

# Infamous Wildland Fires around the World By Calendar Date

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This is a partial list, by date of the year, of some of the more famous, or infamous, multiple fatality wildland fires around the world over the last 150 years. It is not intended to be a complete list of every fatality fire. The data has been gathered from many different sources, and we assume no responsibility for its accuracy. The list also includes a few non-fatality fires that have historical significance and affected wildland fire policy and practices. Aviation accidents are not covered in this list.

There are several purposes of doing the research and compiling this list by calendar date. It is hoped that individuals and organizations involved in fire, especially wildland fire, will mark these dates on a calendar.

By having these wildland fires on a calendar, the lessons learned from even a 150 year old fire will be less likely to be forgotten. An unforgotten lesson learned may save the life of a current or future firefighter.

The laws of physics that determined fire behavior 150 years ago are still in effect today. Fire is not, as some people like to call it, a “dragon” or a “beast” that cannot be understood and must be defeated. It is a physical process that can be studied—and even managed. If enough data, situational awareness, education, and experience are available, fire behavior can be predicted and understood, at least to a degree.

*If you are holding a safety meeting, conference, or any other gathering of firefighters near one of these dates, consider making a brief mention of the historical event. It just may stir the interest of some to the point of reading the reports, and, learning lessons—the easy way, and not the tragic way.*

In some cases little information could be found about these fires on the Internet. No doubt formal reports exist in dusty file cabinets. The Lessons Learned Center, at [www.wildfirelessons.net/IIRDB.aspx](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/IIRDB.aspx) has gathered some reports, and where appropriate, it has been noted below as a web link. It is hoped that they will continue to gather and post investigation reports on historical fires, thereby transferring the knowledge to the people on the ground.

**Date:** 9 January 1983

**Name:**

**Location:** Grays Point, NSW, Australia

**Web link:** <http://www.firebreak.com.au/paix-sydney99.html>

**Brief Description:** The Heathcote Tanker 81 and its 10 crewpersons was one of a number of vehicles engaged in fire suppression in bushland on "Anana Hill". All the vehicles were ordered clear as changing conditions made the hill dangerous. The crew of Heathcote 81 apparently did not appreciate the danger and were too slow to depart, and found their only exit blocked by fire. The tanker reversed back up the track away from the fire then stopped. At about the same time, a civilian on foot was spotted further up the hill and 2 crew were dispatched to bring her back to the tanker. She declined to be rescued and was instead accompanied safely off the hill by one of the crew. The other man returned to the tanker. The tanker crew then lit a self defense back burn, although this apparently flared up and did not assist them. A few minutes later, the tankers engine stalled and could not be restarted. This however did not cause the burnover as the vehicle was already trapped. It was then overrun by fire whilst parked on the firetrack. All of the crew sheltered outside of the truck, initially behind the front wheel, and then in a huddle in the middle of the road. Three of the crew were fatally burned, and the other 6 seriously.

**Date:** 13 January 1939

**Name:** Black Friday

**Location:** Victoria, Australia

**Web link:**

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/ccb3f2e90ba779d3ca256dea00053977?OpenDocument>

**Brief Description:** 1.5-2.0 million ha were burnt, 71 people were killed and over 1000 homes destroyed in Victoria. The most devastation occurred on 'Black Friday', 13 January 1939, when strong northerly winds intensified fires burning in almost every part of the state. Townships were destroyed and others badly damaged. So much ash and smoke was generated that ash fell as far away as New Zealand.

**Date:** 18 January 2003

**Name:** Canberra Bushfire

**Location:** Australian Capital Territory

**Web link:**

<http://www.ema.gov.au/ema/emadisasters.nsf/54273a46a9c753b3ca256d0900180220/9800a481424dd5a4ca256d65007ea8ef?OpenDocument>

**Brief Description:** Four people were killed, and approximately 500 homes were destroyed, along with an internationally famed astronomical observatory, extensive tracts of commercial and recreational softwood plantations, and an unknown number of sheep and cattle when fire swept into the western suburbs of Canberra the national capital of Australia.

**Date:** 1 February 1898

**Name:** Red Tuesday

**Location:** Victoria, Australia

**Web link:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red\\_Tuesday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Tuesday)

**Brief Description:** 260,000 ha were burnt, 12 people were killed and 2000 buildings were destroyed.

**Date:** 6 February 1851

**Name:** Black Thursday

**Location:** Victoria, Australia

**Web link:** <http://calisto.slv.vic.gov.au/latrobejournal/issue/latrobe-44/t1-g-t14.html>

**Brief Description:** The 'Black Thursday' fires burnt the largest area (approximately 5 million ha) in European-recorded Australian history, and took the lives of 12 people.

**Date:** 7 February 1967

**Name:** Black Tuesday

**Location:** Tasmania, Australia

**Web link:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967\\_Tasmanian\\_fires](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967_Tasmanian_fires)

**Brief Description:** Tasmania, Australia's southernmost "Island State" experienced its worst bushfires on "Black Tuesday" 7 February 1967 when 110 fires that were within a 40 kilometer radius of Hobart converged during a seven-hour period, fanned by extreme weather conditions. Approximately 264,000 ha were burnt, 1,700 houses destroyed and 61 people were killed. Several small towns were essentially burnt to the ground, fire destroyed houses well into the urban interface of Hobart, the state capital.

