

Structural Fires

While the programs aimed at managing landscape fires have received much attention since the Yellowstone wildfires of 1988 (see “Wildland Fire,” page 2–29), fire protection for national park facilities and the people using them has not always received similar attention. During the peak summer season, Yellowstone’s overnight population may reach more than 18,000 and its daytime population 32,000, yet its capabilities for suppressing structural fires and undertaking fire-related rescue operations fall far short of those considered necessary in a residential community of comparable size.

The additional challenges posed by a large park with seasonal operations and widely separated developed areas present a serious risk to building occupants and to irreplaceable historic structures.

In 1995, the structural fire staff moved into a remodeled garage that serves as the park’s Emergency Operations Center in Mammoth, but protection of park buildings, many of them multi-story wood structures, calls for separate fire-fighting equipment and crews in each of the park’s five large and three smaller developed areas—a standard Yellowstone does not fully satisfy. Four major park locations (Lake, Old Faithful, Grant, and Mammoth) each have two fire trucks, while Canyon has one. In 1994, an emergency services building was constructed to serve the Old Faithful area, but the availability of trained structural fire staff is extremely limited, and the equipment on hand is not suitable for fighting fires in winter, when several hundred people may be spending the night there. Similar problems in winter protection exist at smaller park housing and administrative areas.

The personnel that may be available to respond to the more than 250 alarms a year that occur at Yellowstone are less than half of what is considered necessary. The park has a structural fire staff consisting of a fire chief, a fire truck mechanic, and an administrative assistant, and for assistance they can call on up to 60 employees holding a variety of other jobs throughout the park. The structural fire staff provide training, equipment, and supervision to the other park employees who assist at structural fires and other emergencies such as hazardous materials spills, vehicular accidents that require complicated passenger extrication, and confined space rescues, but many of these employees are seasonal and only marginally trained, and there is not adequate coverage during the off-season. The park spends \$35,000 a year to respond to alarms, and disposal of contaminant spills creates additional costs. The structural fire staff are also responsible for conducting building inspections for safety and for promoting fire prevention to school children and community residents.





Program Needs

- **STAFF AND TRAINING.** The structural fire workload and health and safety mandates require that Yellowstone has staff trained in structural firefighting and emergency response and rescue. At Old Faithful and Mammoth, such staff must be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year round. Other developed areas should have full coverage during the summer. The park also needs to have sufficient self-contained breathing apparatus and personal protective gear for each trained firefighter.
- **MOBILE EQUIPMENT.** The park needs new fire and rescue vehicles that meet the standards outlined for high-risk, high occupant-load facilities. Trucks must meet specifications for pumping water. To be able to respond adequately to winter emergencies in snowbound locations, the park needs to enclose fire hydrants and obtain specially equipped three-track fire-fighting vehicles with pumps and water tanks for use in developed areas. To adequately protect persons and property, additional winterized fire stations and hose houses should be constructed.



STRUCTURAL FIRE

STEWARDSHIP GOALS



Yellowstone has a comprehensive structural fire program with adequate equipment and trained firefighters who respond to all structural fires to protect human lives, cultural resources, and other property.



Trained staff respond promptly and effectively to hazardous materials spills and related emergencies that threaten human safety and natural and cultural resources.



Staff have a proactive program of fire prevention and detection, working with other park staff and local community residents.

CURRENT STATE OF RESOURCES/PROGRAMS



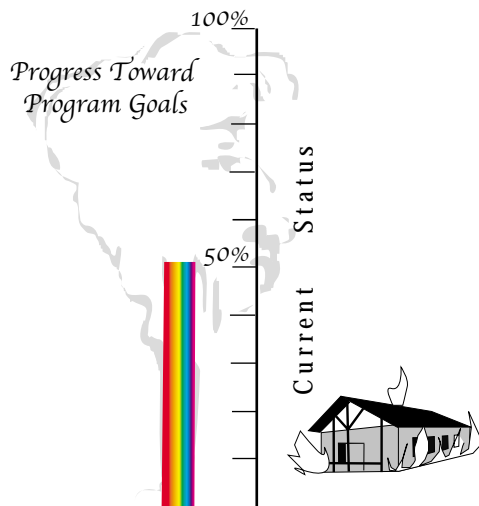
A limited number of trained firefighters respond to structural fires to protect human lives, cultural resources, and other property. Additional staff, training, and equipment are needed to meet standards for protection of public safety, historic structures, and other government property.



Staff respond to hazardous materials spills and incidents. But additional specialized training and equipment are needed.



Limited fire prevention and safety education programs occur in park schools and communities. More should be done to alert staff and residents to fire danger and preventative measures.



1998 FUNDING AND STAFF

Recurring Funds	
Yellowstone N.P. Base Budget	\$ 226,000
Staff	2 FTE

The human resources and funding necessary to professionally and effectively manage the park to stewardship levels will be identified in the park business plan.