

CALFIRE Glossary of Terms

Anchor Point – An advantageous location, usually a barrier to fire spread, from which to start constructing a fireline.

Area Command – An organization established to:

1) oversee the management of multiple incidents that are each being handled by an incident management team (IMT) organization; or
2) to oversee the management of a very large incident that has multiple IMTs assigned to it. Area command has the responsibility to set overall strategy and priorities, allocate critical resources based on priorities, ensure that incidents are properly managed, and that objectives are met and strategies followed.

Average Bad Day – Fire conditions experienced during typical mid-fire-season day. Used as a benchmark to gauge fire situations.

Backfire – A fire suppression tactic. Any intentionally set fire used to consume the fuel in the path of a free burning wildfire.

BIA – Bureau of Indian Affairs

BLM – Bureau of Land Management

CALMAC – California Multi-Agency Command. The information coordination center established in Sacramento. Tasked to gather timely information from regions, cooperating agencies, the media, the director, interested government leaders and the public.

Chief Officers – Agency Administrators, Fire Chiefs and other strategic level staff overseeing Incident Commanders.

Containment – A fire is contained when it is surrounded on all sides by some kind of boundary but is still burning and has the potential to jump a boundary line.

Controlled – A fire is controlled when there is no further threat of it jumping a containment line. While crews continue to do mop-up work within the fire lines, the fire fight is over.

Convection Column- The rising column of gasses, smoke, fly ash, particulates and other debris produced by a fire.

Cooperating Agency – An agency supplying assistance including but not limited to direct tactical or support functions or resources to the incident control effort.

Crown Fire – A fire that advances from top to top of trees or shrubs, more or less independently of the surface fire.

Defensible Space - Creating a fire safe landscape for at least 30 feet around homes (and out to 100 feet or more in some areas), to reduce the chance of a wildfire spreading and burning through the structures. This is the basis for creating a “defensible space” - an area that will help protect your home and provide a safety zone for the firefighters who are battling the flames. It is required by California law.

Direct Attack – A method of fire suppression in which suppression activity takes place on or near the fire perimeter.

Direct Protection Area (DPA) – That area for which a particular fire protection organization has the primary responsibility for attacking an uncontrolled fire and for directing the suppression action.

Draw Down Level – The level where the success of extinguishing a fire with initial attack forces is compromised.

ESF4 – Emergency Support Function 4. A component of the National Response Plan developed for FEMA. A document that outlines different agency’s responsibilities in different types of emergencies.

ESRI - Environmental Systems Research Institute. A software company that produces software that is widely used to produce Geographic Information Systems maps on emergencies for analysis and display.

Extreme Fire Behavior – “Extreme” implies a level of fire behavior characteristics that ordinarily precludes methods of direct control action. One or more of the following is usually involved: high rate of spread, prolific crowning and/ or spotting, presence of fire whirls, strong convection column. Predictability is difficult because such fires often exercise some degree of influence on their environment and behave erratically, sometime dangerously.

Federal National Team - A Type 1 National Incident Management Team coordinated by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). Team members may be from various agencies. The California Wildfire Coordinating Group (CWCG) sponsors five of the 16 national teams.
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Federal Regional Team - A Type 2 Incident Management Team maintained by the U.S. Forest Service in the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5, California and the Pacific Islands). Team members may be from various agencies.

Federal Responsibility Area (FRA) - The primary financial responsibility for preventing and suppressing fires is that of the Federal Government. These lands are generally protected by the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, the Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, National Parks Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Fire Danger Rating – A management system that integrates the effects of selected fire danger factors into one or more qualitative or numerical indices of current protection needs.

Fire Line - A strip of area where the vegetation has been removed to deny the fire fuel, or a river, a freeway or some other barrier which is expected to stop the fire. Hose lines from fire engines may also contribute to a fire being surrounded and contained.

Fire Perimeter – The entire outer edge or boundary of a fire.

Fire scope – Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies. A multi-agency coordination system designed to improve the capabilities of California's wildland fire protection agencies. Its purpose is to provide more efficient resource allocation and utilization, particularly in multiple or large fire situations during critical burning conditions.

FMAG – Fire Management Assistance Grant. A federal assistance program managed by FEMA through the state Office of Emergency Services (OES). This program is designed to help state and/or local jurisdictions impacted by high cost, high damage wildland fires.

Fuels - Combustible material.

GACC – Geographical Area Coordination Center, see South Ops

GIS – Geographic Information System

INCIDENT COMMANDER – This ICS position is responsible for overall management of the incident and reports to the Agency

Administrator for the agency having incident jurisdiction.

Incident Command System (ICS) – A standardized on-scene emergency management concept specifically designed to allow its user(s) to adopt an integrated organizational structure equal to the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries.

Incident Command Team (ICT) – see Incident Management Team

Incident Management Team (IMT) – The incident commander and appropriate general and command staff personnel assigned to an incident. Also known as an Incident Command Team.