**Date:** 15 February 2009

**Name:** Fire in Chile

**Location:** near Chanco, 165 miles south of Santiago.

**Web link:**

**Brief Description:** Twelve wildland firefighters and a pilot were killed when their helicopter crashed in south-central Chile. The National Forestry Corporation, Chile's equivalent to the United States' National Park Service, said they were being ferried either to or from a fire in a eucalyptus plantation when the helicopter crashed.

The victims were men between the ages of 18 and 30 who worked for Celulosa Arauco y Constitucion, a timber and pulp company known as CELCO. Many of them were students working seasonally in order to make money for school.

**Date:** 16 February 1983

**Name:** Ash Wednesday

**Location:** Victoria, Australia

**Web link:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash\\_Wednesday\\_fires](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash_Wednesday_fires)

**Brief Description:** Over 100 fires started on the 16th of February 1983, a day known as Ash Wednesday. 210,000 ha were burnt, 2,080 houses destroyed, and 47 people lost their lives. Property-related damage was estimated at over \$A200m. More than 16,000 fire fighters, 1,000 police and 500 defense personnel fought the Victorian Ash Wednesday fires.

On the same day as the Victorian Ash Wednesday fires, the same weather pattern brought extreme fire behavior to the south-Eastern part of South Australia. The resulting fires, unrelated to those burning at the same time in Victoria burnt 208,000 ha, and 383 houses. 28 people were killed and property-related damage was estimated to be more than \$A200m.

**Date:** 5 April 1958

**Name:**

**Location:** Wandilo, South Australia

**Web link:**

<http://www.ema.gov.au/ema/emadisasters.nsf/83edbd0553620d8cca256d09001fc8fd/3721c247ea987e7fca256d3300057c4b?OpenDocument>

**Brief Description:** Several Forestry Department trucks were part of a group of vehicles attempting to control a fire in a pine plantation when a "sudden and dramatic increase in the wind resulted in a fire storm". In their efforts to escape, 3 of the vehicles became stuck in the soft sand of a firebreak and were overrun by the fire. Three of the firefighters survived with moderate burns, 2 by sheltering in the cabin of one vehicle and another by lying down in a deep wheel rut in the sand. The other 8 men were all killed by the fire as they fled.

**Date:** 27 April, 1938

**Name:** Massachusetts Military Reservation

**Location:** Sandwich Massachusetts,

**Web link:**

**Brief Description:** Three firefighters — Thomas E. Adams, Ervin Draber and Gordon King — lost their lives in a forest fire that ravaged 5,000 acres on the Massachusetts Military Reservation. The 1938 fire was detailed in the April 28, 1938, Cape Cod edition of the New Bedford Standard Times: "Fighting the blaze on the edge of the Shawme State Forest on the edge of the Forestdale Road, the men were building a back fire when a shift in the wind caused by heat from the head blaze created a blazing circle that engulfed the quartet," the newspaper reported. "Gibbs, Adams and Draber fell prone to the ground and attempted to crawl to the nearest haven — a dirt road running through Shawme Forest and constructed by the CCC workers. Fire shooting through dry brush enveloped the men igniting their clothes and burning their bodies." Adams, 42, a volunteer firefighter from Sandwich who owned a wholesale meat business, died the next day. King, 35, the son of the Sandwich fire warden and who worked in forestry, died April 30. Draber, 32, of Buzzards Bay died June 10 from complications surrounding a blood transfusion. He was on Cape Cod to help dredge the canal."

**Date:** 26 June 1990

**Name:** Dude

**Location:** Tonto National Forest, Payson, Arizona

**Web link:** [http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Dude\\_Fire\\_Fatalities\\_1990.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Dude_Fire_Fatalities_1990.pdf)

**Brief Description:** Six firefighters perished in Walk Moore Canyon north of Payson, AZ June 26, 1990

**Date:** 06 July 1994

**Name:** South Canyon

**Location:** Grand Junction, Colorado

**Web link:** [http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/South\\_Canyon\\_1994\\_Final\\_Report\\_062695.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/South_Canyon_1994_Final_Report_062695.pdf)

**Brief Description:** On July 3, 1994, the Bureau of Land Management received a report of a fire near the base of Storm King Mountain in the South Canyon, near Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Over the next several days the South Canyon Fire increased in size and BLM/Forest Service dispatched hotshot crews, smokejumpers, and helicopters to contain the fire - with very little luck. On the afternoon of July 6, the South Canyon fire spotted back across the drain and beneath the firefighters, moving onto steep slopes and into dense, highly flammable Gambel oak. Within seconds, a wall of flame raced up the hill toward the firefighters on the west flank fireline. Failing to outrun the flames, 12 firefighters perished. Two helitack crew members on top of the ridge also died when they tried to outrun the fire to the northwest. The remaining 35 firefighters survived by escaping out the east drainage or by seeking a safety area and deploying their fire shelters.

