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Instructor's Name

ENGL 1013

Date

Fighting Fire

I abruptly wake up to the high-pitched beeping sound of my fire pager going off. Twenty minutes later, I am fully dressed in personal protective equipment en route to a structure fire. On this particular cool Friday morning at 3:28 a.m., the entire Danville Fire Department and I are using a direct attack to suppress the fire in a fully engulfed three-bedroom home. This is my first experience as a volunteer firefighter, but I know that, while all fires that I will respond to will not be exactly the same as this one, they will also have some things in common. Fires vary in shape, size, and temperature, but there are only two types of fires: wild land fires and structure fires. Although the mop-up technique will be the same for both types, a knowledgeable fireman must know which tools and suppression methods to use for each type.

Wild land and structure fires require different tools and equipment for the safety of the fireman. A major difference is the use of a typical big fire truck capable of pumping thousands of gallons of water to structure fires. Wild land fires require a smaller, more maneuverable truck. A ¾-ton truck capable of moving through small dirt roads and forest is called a brush truck. There is also a tremendous difference in personal protective equipment between the two fires. Structure fires require heavy-duty turnouts made to resist high temperatures, while lighter and thinner jumpsuits are needed for the firefighter to walk in the forest when fighting wild land fires. High-capacity water hoses up to five inches in diameter are used in structure fires, while small, two-inch red lines are used in wild land fires. Furthermore, the use of hand tools differs on both

fires. While shovels, leaf blowers, broom rakes, fire swatters, and chainsaws are the most common hand tools used in wild land fires, Halligan bars, fire hooks, ladders, and poke sticks are always used in structure fires.

The use of different tools in structure fires and wild land fires results in different methods of suppression. Firefighters will use direct attack when fighting a structure fire. Direct attack is a simple, quick, and efficient method of suppression. Directly straying water on the fire will limit the loss of property. Indirect attack used to fight a wild land fire is more complicated. Laying a control line ahead of the fire using a tractor plow will determine where the fire will be contained. Little water is needed when controlling a wild land fire.

The only similarity between structure fires and wild land fires is the mop up. Regardless if the fire has invaded a home or Uncle John's pasture land, the same precautions are taken after the fire has been put out. In both scenarios, firefighters must check for hot spots, smoke, and hot surfaces. Doing so will save time, effort, and a second trip to the same fire. Signs of smoke indicate that fire is still alive. A fire might not light up instantly; however, given two or three hours, enough heat will accumulate, and the fire will reignite right where it left off.

Despite the different tools used and methods of suppression, structure and wild land fires are composed of the same three elements: oxygen, fuel, and heat. Choosing the correct tool, approaching the fire with the correct method of suppression, and taking the time to mop up correctly will ensure the safety of the entire fire department and community.