

# THE RURAL FIREFIGHTER

Issue 04-12—Nov 2012



Nebraska Forest Service

[www.nfs.unl.edu](http://www.nfs.unl.edu)

## Planning for Interface Fires

Being familiar with the layout of major occupancies in your fire district is an obvious advantage when the pager notifies you of an incident at that location at 3 AM. Pre-planning is also one of the keys to success during an incident in the wildland/urban interface (WUI).

Ideally, pre-planning should start during the early phases of new construction. Most often, however, WUI fires occur in existing areas, and the reality is that firefighters must deal with subdivisions and areas where little thought may have been given to wildland fire threats.

With that in mind, what should the fire department focus on when developing a local plan? Here are a few things to consider.

First, a detailed map needs to be developed showing structure locations, access routes, evacuation routes and critical infrastructure (power lines, communication towers, etc). Highlight other special hazards such as areas with steep slope, chimneys and drainages (especially those in line with prevailing wind direction) and concentrations of highly flammable vegetation. Areas of special concern such as hospitals, nursing homes, apartment buildings, schools, etc. should also be identified.



Devils Nest in northern Knox County has been recognized as an area of WUI concern. Recently, NFS assisted the Crofton Fire Department in pre-planning what will be a very challenging area during an interface fire.

Incident specific information such as potential locations for incident command posts, staging areas, water sources, helicopter dip sites, existing or potential fire control lines and safety zones can also be identified.

A written plan should also be included. It should contain a list of partners and cooperators, the functions they

will perform and the resources they can bring to the incident. For example, if evacuations are needed, who will perform that function and who will facilitate the care of the evacuees? If heavy equipment is needed, who can provide that? If road closures are needed, who will perform that function?

Once the plan is formulated, it's time to put

it through it's paces. Consider organizing scenario and/or sand table exercises with role players acting in the capacity they would fill in the event of an actual incident. This training exercise can not only expose potential flaws and missing information, it also serves to build interagency cooperation, so be sure to include those non-fire partners who may be called upon for resources.

Obviously much more information could be added so consider everything that could come into play in an emergency.

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## Drought to Continue

The National Weather Service has just released the seasonal drought outlook through December. The forecast shows no relief in sight. This is the case not only for Nebraska, but also for most of the plains states and the rocky mountain and Southwest states. Both soil moisture and fuel moisture are at dangerously low levels. No green-up will be likely until next spring at the earliest. Cool season grasses will be the first to green (spring) while the warm season grasses wait until the warmth of summer to green and increase fuel moisture.

Fire season will likely last through the winter and wildfires can happen whenever and wherever we don't have snow cover. While it doesn't happen often, we have had large wildfires in rangeland in November, December, January and February. If we don't get snow cover, we're certainly "set up" for this to happen again. The only thing working in our favor is the fact that the drought this year kept grasses from growing very tall. However, even short grass will carry a wildfire though and on a warm, windy day it will spread fast and get big.

It's obvious what this means for fire departments. Hope for the best but plan for the worst. Keep equipment in a state of readiness and firefighters ready to go. Now is when all that training pays off!

In your fire district; urge farmers, ranchers and rural homeowners in range or forest land to create a defensible space around their homes and buildings. The publication "Living with Fire," a homeowner's guide to reducing the risk of wildfires, is available on the Nebraska Forest Service website (nfs.unl.edu). Separate guides are available for eastern and western Nebraska homeowners. The guides include no-cost ways to make a home firewise.

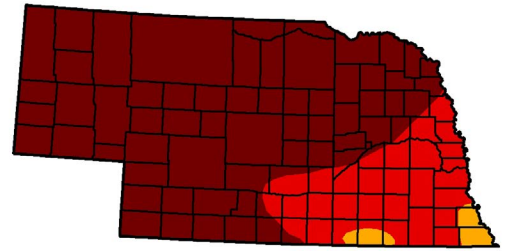
## U.S. Drought Monitor Nebraska

October 2, 2012  
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	97.94	77.61
Last Week (09/25/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	97.94	73.25
3 Months Ago (07/03/2012 map)	0.19	99.81	77.22	40.55	2.28	0.00
Start of Calendar Year (12/27/2011 map)	71.68	28.32	13.81	0.65	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	97.94	73.25
One Year Ago (09/27/2011 map)	75.70	24.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

### Intensity:

■ D0 Abnormally Dry  
■ D1 Drought - Moderate  
■ D2 Drought - Severe  
■ D3 Drought - Extreme  
■ D4 Drought - Exceptional