**Date:** 09 July 1953

**Name:** Rattlesnake

**Location:** Mendocino National Forest, California

**Web link:** [http://www.fireleadership.gov/toolbox/staffride/library\\_staff\\_ride2.html](http://www.fireleadership.gov/toolbox/staffride/library_staff_ride2.html)

**Brief Description:** On July 9, 1953 a New Tribes Mission firefighting crew under the direction of U.S. Forest Service overhead was trapped by flames as they worked on a brush covered hillside in Powderhouse Canyon on the Mendocino National Forest. The crew was working on a spot fire in a narrow canyon covered with 40 year-old Chaparral brush. They had just completed construction of a hand line around their spot fire when a sudden wind shift caused another spot fire to flare-up. This other spot fire was located up-canyon from the crew. However, the unusually strong down-canyon wind pushed the uncontrolled spot fire toward the crew's location. Within 30 minutes the fire had run more than a mile down canyon, catching the crew while they attempted to fight their way through the heavy brush to safety. Fifteen firefighters perished on the Rattlesnake Fire that day. Nine fellow crewmembers barely escaped.

**Date:** 10 July 2001

**Name:** Thirtymile

**Location:** Okanogan National Forest, Washington

**Web link:**

[http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/thirtymile\\_lsr4\\_fire\\_investigation\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/thirtymile_lsr4_fire_investigation_rpt.pdf)

**Brief Description:** On July 10, 2001, high temperatures, low humidity and severe drought conditions caused an abandoned cooking fire to ultimately erupt into a devastating firestorm that swept up the Chewuch River valley, trapping 14 firefighters and two campers. Four firefighters perished in an effort to battle the Thirtymile Fire.

**Date:** 16 July 1976

**Name:** Battlement Creek

**Location:** Grand Junction, Colorado

**Web link:** [http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Battlement\\_Creek\\_Fire.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Battlement_Creek_Fire.pdf) (22 MB)

**Brief Description:** Two air tanker pilots were killed when their aircraft went down, and the next day three firefighters were overrun and killed.

**Date:** 16 July 1977

**Name:** Cart Creek

**Location:** Ashley National Forest, Utah, about 2 miles southwest of Flaming Gorge Dam; N 40<sup>0</sup> 54.196', W 109<sup>0</sup> 26.501'

**Web link:** <http://iirdb.wildfirelessons.net/main/DisplayReport.aspx?ID=734>

**Brief Description:** Three firefighters died: Dave Noel, Dwight Hodgkinson, and Gene Campbell. During the early stages of the fire, a squad of firefighters was cutting fireline in flashy grass/sage vegetation with scattered junipers and Ponderosa pine. In the few minutes while they built 63' of line, they had to withdraw twice due to increasing heat from the fire. Then there was a major increase in intensity and the squad was ordered out of the area by the squad boss. They ran in single file for 5 chains and then had to run through an opening in the fire. Some of the crewmembers got separated and were entrapped by the fire.

**Date:** 22 July 1977

**Name:** Bass River

**Location:** Bass River State Forest, New Jersey

**Web link:**

**Brief Description:** A 2,300-acre fire killed four firefighters from Eagleswood Volunteer Fire Department. There is a firefighter memorial at Bass River State Forest at: N39, 40', 06.3" by W74, 26', 27.4". Greenbush Rd. near the intersection of Stage Rd.; 1977 fatality location: N39,37', 16.8" by W74, 26', 21.7". East of Allen Rd. near the intersection of Oswego Rd.

**Date:** 22 July 1998

**Name:** Kareas

**Location:** Kareas, near Athens, Greece

**Web link:** [http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/country/gr/gr\\_12.htm](http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/country/gr/gr_12.htm)

**Brief Description:** The fire was fanned by a strong “meltemi” wind (N direction) along the W to SW facing slopes of Ymettus mountain. The fuel in the area was Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*) forest. Firefighters in a number of fire trucks that were on a road that ran parallel to the main fire about 200 m higher saw a new branch and drove back (northwards) trying to escape. The three firefighters in the last truck, probably due to the smoke or due to inexperience in forest firefighting, stopped their truck exactly at the turn of the road in the narrowest point of the canyon. They abandoned it, although they had plenty of water and some safety distance and fled uphill, towards another road that ran parallel to the one they were on until then about 100 m higher. They were caught by the heat and the smoke in the canyon and perished. One young volunteer firefighter who was with them also died. Their bodies were found at a short distance (about 120 m) from the fire truck, which they had abandoned. The truck received little damage. It is quite probable that if they had stayed in the truck they would have survived. The results of the Fire Service investigation on the incident were never publicly announced.

**Date:** July 22, 2003

**Name:** Cramer Fire

**Location:** Salmon-Challis National Forest in central Idaho

**Web link:**

[http://wildfirelessons.net/documents/Cramer\\_Factual\\_Report\\_Less\\_Redacted\\_2003.pdf](http://wildfirelessons.net/documents/Cramer_Factual_Report_Less_Redacted_2003.pdf)

**Brief Description:** Two helitack crewmembers from the Indianola helitack crew rappelled into an area in order to build a helispot (H-2) above the fire so that a crew could be flown in to secure the west flank of the fire. The rappell spotter estimated it would take one hour to clear the helispot. About 5 hours later the two helitack personnel requested to be picked up by helicopter and said “Send them in a hurry.” At that time, however, two helicopters were down, one for 30-hour maintenance and the other for refueling. Fifteen minutes later a helicopter attempted to pick up the crewmen but could not land because of the smoke. The fire burned over the area and the bodies of Jeff Allen and Shane Heath were found 75-100 yards from the helispot. Their fire shelters had not been deployed.

This was the first known wildland fire where a firefighter was under threat of criminal liability for his actions.

