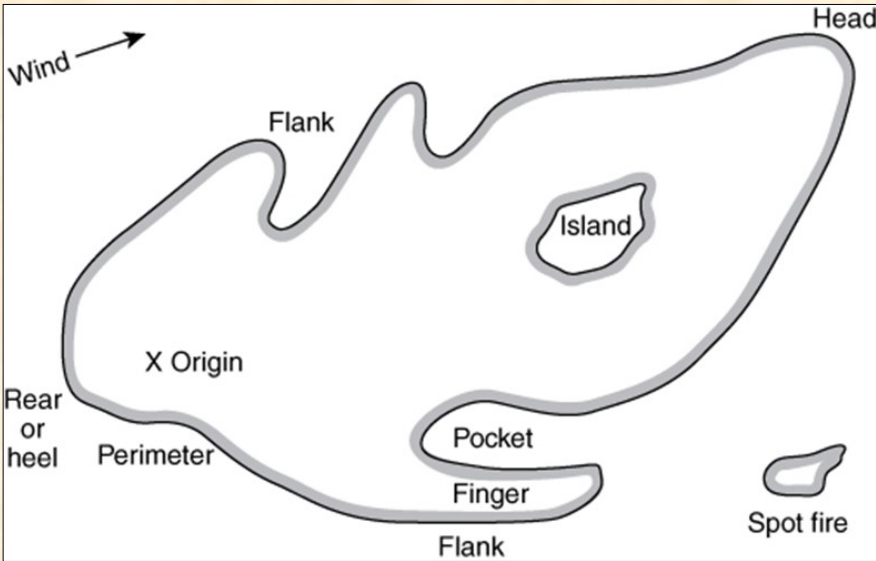
Often the general area of origin will be identified through evaluation of weather/ wind conditions and witness statements such as the reporting party and first arriving fire departments. Next a gridded search takes the investigation to a closer examination of fire effects, fire dynamics, fuels and conditions. Keep in mind that the specific area of origin will likely not be at the point of the pattern as the fire will back burn for some distance creating the heel. This is important in the gridding process to ensure all areas are examined and for preservation of evidence.

Some interesting fire effects are created during wildfires. Larger more identifiable patterns may include greater degree of damage to fuels, degree of charring and location/direction of char patterns. Some smaller effects include foliage freeze that happens when leaves and small stems exposed to advancing areas of fire bend in the direction of winds and remain in the same position as they cool. This is helpful to determine wind direction at that location. Green leaves tend to curl inward toward the heat source and are typically found more in slow moving, back or lateral movement of fire. Limbs and twigs may have rounded or 'cupped' ends that can show directional fire patterns. There are way more than space allows in the

newsletter!

Causes of wildfires include human intervention such as incendiary, campfires, smoking, burning debris, vehicle/equipment usage, fireworks and railroads. Others may be due to utilities, oil/gas drilling, sun refraction, firearms and under specific conditions spontaneous combustion. Certainly not an all-encompassing list but provides an idea of how many potential causes may need to be considered.

Wildfires (like all fires) make for interesting investigations that have unique challenges, data and analysis so know that we are here to assist in those



Anatomy of a Fire Showing Fire Head and Heel (Rear)

Reference: NFPA 921 2021 Edition – Figure 27.5



ON THE ROAD WITH DEPUTY FIRE MARSHAL

Doug Pierre — District 2



With warmer weather approaching and the conditions across the state varying from wet to dry you might be getting a lot of calls about recreational burning. With that in mind I wanted to share where you can find more information in the State Fire Code, how it applies, and how you can help ensure safety in your communities.

The State Fire Code is the amended and adopted version of the International Fire Code, 2018 Edition. It defines open burning as the burning of material wherein products of combustion are emitted directly into the ambient air without passing through a stack or chimney from an enclosed chamber.

Section 307 of the State Fire Code talks about open burning, recreational fires and portable outdoor fireplaces. Some of the precautions that can be taken when having a recreational fire is to make sure that you are 25 feet from a structure or combustible material and eliminate the conditions that could cause a fire to spread within 25 feet of a structure or combustible material. Portable outdoor fireplaces should be used in accordance with the

manufacturers' guidelines and not operated within 15 feet of a structure or combustible material. When having a recreational fire or using a portable outdoor fireplace there should be a person constantly attending the fire until the fire is completely extinguished. There should be a portable fire extinguisher with a minimum rating of 4-A or on-site fire extinguishing

equipment such as dirt or sand, water barrel, garden hose or water truck available for immediate use.

If you encounter a fire that is causing a nuisance, is unapproved or is a hazard, enforcement can be found in the North Dakota Century Code and the State Fire Code. ND Century Code Section 18-08-09 describes misconduct at fires and the penalties associated. The Century Code can be found [here](#). The State Fire Code Section 307.3 gives the authority for extinguishment to the fire code official when open burning creates or adds to a hazardous situation. Online access to the 2018 Edition of the International Fire Code can be found [here](#). Please contact our main office if you have any questions or concerns about recreational fires and code enforcement to address unwanted fires.





ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT AREA

Marcy Ost

This month we have a guest contributor!

