

## Mid-Atlantic Wildfire Training Academy

### Academy Provides Necessary Skills Essential for Wildland Firefighting

#### The Challenge

Wildland fires burn tens of thousands of acres of land in the Mid-Atlantic States every year. People who battle these blazes need to learn about fire prevention and how fire behaves under different environmental conditions. These firefighters also need to know how to safely use specialized equipment, recognize hazardous situations, and undertake leadership roles using the Incident Command System.

#### The Solution

For the last 6 years, the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry has partnered with the Mid-Atlantic Forest Fire Compact, the West Virginia University Division of Forestry and Natural Resources, and the National Park Service to host a wildland fire training academy at West Virginia University. Each year, over 100 participants have attended the weeklong Mid-Atlantic Wildfire Training Academy to learn skills that are essential for wildland firefighters and managers. Classes presented at the academy meet National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards, and participants receive NWCG certificates.

#### Resulting Benefits

- Provides wildland firefighting training to volunteer fire department members who are not familiar with the differences between structural and wildland fires.
- Maintains a cadre of trained wildland firefighting personnel who are available for deployment nationwide when the need arises.
- Reduces wildfire training costs for local, State, and Federal jurisdictions by sharing personnel and equipment resources for training.

*According to Kevin Arnold of the West Virginia Division of Forestry, debris burning is the number one cause of wildland fire in the State. Because West Virginia is 80 percent forested, most people live right beside the woods, so it doesn't take much to let a fire get out of control when conditions are right.*



*Academy participants gain practical hands-on experience working with a fire hose. (Photo by West Virginia Regional Forester Rudy Williams)*

#### Sharing Success

- Four wildfire compacts exist across the region served by the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry and several Canadian Provinces. These compacts regularly conduct wildland fire training sessions.
- Wildfire compacts have reciprocal agreements to share firefighting resources with each other to minimize a given State's firefighting burden when multiple fires occur at the same time.
- Pooling training participants from several agencies and States makes it more cost efficient to attend higher level Incident Command System courses that might otherwise be difficult to attend.
- The academy makes it possible to have an ample number of qualified instructors at one location.
- The academy enhances the learning environment by bringing together wildland firefighters and instructors from a variety of partners.



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