**Date:** 28 July 1939

**Name:** Rock Creek

**Location:** Orovada, Nevada

**Web link:** [http://www.fireleadership.gov/toolbox/staffride/library\\_staff Ride3.html](http://www.fireleadership.gov/toolbox/staffride/library_staff Ride3.html)

**Brief Description:** The Rock Creek Fire started at 11:15 on July 28th, 1939 from lightning. The point of origin is located approximately five miles southeast of Orovada, Nevada and four miles due east of the Highway 95 monument. Between 15:30 to 16:00 the fire burned

explosively downhill in a westerly direction, under the influence of a thunderstorm directly over the fire that produced 40 to 60 mile per hour downdraft winds. A crew was entrapped and 5 died.

**Date:** 28 July 1999

**Name:**

**Location:** Melanios Cape, Chios island (Aegean sea), Greece

**Web link:** [http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/country/gr/gr\\_13.htm](http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/country/gr/gr_13.htm)

**Brief Description:** On 28 July 1999 three experienced fire fighters from an eleven-person hand crew were trapped by the flames on the island of Chios. The fire was burning in light fuels (Sarcopoterium spinosum dominated phrygana vegetation) at the bottom of a slope. They were descending to it as it did not look threatening. Then there was a sudden wind change, the fire picked up intensity and started moving upslope fast. Two of the fire fighters, who worked as seasonals for the Greek Fire Service (GFS), lost their life. One of them, a 27 year-old girl who was an assistant forester, died on the spot, while the second, a 31 year-old man suffered extensive burns (>60% of his body) and died a week later in the hospital. It was said at the time that the girl, who had five years of firefighting experience, fainted while trying to retreat with the rest of the crew. The 31 year old firefighter who was her fiancée tried to help her by carrying her. The third firefighter trapped by the flames, a GFS officer who was in charge, tried to help the 31 year old with carrying the girl. He escaped with intense burns over 40% of his body, and managed to survive after a long treatment in the hospital.

**Date:** 30 July 1993

**Name:**

**Location:** Agios Kirikos on Ikaria island, Greece

**Web link:**

**Brief Description:** The fire on Ikaria island started at 14:30 on July 30, 1993. There were two fire starts north of the town of Agios Kirikos. They were later attributed to arson. According to witnesses it took the weak (at that time) firefighting forces on the island more than an hour to arrive to the scene. The wind was blowing at about 8 Beaufort scale force (the usual NE wind called "meltemi" that blows at this time of the year in the Aegean). The fire soon reached the settlements Glaredes and Kountouma where houses were intermixed with forest and agricultural vegetation. The people tried to leave in panic. On one occasion five people perished when they tried to flee with their car. In the smoke they had a collision. They were caught by the smoke and flames as they were trying to leave the damaged car. In another case, three young people tried to help three old people to leave their home. They were all caught in the open by the flames and perished. The final toll was 13 people dead, many more injured, 35 destroyed houses, and 400 ha of pine forest and agricultural land burned.

**Date:** 01 August 1959

**Name:**

**Location:** Massif des Aures Algeria

**Web link:**

**Brief Description:** A forest fire killed 48 northeast of Massif des Aures, Algeria, 1959

**Date:** 05 August 1949

**Name:** Mann Gulch

**Location:** Helena National Forest, Montana

**Web link:** [http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Mann\\_Gulch\\_Fire\\_1949.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Mann_Gulch_Fire_1949.pdf)

**Brief Description:** On August 5, 1949, a wildfire overran 16 smokejumpers and firefighters in Mann Gulch on the Helena National Forest in Montana. Only three survived. The tragedy dealt a major blow to the U.S. Forest Service, which had not experienced a fatality during a decade of smokejumping. A best selling book by Norman Maclean called “Young Men and Fire”, describes the worst disaster ever to happen to a smokejumper crew.

**Date:** 05 August, 2008

**Name:** Buckhorn Fire (Iron Complex)

**Location:** Shasta-Trinity NF, California

**Web link:** <http://wildfiretoday.blogspot.com/2008/08/possibly-worst-non-military-helicopter.html>

**Brief Description:** A Sikorsky S-61 helicopter crashed shortly after lifting off from a remote helispot in an effort to transport a portion of a Type 2 hand crew back to the incident base. Nine people were killed, including the co-pilot and a U.S. Forest Service Inspector Pilot. The aircraft had a crew of two, both employees of Carson Helicopters of Grants Pass, Ore., and was carrying 11 firefighters.

The firefighters from Southwestern Oregon who died are Shawn Blazer, 30, of Medford; Scott Charleson, 25, Phoenix; Matthew Hammer, 23, Grants Pass; Edrik Gomez, 19, Ashland; Bryan Rich, 29, Medford; Stephen Renno, 21, Cave Junction; and David Steele, 19, Ashland.

Other victims of the accident were U.S. Forest Service inspector pilot James N. Ramage, 63, of Redding; and Carson Helicopters pilot Roark Schwanenberg, 54, from Lostine, Ore.

**Date:** 08 August 1959

**Name:** Decker

**Location:** Elsinore, California

**Web link:** [http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Decker\\_Fire\\_1959.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Decker_Fire_1959.pdf)

**Brief Description:** On August 8, 1959 the El Cariso Hot Shots experienced the first of two fire tragedies El Cariso would be involved in. The fire was the Decker Fire located in the foothills above Lake Elsinore. Seven people were overrun by fire and lost their lives. Three were members of the El Cariso Hotshot Crew.

