

Firefighters and members of the ranching community both have a vested interest when wildland fires occur on range and forest lands.

For those in the ranching community, the loss of forage and grazing use can have significant economic impacts. For fire managers and fire crews, wildfires present a formidable foe in the challenge to protect lives, property and natural resources.

Although these interests are different, it's critical that everyone work together as partners on the ground. It will help save forage, structures, and natural resources. But most importantly, working together is necessary to save lives.

Who should I contact when I first see a fire or smoke?

Because you live and work on the land, you are often the first to spot a fire. You can call your local law enforcement, who will then contact the local Bureau of Land Management (BLM) fire dispatch office; or you can call the BLM directly.

BLM fire managers will make every effort to contact you, too, when a fire occurs that may threaten your property.

Why does the BLM take issue with me going out with my tractor and disk to fight a fire on my allotment?

Many times, a fire has been kept small or put out by ranchers before a BLM crew arrives. We only ask that you stop, establish some communication and coordinate with the crews when they do arrive.

It's a critical safety matter. For example, if you are working on the fire but fire crews don't know where and have no communication with you, and vice versa, you could be caught in a backfire or burnout operation. It places both the crews and you in a potentially life-threatening situation.

Are there other ways I can help?

Once fire crews arrive, your knowledge of the landscape can be of tremendous help. You are in the best position

to know where threatened livestock are located, the location and condition of roads and trails, water sources, fence lines and gates, outbuildings, natural barriers, and more.

Please work with the Resource Advisor assigned to the fire, the Duty Officer at the BLM dispatch, or fire crews at the scene to share your knowledge. Providing this information may be the greatest help to firefighters.

I have a water truck for refilling stock ponds. Can I use it to help the fire crews?

Your local BLM office can inspect equipment you have and assist you in signing it up on a contract so you can be reimbursed for your time and equipment use when called upon.

This also helps BLM fire managers know what local equipment is available when fire strikes; provides you a business relationship with BLM fire managers; and provides for overall safer, cooperative operations.

Please contact your local BLM fire office in the spring, before fire season, to make these arrangements.

Why do fire crews have to pull off the line when an air tanker arrives to drop retardant?

Again, this is a safety measure. Large air tankers can drop up to 2,500 gallons and small ones typically drop 500 to 800 gallons. Both drop at relatively high speeds and low levels.

Consider that a single gallon of water alone weighs more than 8 pounds. Given the speed, weight, and low-level of these drops, retardant can hit with a tremendous force of thousands of pounds. In the past, people have sustained serious injuries and vehicles have been demolished by air tanker drops.



Air tanker pilots will not drop their retardant if anyone is along their path. If you are on the fireline and see an air tanker, large or small, pass over you without dropping retardant, the reason may be you.

Please move away from the flight path. Retardant does no good unless pilots can get it on the ground.

Why do fire crews from other states come to a fire in this area?

Depending on fire activity around the West, fire crews may be moved across state and geographic area boundaries, and utilized where the needs are greatest.

At times, this means you may have out-of-state fire crews in your area assisting local crews, particularly if your area is experiencing an active fire season.

These other crews are equally well-trained and professional, and are there to help.





Why do I sometimes see fire crews taking a break, even sleeping, during a fire?

Fatigue is frequently cited as a cause when fire-related accidents, injuries, and fatalities occur. No fire is worth someone losing a life for, and firefighters must follow fairly rigid work-rest guidelines. These can be waived during initial attack, but only to a point, and there may be a time when a break is not only advisable but required.

In some cases, a fire crew may arrive directly from another fire or location having worked on the fireline for several days or more and then driving to where you are. For safety reasons, they may be required to rest before taking action on the fire line.

Who can I talk to about what actions are being taken on a fire in my area?

There is usually a resource advisor assigned to a fire. This person is often a rangeland management specialist and works closely with both fire managers and the public, and is a good source of information.

The duty officer at the local BLM dispatch office is in constant contact with the incident commander and is often more accessible and available by phone.

At times it's possible to talk directly to the incident commander at the scene. Please remember, though, that he or she is typically very busy with fire operations.

COMMUNICATION COOPERATION COORDINATION

These add up to Safety.... for you and for firefighters.

A successful fire operation is one in which everyone goes home safely when the smoke clears.

Please do your part and work with your local BLM fire office to be sure every fire event is a successful operation.

Thank you.

Local Contacts

Dispatch office _____

Fire Management Officer _____

Field Office Manager _____



WILDFIRE AND THE RANCHING COMMUNITY

ANSWERS TO SOME COMMON QUESTIONS