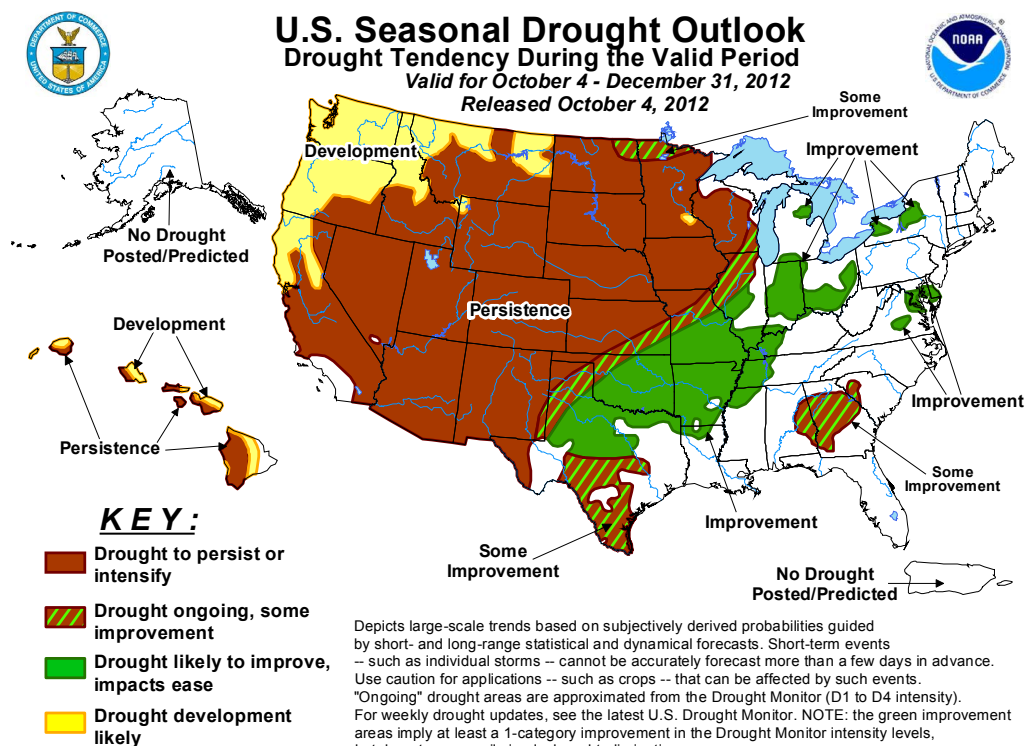
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, October 4, 2012  
Anthony Artusa, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC

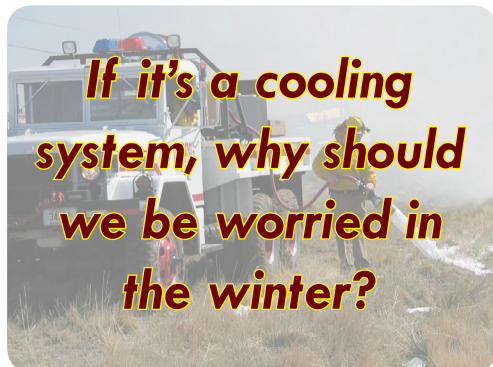
**The latest maps don't provide much good news for Nebraska. As the drought continues, larger 10- and 100-hour fuels will continue to dry. Be prepared for these fuels to begin to contribute to fire behavior along with fine fuels. Mop up in areas with downed woody fuels (tree lines, forested areas) will likely need to be more intensive and could take longer than it normally would. Factor this into your tactics and consider requesting mutual aid and/or aerial resources as early as possible.**





## ***Preparing Apparatus Cooling Systems for Winter Operations***

With the onset of winter just around the corner, now is the time for everyone to ask the same question: "Have I done all that needs to be done to make my apparatus ready for winter? What am I forgetting?"



An often overlooked item is your cooling system. If it's a cooling system, then why should we be worried in the winter? It's already cool outside! Actually your cooling system plays a big part in the proper operation of your vehicle. The standard mix of antifreeze and water is a 50/50 solution; this will give you protection to -35 degrees. You should never exceed 60/40 because this is one of the times were more is not better. Excessive antifreeze will actually freeze faster than too little, the ethylene glycol will sludge up and not circulate correctly in the engine causing hot spots that could result in engine damage. So it is a good idea to stick close to the 50/50 mix.