**Date:** 15 August

**Name:** Spanish Ranch

**Location:** 40 miles east of Santa Maria, California

**Web link:** [http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Spanish\\_Ranch\\_Fire\\_1977.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Spanish_Ranch_Fire_1977.pdf)

**Brief Description:** The fire claimed the lives of four California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE) firefighters who were working on an indirect fireline 40 miles east of Santa Maria, California: Captain Ed Marty, and firefighters; Scott Cox, Ron Lorant and Steve Manley. Joe Valencia wrote the book "Area Ignition" about the incident.

**Date:** 16 August 1975

**Name:**

**Location:** Transkei Veld South Africa

**Web link:**

**Brief Description:** Forest fire kills 25, Transkei Veld, South Africa, 1975

**Date:** 19 August 1949

**Name:**

**Location:** Southwest part of France near Bordeaux

**Web link:**

**Brief Description:** Forest fire kills 230 and burns 256,000 acres

**Date:** 20 August, 1988

**Name:** Yellowstone area fires

**Location:** Yellowstone, Wyoming

**Web link:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellowstone\\_fires\\_of\\_1988](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellowstone_fires_of_1988)

**Brief Description:** In the summer of 1988 numerous fires burned 793,000 acres of Yellowstone National Park as well as large tracts of land surrounding the park. Half of the acres burned inside the park resulted from fires that started outside the boundary. Nine of the fires were human-caused, and 42 were started by lightning. On the worst single day, August 20, 1988, tremendous winds pushed fire across more than 150,000 acres. Throughout August and early September, some park roads and facilities were closed to the public, and residents of nearby towns outside the park feared for their property and their lives. Yellowstone's fire management policy was the topic of heated debate, from the restaurants of park border towns to the halls of Congress. Following this event, the National Park Service and other federal land management agencies rewrote their policies affecting how they managed fires with less than full suppression strategies.

**Date:** 21 August 1910

**Name:** Big Blowup fires of 1910

**Location:** Idaho

**Web link:** [http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/1910\\_fire.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/1910_fire.pdf)

**Brief Description:** As the fires scaled up, the fledgling U.S. Forest Service, barely five years old, tried to match them. It rounded up whatever men it could beg, borrow, or buy and shipped them into the backcountry. The crews established camps, cut firelines along ridge tops, and backfired. Over and over again, one refrain after another, the saga continued of fires contained, of fires escaping, of new trenches laid down. Then the Big Blowup of 20-21 August shredded it all. Farms, mining camps, trestles, hobo camps, and whole towns cracked and burned. Smoke billowed up in columns dense as volcanic blasts, while the fire's convection sucked in air from all sides, snapping mature cedar and white pine like toothpicks, spawning fire whirls like miniature tornadoes, flinging sparks like broadcast seed. Those on the lines heard that savage thunder and felt a heat that could melt iron and buffeted in winds that could scatter whole trees like leaves and stared, senseless, into smoke too dense to see their own hands before them. Crews dropped their saws and mattocks and fled. That day seventy-eight firefighters died; a total of 160 people were killed and millions of acres burned. (From American Forests)

**Date:** 21 August 1937

**Name:** Blackwater

**Location:** Shoshone National Forest, Wyoming

**Web link:**

[http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/blackwater\\_lsr5\\_handling\\_of\\_blackwater.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/blackwater_lsr5_handling_of_blackwater.pdf)

**Brief Description:** 12 firefighters died and 32 were burned.

**Date:** 23 August 1968

**Name:** Canyon Inn

**Location:** Los Angeles area, California

**Web link:**

[http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/documents/psw\\_rp055/psw\\_rp055.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/documents/psw_rp055/psw_rp055.pdf)

**Brief Description:** The Canyon Inn Fire occurred at the mouth of San Gabriel Canyon, north of Azusa, on August 23, 1968. 19,000 acres burned, one camp crew foreman and eight crewmen were killed in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains.

**Date:** 24 August 2000

**Name:**

**Location:** Charaugi, Greece

**Web link:**

**Brief Description:** A fire moving across the border from Albania pushed by a strong north wind ran for 20 km within four hours, burning mainly dense broadleaved vegetation. Many small villages in the shrubby oak forests were soon surrounded by the fire. Most people fled or were evacuated but some of them did not make it or stayed to protect their homes and perished. By the next morning, seven people were dead and tens of homes were destroyed. The fire continued for three more days, finally burning about 8000 ha. The final death toll reached eleven people, all of them older than 67 years old.

**Date:** 1 September 1967

**Name:** Sundance

**Location:** Northern Idaho, Kootenai National Forest

**Web link:**

[http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/sundance\\_investigation\\_1967\\_part1.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/sundance_investigation_1967_part1.pdf)

**Brief Description:** On the back of fire-induced winds gusting to 95 mph, the Sundance Fire raced 16 miles in nine hours. Once it crested the Selkirk Divide, it burned across the entire Pack River drainage and over Apache Ridge – more than 10 miles – in three hours. It was during the height of this firestorm that Luther P. Rodarte of Santa Maria, Calif., and Lee Collins of Thompson Falls, Mont., were killed while taking refuge beneath a bulldozer. During the period of the fastest spread, the fire burned at a rate of a square mile (640 acres) every three to six minutes and produced a smoke column that rose 35,000 feet into the air. It generated the energy of a Hiroshima-force atomic bomb exploding every two minutes, according to fire historian Stephen Pyne of Arizona State University.