Liz Trythall, an Environmental Scientist with the [Department of Environmental Quality](#) (DEQ) has put together some information about open burning.

Don't Get Burned, Get Approval

DEQ and specific district health units (Upper Missouri District, Central Valley Health District and Lake Region District Health) have authority to grant approval to open burn and/or issue open burning variances in accordance with the [North Dakota Air Pollution Control Rules \(NDAC\)](#).

An application for open burning variance is required to be submitted for any burning activities that are not explicitly designated as permissible in the North Dakota Air Pollution Control open burning regulations, [NDAC 33.1-15-04](#).

- The rules governing open burning and an application for variance can be found [here](#).
- Written approval must be received prior to conducting any burning activities that are not indicated as permissible per NDAC 33.1-15-04.
- NDDEQ has discretion on granting open burning variances.
- The NDDEQ or specified district health units should be contacted regarding any non-permissible burning activities.

Noncompliance with these rules can result in:

- Increase air pollution. This could be harmful to citizens who are immunocompromised.
- Increased chance of the burn getting out of control.
- NDDEQ issuing an enforcement action against the violator(s). Enforcement actions can include monetary fines of up to \$10,000.00 per day, per violation.

Should you or citizens have questions regarding the open burning of a building please contact the Division of Waste Management at 701-328-5166. If you or citizens have questions about any other open burning activities, please contact the Division of Air Quality at 701-328-5188.

May Social Media Focus

Protect your home: Embers and small flames are the main way homes ignite in a wildfire

Suggested posts:

- ◆ Clear off pine needles, dead leaves and anything that can burn from your roof, gutters, porch, deck, patio and fence line.
- ◆ Do not throw cigarettes into vegetation, potted plants or landscaping, peat moss, dried grasses, mulch, leaves, or other similar times—they can easily catch fire.

- ⇒ USFA has Wildfire outreach materials including graphics [here](#).
- ⇒ Ready.Gov has lots of resources specific to wildland fire [here](#).
- ⇒ NFPA's Public Education page can be found [here](#).

Also happening in May:

Building Safety Month

May 6th is Wildfire Community Preparedness Day

May 7-13 is Arson Awareness Week

Pages you should consider following:

- * US Fire Administration
- * National Association of State Fire Marshals



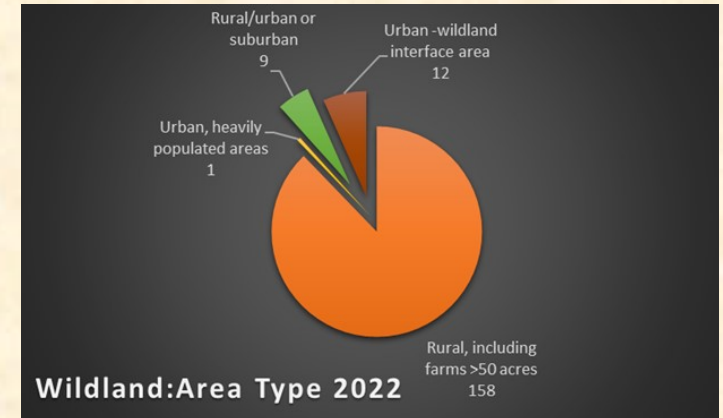
FIRE DATA ASSISTANT ZONE

Lydia Citta



I would like to touch on the importance of finishing your Incident Report right away. The longer you wait, details of the incident are forgotten. A big issue is the correct response times. Sometimes a reporting system will use the day that you finish the report as your in-service time. Also with times, seconds count. If you are able to report seconds on your incident reports that can make a difference on total time. May not seem like it, but it could make difference if you ever need to argue your case.

Last year 180 wildland fires were reported. Of those, 158 were more than 50 acres, resulting in \$503,400 in damages. See the graphs for reported heat sources and areas where wildland fires took place.



The State Fire Marshal's Office can only accept fires reported in a manner that is compliant and compatible with the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS).

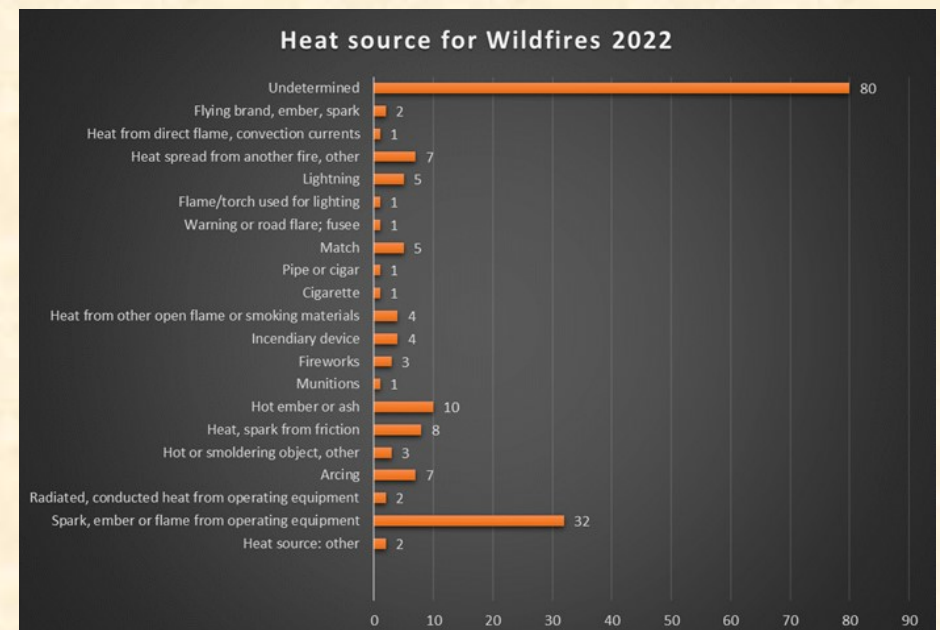
There are four options available to meet this:

- Report fires directly into eNFIRS
- Report using a third party software that is compatible and current with NFIRS
- Report using State (Department of Forestry) contract with Emergency Reporting (ER)
- Report using the NFIRS paper form (acceptable but does not get entered into state or federal database)

Our office will release submitted incident reports into the NFIRS Database monthly.

If you report fires directly into eNFIRS (<https://www.nfirs.fema.gov/NFIRSWeb/login>)

For questions or support for ER (844)253-9337 or support@emergencyreporting.com.



MONTHLY REPORTING INSTRUCTIONS

If you report fires directly into eNFIRS

Ensure reports are entered, complete and submitted.

In eNFIRS this means to SAVE a lot and make sure that your incident page says “successful” once complete and saved.

If no fires or incidents occurred in the previous month, please enter a “no activity report” by completing the following steps:

In eNFIRS, click on the “Incidents” Tab

Click “Create Incident” from the dropdown menu

Check/mark the “No Activity” box

Fill both the incident number and exposure fields with zeros.

The incident date field should be the last day of the month of no activity.

SAVE the incident

Now your department/District will count as actively reporting even though no incidents occurred.

If you report using a third party software compatible with NFIRS:

Ensure your reports are entered, complete and submitted.

Submit your incidents to nfirs@nd.gov in a .txt file that can be imported into eNFIRS.

We will report back to you with any discrepancies or notification of successfully completed import.

*FEMA releases NFIRS updates every year in October. It is a good idea to contact your third party software and make sure they are compliant with NFIRS updates.

If you report using the State provided contract with Emergency Reporting:

Ensure your reports are entered, complete and “reviewed” (i.e. the “Lock” Logo is GREEN). If not reviewed, they cannot be released to the SFM’s Office or imported into eNFIRS.

In Emergency Reporting, you MUST ensure that the “Lock” Logo is GREEN in order for your incident to be complete and available for our office to export.

• If reporting fires using the NFIRS paper form:

(acceptable but does not get entered into state or federal database)

Ensure all required modules on report are complete and legible.

Required modules for all fires include:

Basic Module

Fire Module (Wildland Module may be used with this for applicable fires)

Structure Fire Module

Civilian Fire Casualty Module

Fire Service Casualty Module

Mail or email completed paper forms to the State Fire Marshal’s Office.

Paper reports submitted without all required incident information will not be accepted.

For any questions on this process, reporting of fire incidents, or eNFIRS user account assistance, please contact the State Fire Marshal’s Office.

RESOURCES

Links from this issue:

Burn Restrictions and Fire Danger Maps <https://www.ndresponse.gov/burn-ban-restrictions-fire-danger-maps>

North Dakota Administrative Rules Chapter 33.1-15-04 <https://ndlegis.gov/information/acdata/pdf/33.1-15-04.pdf>

North Dakota Century Code 18-08 <https://ndlegis.gov/cencode/t18c08.pdf#nameddest=18-08-01>

North Dakota Century Code 18-13 <https://www.ndlegis.gov/cencode/t18c13.pdf#nameddest=18-13-01>

2018 Edition of the International Fire Code <https://codes.iccsafe.org/>

North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality <https://deq.nd.gov>

North Dakota Air Pollution Control Rules <https://deq.nd.gov/AQ/rulesregs.aspx>

Arson Awareness Week Webinar

The USFA and the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) will co-host a webinar on **Monday, May 8, at 2 p.m. EDT** to present current best practices and tips to prevent and mitigate youth firesetting in communities across the country.

Visit the [USFA's webpage for Arson Awareness Week](#) to register for the webinar and access resources that can help fire departments, parents and caregivers prevent children from experimenting with fire.

Grant Opportunities:

- The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), in partnership with SAFECOM and the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC), recently published the [Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2023 SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants](#) (SAFECOM Guidance).
- The US Forest Service (USFS) has released the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) program. This program, created by last year's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and funded at \$160 million annually for the next five years, will help communities at risk from wildfires plan and implement steps to reduce their risk. Read more about this grant at <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildland/WildfireCommunityDefenseGrants.ashx>.
- The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) established the new Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) discretionary program with \$5 billion in appropriated funds over 5 years. The SS4A program funds regional, local, and Tribal initiatives through grants to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries. You can find more information at <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A>.