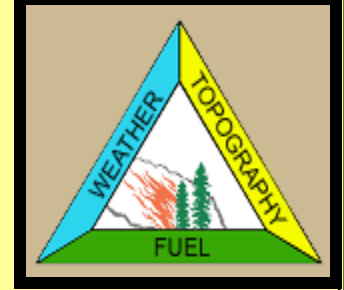




TOPIC 1 COMMON DENOMINATORS



Many firefighters are surprised to learn that tragedy and near-miss incidents occur in light fuels, on small fires or on isolated sections of large fires, and that fire behaviour is relatively quiet just before the incident. A common assumption is the high-intensity crown fire in timber or heavy brush traps and kills firefighters. Most fires are innocent-appearing, burning in light fuels, just before the flare-ups.

The differences between near-miss or tragedy fires and a safe fire is decided by a person's reaction to a sudden crisis. Recognizing conditions under which narrow escapes and fatalities occurred on past fires help firefighters increase survival skills.

It is possible to identify some common denominators of fire behaviour both in the fatal fires and in the near-miss fires.

The Four Major Common Denominators of Fire Behaviour on Tragedy Fires

1. Most incidents happen on small fires or on isolated sections of large fires.
2. Flare-ups generally occur in deceptively light fuels, such as grass and light brush.
3. Most fires are innocent in appearance before unexpected shifts in wind direction and/or speed result in "flare-ups." Sometimes, tragedies occur in the mop-up stage.
4. Fires respond to large- and small-scale topographic conditions, running uphill surprisingly fast in chimneys, gullies, and on steep slopes.

**BE ALERT
WATCH OUT FOR:
LIGHT FUELS, WIND SHIFTS,
AND TOPOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS
SUCH AS SLOPES, AND CHIMNEYS**