**Date:** 01 September 1894

**Name:**

**Location:** Hinckley, Minnesota

**Web link:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinckley\\_Fire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinckley_Fire)

**Brief Description:** 418 people died and 200,000 acres burned.

**Date:** 06 September 1966

**Name:**

**Location:** Lisbon, Portugal

**Web link:**

**Brief Description:** Forest fire kills 25 firefighting soldiers

**Date:** 26 September 1970

**Name:** Laguna

**Location:** San Diego County, California

**Web link:** [http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Laguna\\_Fire\\_Analysis\\_1970.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Laguna_Fire_Analysis_1970.pdf)

**Brief Description:** September 26-Oct. 3 1970: The Laguna fire burned 175,425 acres, killed eight civilians, and destroyed 382 homes. In 24 hours the fire burned from near Mount Laguna into the outskirts of El Cajon and Spring Valley. Previously known as the Kitchen Creek Fire and the Boulder Oaks Fire, was, at its time, the second largest fire in the history of California. The Laguna fire was started by downed power lines during Santa Ana winds in the Kitchen Creek area of the Laguna Mountains in eastern San Diego County on the morning of September 26, 1970. In only 24 hours it burned westward about 30 miles (50 km) to the outskirts of El Cajon and Spring Valley. The fire devastated the communities of Harbison Canyon and Crest. In the end the fire burned 175,425 acres (710 km<sup>2</sup>) and 382 homes killing eight people. Santa Ana winds are warm, dry winds that characteristically appear in Southern California weather during autumn and early winter.

This fire led to an analysis of fire suppression staffing needs on national forests in California, and many of those involved reconsidered interagency communications and large fire organization. The Incident Command System was initially developed by a group of seven fire agencies who came together in the aftermath of the disastrous 1970 wildfire season in California. This coalition took the name Firefighting Resources of Southern California Organized for Potential Emergencies, or FIRESCOPE. Chartered by the U.S Congress in 1972, the FIRESCOPE coalition was charged with a national mandate to develop a system for multi-agency coordination of complex emergencies that exceeded the capabilities of any single jurisdiction.

**Date:** 02 October 1943

**Name:** Hauser Creek

**Location:** San Diego County, California

**Web link:** [http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Hauser\\_Creek\\_1943.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Hauser_Creek_1943.pdf)

**Brief Description:** The Hauser Creek fire in the Cleveland National Forest left nine firefighters dead from a crew of Marines and scorched 10,000 acres. FROM VFW MAGAZINE, MARCH, 2003. Two hard hours of intensive fireline work found the Marines being forced into Hauser Canyon. Things got progressively worse because of the canyon's especially steep slopes. Rushing flames pushed the Marines into a rut. Wind shifts and inversions of flame sheets cut off their retreat to a safe area. Three Leathernecks thought they could race through a wall of flame and break into a safe zone. But the fire front was deep and wide, and they became the first of 10 men to die there. Four Marines later died in the Naval Hospital in San Diego. The next day, now reinforced by the 28th Cavalry, 10th troopers were starting a backfire when a corporal became separated from his platoon. Running uphill close to the fire, he was burned to death. Besides the 10 fatalities, 73 military personnel suffered burn injuries. "The Marines and federal foresters had retreated before the rushing flames" reported The San Diego Union. "A wind shift sent fire leaping at them, and cut off their retreat ... The fire `ran over' them, and although none of the leaping flames actually touched the men, five more--four Marines and a soldier--died of

burns suffered in the heat."

**Date:** 03 October 1933

**Name:** Griffith Park

**Location:** Los Angeles, California

**Web link:**

[http://www.lafire.com/famous\\_fires/331003\\_GriffithParkFire/100333\\_GriffithPark.htm](http://www.lafire.com/famous_fires/331003_GriffithParkFire/100333_GriffithPark.htm)

**Brief Description:** The Griffith Park Fire occurred at 2:26 p.m. October 3, 1933 in Block 36, Dam Canyon in the Mineral Wells Canyon area near the old Los Angeles Zoo. A group of 3,780 men were employed clearing brush as part of the Los Angeles County welfare relief program. A small fire had started at the bottom of a slope and a number of men were ordered or volunteered to fight the fire. A sudden wind change sent a shaft of flame up the slopes of Dam Canyon killing 29 workers of thermal burns and injuring more than 150 others. Engine 56, Hose 27 along with 50 Mountain Patrolmen responded and contained the fire to 46.83 acres.

**Date:** 04 October 1922

**Name:**

**Location:** Ontario, Canada

**Web link:**

**Brief Description:** Forest fire kills 44, northern Ontario

**Date:** 07 October 1825

**Name:** The Great Miramichi Fire

**Location:** Northern New Brunswick, Canada.

**Web link:** <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Miramichi-Fire>

**Brief Description:** 160 died in the fire which burned over 80,000,000 acres, about 1/5 of New Brunswick's forests. It ranks among the three largest forest fires ever recorded in North America. About 1/3 of the homes in Fredericton were destroyed, but the main devastation was 100 miles to the northeast. On the evening of October 7, 1825, the firestorm roared through Newcastle, and New Brunswick (now part of the City of Miramichi).