Another item often overlooked is how often do you change your antifreeze? Antifreeze contains chemicals that help prevent electrolysis in the cooling system (you can equate this to static electricity). As your antifreeze ages, these chemicals can no longer keep the electrolysis at bay and it can cause erosion inside of your engine block. This will show up as leaks, like coolant in the oil. Yearly additions of a quality additive will help, but a 3-4 year

cycle of flushing your cooling system is better. By flushing your cooling system you will also help remove any buildup of rust, sludge, etc. that can reduce the efficiency of the system.

Final tip: If you have a Military 6X6, periodically check the ground strap between the radiator and the frame for looseness, corrosion, and more importantly, just assure that it is there.

As always, the Fire Shop personnel stand by to answer question that you may have for the care of your military equipment. For more information call Lew at 402.624.8061.



## ***Ready, Set, Go! Grants Available***

We all know the work done by homeowners **before** a fire threatens makes fighting the fire much easier. But with limited budgets in a "normal" fire season, now does a department find the funding to get the word out?



***Pre-fire preparation efforts proved effective in sparing this home during the recent Wellnitz fire in Sheridan County.***

The Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) Program could be one way. The RSG program, sponsored by the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety offers direct funding grants—no cost-share—of up to \$1000 to help assist small volunteer and rural fire departments provide outreach

to their communities on wildland fire public awareness. Grants are intended to help with printing or supply costs to create a successful local outreach event or door-to-door efforts.

Fire departments must be "members" of the RSG Program and complete an application. Grant funds cannot support and/or supplant salary or in-kind reimbursements to the fire department or other partners involved. Grant funds must be used within 6 months of award and are only for events/activities that have not yet occurred. Applicants must indicate whether the fire department can be reimbursed for expenses or if it will need grant funds up front.

For information and to sign up with RSG, go to [www.wildlandfirersg.org](http://www.wildlandfirersg.org).



## ***Nugget of the Day***

**Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat** - Sun Tzu, an ancient Chinese military general, strategist and philosopher who is believed to be the author of *The Art of War*, an influential book on military strategy.



## ***Calendar of Events***

Nov 3	Red card certification course, LaVista
Feb 8-10	Les Lukert Winter Conference, Kearney
April 13-21	Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy, Fort Robinson State Park
May 17-19	Nebraska State Fire School, Grand Island

## Sandy's Corner



It is that time of year when I start “pulling at my hair” as I try to match up mutual aid and fires.

After spending nearly a day and a half trying to match these, I still only managed to match about 40+ fires. I am now sitting at 532 “Mutual Aid Giver” responses with only two months to go in the 2012 year.

This has been a terrible year for fire—the worst we have had since I started working for the NFS—and we are looking at a possible 400,000 acres of Nebraska wildland that has burned this year. I cannot stress enough the importance of getting these fires reported. Some of you don’t feel reporting is important, but let me assure you—it is—and this year it is especially important! Beginning in December, if I have a number of Mutual Aid Givers for a specific fire, and I’m unable to match these up with the home fire department, I will begin the process of calling the Fire Chief. We’ve not done this before—it takes a lot of my time and department expense—but we are going to do it. Please help me out here and take the

time to get them reported before there is a need for me to personally call you. Mutual Aid can be confusing for a lot of departments so I want to go over this one more time and hopefully, you will read carefully how it works.

1. On the yellow card in column 4 – it is strictly for the department name of WHO YOU GAVE MUTUAL AID TO, e.g., the name I write in that column is Cedar Bluffs, which means the only other area I fill in are the people and apparatus that our department (Wahoo) sent to the fire. You don’t need acres or anything else – just the date, time out and back and people and apparatus.

2. Do not report Mutual Aid you give to a department where the fire was not a wildfire. If you helped out another department where a house burned down and no acres of wildland was burned - do not list it. The reason: the department that had the fire is not supposed to report it, and if they do what they are supposed to do (not report), there will be no fire for me to match your Mutual Aid with. NFS reports are for wildland fires only.

3. If you report online, it will show that you are the Mutual Aid Giver. At the bottom of the form, it asks for

the Home Fire Department – that is the department that HAD the fire and asked you for assistance.

Thanks to those of you who are reporting on-line. We add several new departments each month, but we still have a long way to go. Please give it a try. It saves money and time...what more could you ask for? Just because you are the Fire Chief who typically reports does not mean you cannot have another member of your fire department do this. Many departments are having a city employee do this and I’ve found they are very conscientious about getting them done on time and with accuracy. Please give them my thanks for helping their community.

Have a nice holiday season and I’ll be looking for those reports. Deadline – around the 2nd week in January. The Feds set the date so it changes from year to year so when the clock strikes 12:00 on January 1st – time to get them in.

Thanks for what you do in your community. We do appreciate you!



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