

Next Week: Animal shelters



photo courtesy BLM Idaho

Wildfires

Mini Fact:

Firefighters may carry about 200 feet of hose on their backs.

In mid-August, the National Interagency Fire Center reported that 38 large wildfires were burning in 15 states, from Alaska to Florida.

This week, The Mini Page learns more about wildfires and how people battle them to save lives and property.

Natural burning

Fire is a part of the natural balance in many ecosystems. Fires help keep forests clean. They clear out the underbrush. That way, when the next fire comes, it doesn't spread as quickly or as far.

Fires are necessary to make certain seeds sprout. Without fires, many native plants won't grow in forests and grasslands.

In some areas of the wilderness, firefighters let wildfires burn. They keep a close watch to be sure the fire won't become dangerous to people or their homes.

Too risky

Sometimes weather conditions are so dry or windy that fires would be dangerous anywhere. In these times, firefighters put out wildfires no matter where they begin.

Upsetting the balance

About 120 years ago, people started putting out forest fires. As a result, underbrush grew between the trees, creating more fuel for future fires.

People began building homes and other structures closer and closer to forested areas.

They planted crops in areas that might normally have acted as natural **firebreaks**, or places where the fire runs out of fuel.

Drought, or dry, conditions, higher temperatures and high winds have also increased the risk of wildfires.

Fighting fires directly

Fires need **heat**, **fuel** and **oxygen** to burn. If firefighters can take away one of these, the fire will die.

When firefighters go to a small wildfire, they attack it **directly** by pouring water right on the flames. This is the safer way to fight a wildfire.

Fighting fires indirectly

In bigger fires, firefighters might attack the fire **indirectly**. They use bulldozers, shovels, rakes or chainsaws to clear brush from the area in front of the fire, creating a firebreak.

Sometimes, firefighters actually light a second fire between the wildfire and themselves. This burns up fuel before the wildfire can reach the area, but it can be dangerous. The expression "fighting fire with fire" comes from this practice.



Firefighters are aided by airplanes dropping flame retardant and by helicopters dropping water.

photos by Austin Catlin, BLM



Firefighters battle the Indian Butte fire in Idaho in 2018.

Staying safe

Firefighters are taught to "keep one foot in the black and one in the green." The black area is the safest because it has already burned. If things go wrong, firefighters can jump into the black area where there is no fuel left.

Even if the flames don't reach the firefighters, the smoke can. The smoke is full of a deadly gas, **carbon monoxide**. When people inhale this gas, it can cloud their thinking, so they might not even know they are in danger.

Fire shelter

Firefighters carry small fire shelters on their hips. They can get these shelters out within 30 seconds.

If firefighters can't escape a fire, they throw these aluminum-and-fiberglass shelters out and crawl inside. They lie low to the ground with the shelter around them, waiting for the fire to pass over. These shelters have saved hundreds of firefighters' lives.

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPwildfires

At the library:

- "Extreme Wildfire: Smoke Jumpers, High-Tech Gear, Survival Tactics and the Extraordinary Science of Fire" by Mark Thiessen

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of wildfires are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

BATTLE, BURN,
DANGEROUS, DIRECT,
DROUGHT, FIGHT,
FIREBREAK, FLAME,
FOREST, FUEL, HEAT,
OXYGEN, PLANTS,
SAFETY, SHELTER,
SPREAD, UNDERBRUSH,
WATER, WILDFIRE.

W D Y T E F A S A D Z E K T L
T I S U O R E G N A D Y C C W
H F L Z G D L R E T L E H S B
G L O D H H S U R B R E D N U
U A X T F Z T H G I F I A V R
O M Y X N I L I D F Y U E W N
R E G K A E R B E R I F R A O
D V E Z U G J E T A E H P T F
L U N F C A E L T T A B S E I
S T N A L P D F O R E S T R A



Cook's Corner

Spicy Hot Peanut Dip

You'll need:

- 1/2 cup organic peanut butter (no sugar)
- 1/2 cup very hot water
- 2 tablespoons light soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 3 small garlic cloves

What to do:

1. Place peanut butter in a medium bowl, add hot water and stir constantly until well-blended.
2. Add soy sauce and vinegar and stir until mixed well. Add all other ingredients and stir to blend.
3. Cover and refrigerate. Serve at room temperature as a dip with fresh vegetables.

- 2 to 3 tablespoons fresh cilantro, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

1. instrument with keys (5) _____
2. meat cutter (7) _____
3. its capital is Tokyo (5) _____
4. what you put a letter in (8) _____
5. person posing for an artist (5) _____
6. fly south for the winter (7) _____
7. high school student (8) _____

OPE	PAN	MIG	VEL
PIA	DEL	BUTC	NA
RATE	MO	TEE	NO
EN	HER	JA	GER

Answers: piano, butcher, Japan, envelope, model, migrate, teenager.



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Mini Jokes



Fern: What is best when it's out?
Frank: A fire!

Eco Note



Sometimes people report **fire tornadoes** during wildfire season. In order for fire tornadoes to form, several things are needed: turbulent winds, uneven terrain and extreme heat from fire, which causes the air to rise rapidly, according to meteorologist Ben Gelber. Other ingredients, like gas being released from burning vegetation, serve as fuel for the tornadoes as well. Meteorologists can see the rotation on Doppler radar.

adapted from The New York Times

For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about wildfires burning in the western United States.

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