**Date:** 7 October 1971

**Name:** Romero

**Location:** Los Padres National Forest

**Web link:** [http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/romero\\_fire\\_investigation.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/romero_fire_investigation.pdf)

**Brief Description:** The Romero fire had a far greater toll than its 14,538 charred acres and structural losses. Four firefighters, three from Inyo National Forest and a contract dozer operator from Arroyo Grande, were overrun on the volatile eastern flank of the fire. An unanticipated wind change was the precipitating factor in this tragedy. The three Forest Service crewmen, Richard Cumor age 26, Delbert Deloachage age 26 and Thomas Klepperich age 21 and the

'dozer operator, 43 year-old Leonard Mineau died. Two other operators were seriously burned in the same burnover. Thirteen aircraft tended the fire, including four B-17s and a prototype C-130 from the Air National Guard. The fire was started by an arsonist on October 6<sup>th</sup> 1971, and burned for eleven days. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1973, a mental patient from Santa Ana residing at Atascadero State Hospital, was arrested and indicted on charges of arson and first degree murder.

**Date:** 08 October 1871

**Name:** Pestigo

**Location:** Pestigo, Wisconsin

**Web link:** <http://www.peshtigofire.info/>

**Brief Description:** On the evening of October 8, 1871 the worst recorded forest fire in North American history raged through Northeastern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, destroying millions of dollars worth of property and timberland, and taking between 1,200 and 2,400 lives.

**Date:** 12 October 1918

**Name:**

**Location:** Cloquet, Minnesota

**Web link:** <http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/documents/gtr-158/gtr-158-cover.pdf>

**Brief Description:** Forest fire kills 559 and burns 250,000 acres

**Date:** 19 October 1938

**Name:** Pepper Hill (or Pepper Run)

**Location:** Lick Island, Pennsylvania

**Web link:** <http://www.rootsweb.com/~pacamero/CCC/ccchist.htm>

**Brief Description:** On October 19, 1938, a fire burned Pepper Hill by Lick Island Penn., (close to Sinnemahoning). Eight CCC workers from Camp Cameron 8-132 died. The fire, known as the "Pepper Hill Fire," started the morning of October 19 in mountainous terrain near Sinnemahoning. Two crews totaling forty-nine men were sent to the fire from Camp Cameron. The weather was very hot. Forest fuels were extremely dry from an extended drought and an early frost which had killed foliage, so the fire moved rapidly uphill. The men were tired from fighting another fire the previous day. They hadn't returned to camp until 5:30 a.m. According to a 1979 investigation report by Warren A. Ely, enrollee leader Edward Sofchak testified, "When we were called back out at 1:00 I looked at the men, and a couple of them were not fit in my mind for any further work- Bogush and Stephanic were pretty tired. They almost fell asleep on the truck." Other testimony at the investigations found a lack of training in fire fighting for most of the men. The combination of tired, untrained men and fast-moving fires in hilly terrain was fatal. Tired, confused crew members got ahead of the fire and uphill from it, a serious mistake in firefighting. The fire moved more rapidly uphill than the men could and eight were burned to death.

**Date:** 20 October, 1991

**Name:** Tunnel Fire (or East Bay Hills fire)

**Location:** Oakland Hills, California

**Web link:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oakland\\_Hills\\_firestorm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oakland_Hills_firestorm)

**Brief Description:** The "Tunnel Fire", commonly referred to as the Oakland Hills fire or East Bay Hills fire, occurred on Sunday October 20, 1991. The fire killed 25 people (23 civilians, 1 police officer and 1 firefighter) and injured 150, and destroyed 2,449 single-family dwellings and 437 apartment and condominium units. Eleven of the fire victims died in traffic jams on Charing Cross Road while evacuating. Eight others died on narrow streets in the same area. The economic loss has been estimated at \$1.5 billion.

**Date:** 21 October, 2007

**Name:** Witch, Harris, Poomacha, Horno/Ammo, Rice, Ranch, Buckweed, Santiago, Slide fires

**Location:** Southern California in the counties of San Diego, Riverside, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino & Ventura

**Web link:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October\\_2007\\_California\\_wildfires](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October_2007_California_wildfires)

**Brief Description:** The October 2007 California wildfires were a series of wildfires that began burning across Southern California on October 20. At least 1,500 homes were destroyed and over 500,000 acres (2,000 km<sup>2</sup>, or about 770 mi<sup>2</sup>) of land burned from Santa Barbara County to the U.S.–Mexico border. Nine people died as a direct result of the fires; 85 others were injured, including at least 61 firefighters. Over 6,000 firefighters worked to fight the blazes; The fires forced approximately 1,000,000 people to evacuate their homes, the largest evacuation in California's history.