Indirect Attack – A method of fire suppression in which suppression activities takes place some distances from the fire perimeter, and often advantage of fire barriers.

Infrared (IR) – A heat detection system used for fire protection, mapping, and hotspot identification.

Initial Attack (IA) – An aggressive suppression action taken by first arriving resources consistent with firefighter and public safety and values to be protected.

Interface Zone – It is the area where the wildlands come together with the urban areas. Also referred to as the I-Zone.

Intermix Zone – It is areas where homes are interspersed among the wildlands. Also referred to as the I-Zone.

Joint Information Center (JIC) – An interagency information center responsible for researching, coordinating and disseminating information to the public and media. Formed through the MAST effort.

LRA – Local Responsibility Area

MACS – (Multi-Agency Coordination System) Is a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications integrated into a common system with responsibility for coordination of assisting agency resources and support to agency emergency operations.

MAFFS – Modular Airborne Firefighting System (Refers to the Military aircraft, C-130s, which are used as Air Tankers)

MAST – Mountain Area Safety Taskforce.

MODIS – (Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer) – is a key instrument aboard the Terra and Aqua satellites. This instrument provided important intelligence for fire managers regarding fire perimeters and fire growth throughout the fire siege.

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Mop-Up – Extinguishing or removing burning material near control lines, felling snags, and trenching logs to prevent rolling after an area has burned, to make a fire safe, or to reduce residual smoke.

Mutual Threat Zone (MTZ) – A geographical area between two or more jurisdictions into which those agencies would respond on initial attack. Also called mutual response zone or initial action zone.

NIFC – National Interagency Fire Center located in Boise, Idaho.

NPS – National Park Service

OES – The California Governor’s Office of the Emergency Services.

OSC – (Operations Section Chief) The ICS position responsible for supervising the Operations Section. Reports to the Incident Commander. The OSC directs the preparation of unit operational plans, requests and releases resources, makes expedient changes to the Incident Action Plan as necessary and reports such to the Incident Commander.

Predictive Services – Those Geographic Area and National-level fire weather or fire danger services and products produced by wildland fire agency meteorologists and intelligence staffs in support of resource allocation and prioritization.

Preparedness Levels – A national system of preparedness for incidents. The levels are 1 through 5:

Preparedness Level 1 – Few or no active fires under 100 acres. Minimal or no commitment of fire resources. Low

to moderate fire danger. Agencies above draw down levels.

Preparedness Level 2 – Numerous fires under 100 acres. Local commitment of resources for initial attack.

Moderate fire danger. Agencies above drawdown levels and requests for resources outside local area are minimal.

Preparedness Level 3 – High potential for fires 100 acres & above to occur, with several 0-99 acre fires active.

Fire danger moderate to very high. Mobilization of resources within the region and minimal requests outside of

region. Agencies above or having difficulty maintaining draw down levels.

Preparedness Level 4 – Fires over 100 acres are common. Fire danger is high to very high.

Resource mobilization

is coming from outside the region. Agencies at minimum draw down levels.

Preparedness Level 5 – CALMAC is fully activated. Multiple large fires are common in the north and or the south.

Fire danger is very high to extreme. Resources are being mobilized through the National Coordination Center.

Activation of National Guard or military done or under consideration.

Santa Ana Winds – Is a type of Foehn wind. A Foehn wind is a warm, dry and strong general wind that flows down into the valleys when stable, high pressure air is forced across and then down the lee side slopes of a mountain range. The descending air is warmed and dried due to adiabatic compression producing critical fire weather conditions.

Locally called by various names such as Santa Ana winds.

South Ops – The multi-agency geographic area coordinating center for southern California. Located in Riverside, it is staffed by CDF, State OES and Federal fire agencies.

STRIKE TEAM - An engine strike team consists of five fire engines of the same type and a lead vehicle. The strike team leader is usually a captain or a battalion chief. Strike Teams can also be made up of bulldozers and handcrews.

Spot Fire or Spotting – A small fire that is ahead of the main fire that is caused from hot embers being carried to a receptive fuel bed. Spotting indicates extreme fire conditions.

Red Flag Warning – Term used by fire weather forecasters to alert users to an ongoing or imminent critical fire weather pattern.

Rehabilitation – The activities necessary to repair damage or disturbance caused by wildfire or the wildfire suppression activity.

State Responsibility Area (SRA) - The California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection classifies areas in which the primary financial responsibility for preventing and suppressing fires is that of the state. CDF has SRA responsibility for the protection of over 31 million acres of California's privately-owned wildlands.

Slop-Over – A fire edge that crosses a control line or natural barrier intended to confine the fire. Also called breakover.

Unified Command – In ICS, unified command is a unified team effort which allows all agencies with jurisdictional responsibility for the incident, either geographical or functional, to manage an incident by establishing a common set of incident objectives and strategies.

WFSA – Wildland Fire Situation Analysis

Wildland/Urban Interface – The line, area, or zone where structures and other human

development meet or intermingle
with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.