**Date:** 25 October, 2003

**Name:** Cedar Fire

**Location:** East of San Diego, California

**Web link:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cedar\\_Fire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cedar_Fire)

**Brief Description:** The fire began south of Ramona when a lost hunter lit a signal fire at sunset hoping to be rescued. Within 30 minutes 320 firefighters and 6 fire chiefs were enroute. At midnight the Santa Ana wind increased pushing the fire to the west toward San Diego. During the night the fast moving fire killed 14 people living in Wildcat Canyon and Eucalyptus Hills who had little or no warning. Eight of those killed died while they were evacuating. The fire burned 280,278 acres, and destroyed 2,232 homes in San Diego, Alpine, Harbison Canyon, Crest, Cuyamaca, Julian, and Santa Ysabel. While trying to defend a house near Santa Ysabel, fire Captain Steven Rucker, 38, from the Novato Fire Department was overrun by the fire and killed on October 29.

Other large fires burned at about the same time in southern California between October 21 and 26, 2007 including Piru, Grand Prix, Old, Paradise, Padua, Simi, Roblar 2, Verdale, Mountain, and Otay

**Date:** 26 October, 2006

**Name:** Esperanza Fire

**Location:** Cabazon, California

**Web link:**

[http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/esperanza\\_00\\_complete\\_final\\_draft\\_05\\_01\\_2007.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/esperanza_00_complete_final_draft_05_01_2007.pdf)

**Brief Description:** Five U.S. Forest Service wildland firefighters were entrapped and died on the Esperanza fire near Cabazon, California on October 26, 2006. Killed were engine Capt. Mark Loutzenhiser, 44, of Idyllwild; engine operator Jess McLean, 27, of Beaumont; assistant engine operator Jason McKay, 27, of Phelan; and firefighter Daniel Hoover-Najera, 20, of San Jacinto. A fifth firefighter Pablo Cerda, 23, of Fountain Valley, who was injured along with the other four, passed away on October 31. The five firefighters comprised the crew of a wildland engine, Engine 57, from the San Bernardino National Forest. They were assigned to a state managed fire approximately 60 miles east of Los Angeles and were entrapped while protecting a structure.

**Date:** 01 November 1966

**Name:** Loop

**Location:** Angeles National Forest, California

**Web link:** <http://www.coloradofirecamp.com/fire-origins/loop-fire-brief.htm>

**Brief Description:** On November 1, 1966, the El Cariso Hotshots were trapped by flames as they worked on a steep hillside in Pacoima Canyon on the Angeles National Forest. Ten members of the crew perished on the Loop Fire that day. Another two members succumbed from burn injuries in the following days. Most of the nineteen members who survived were critically burned and remained hospitalized for some time. Lessons learned from the Loop Fire resulted in the checklist for downhill line construction, improved firefighting equipment, better fire behavior training, and the implementation of new firefighter safety protocols.

**Date:** 3 November 1980

**Name:**

**Location:** Waterfall, NSW, Australia

**Web link:** <http://www.waterfallrfb.org.au/history.htm>

**Brief Description:** Headquarters Brigade Tanker 81 was trapped on a fire truck in bush after being ordered from the area. The tanker was apparently caught by a finger of fire coming out of a gully in a sudden "blowup" . The crew of 5 were burned to death sheltering under the truck.

**Date:** 25 November 1956

**Name:** Inaja

**Location:** Santa Ysabel, California

**Web link:** [http://www.coloradofirecamp.com/cedar\\_fire/inaja\\_fire\\_introduction.htm](http://www.coloradofirecamp.com/cedar_fire/inaja_fire_introduction.htm)

**Brief Description:** Eleven firefighters - two Forest Service personnel and nine from Viejas Honor Camp - lost their lives fighting this human-caused fire west of Julian, California. Soon after this fire, the 10 Standard Firefighting Orders were developed. This was one of the first fires where sodium calcium borate was used as a fire retardant dropped from an air tanker. It was quickly discovered that this chemical sterilized the soil, and by 1957 it was no longer used. However, the term "borate bomber" lingered on for decades.

**Date:** 2 December 1998

**Name:** Linton

**Location:** Victoria, Australia

**Web link:** <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/documents/entrapment-linton.pdf>

**Brief Description:** On Wednesday 2 December 1998, a fire started in forest north of the small Victorian town of Linton. The day was hot (28 C) with light northerly winds. At about 18.00 (6.00 p.m.), when the main fire had been contained around the edge of the town, bulldozers supported by tankers started clearing a control line on the eastern flank of the fire. At about 20.00 (8.00 p.m.) the Operations Point broadcast a warning to crews that a wind change was one hour away. Two tankers, drove ahead of a bulldozer along an old track in an attempt to get to a water point. The crews of the two tankers did not acknowledge receipt of the broadcast

warning. When the wind changed direction and strength it drove the fire towards the two tankers which were surrounded by unburned fuels and up-slope of the fire. One tanker was destroyed by fire and its crew of five men died.

**Date:** 20 December 1977

**Name:** Honda Canyon

**Location:** Vandenberg Air Force Base, California

**Web link:** [http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/The Fatal 1977 Vandenberg AFB Fire.pdf](http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/The_Fatal_1977_Vandenberg_AFB_Fire.pdf)

**Brief Description:** Three people were killed, including the Base Commander Colonel Joseph Turner, Fire Chief Billy Bell and Assistant Fire Chief Eugene Cooper. Additionally, severe burns were experienced by Heavy Equipment Operator Clarence McCauley. He later died due to complications from the burns. A book about this fire, "Beyond Tranquillon Ridge", was written by Joseph N. Valencia.

**Date:**

**Name:**

**Location:**

**Web link:**

**Brief Description:**