



INCIDENT BRIEF



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2025 NW Illinois Wildland Fire Incidents

Two incidents. 17 days apart. 30 miles apart. Five firefighters burned.

THE SHIBLEY INCIDENT

On March 22nd, 2025, two firefighters responded to a mutual aid call for a field fire with their department UTV. While on foot with the UTV nearby, they stopped in an area of dry grass when fire from a previously suppressed area reignited and advanced. Firefighter #1 tried to move the UTV to safety, but the fire spread too fast. Firefighter #2 tried to reach Firefighter #1 but was forced to wait until fire conditions decreased. Once able, he reached his partner and used the UTV's radio to call for help.

Firefighter #1, a 21-year-old male, was airlifted to a burn center. He sustained significant burn injuries over more than 40% of his body. Severe burns to his hands resulted in partial or complete amputation of all fingers. Additional injuries, including facial injuries required significant treatment, skin grafts, multiple surgeries, and specialized ongoing care.

Firefighter #2, a 22-year-old male, was transported to a nearby hospital for burns to his hands.

THE RUSH INCIDENT

On April 9th, 2025, three firefighters responded to a mutual aid call for a field fire with their department UTV. The crew worked along a creek in an unburned field of heavy ornamental grass. A sudden wind shift caused rapid fire growth. Fire ignited beneath the UTV, and Firefighter #1 attempted to move it, but smoke and heat conditions prevented relocation. Firefighters #1 and #3 exited the UTV and entered the creek, but Firefighter #2 became surrounded by flames. Firefighter #1 left the creek, reached firefighter #2, and pulled him into the creek. All three firefighters were airlifted to hospitals.

Firefighter #1, driver of the UTV, a 66-year-old male, was hospitalized with full-thickness burns to his face, hands and legs.

Firefighter #2, front passenger, a 44-year-old male, was hospitalized with full-thickness burns to his face, chest, back, arms, legs, and hands.

Firefighter #3, rear passenger, a 57-year-old male, was hospitalized with full-thickness burns to his face and hands.

CHIEF'S SUPPLEMENT Standards cited by IL OSHA for these incidents ([LINK](#))



TURN OVER ➡



INCIDENT BRIEF



Defenses for Wildland Fires

FIREFIGHTERS

Grass and brush are fuel. Don't stand in fuel. Fine fuels, like grass, burn hot and fast. Attack from the black.
Don't risk your life to save equipment or apparatus. They can be replaced.
Don't get 100% task oriented. Be self-aware.
Follow PPE requirements, the Incident Action Plan, and SOGs/SOPs.
Use a portable radio.

OFFICERS

Continually assess risk vs. benefit.
Do not assume.
Enforce PPE requirements, the Incident Action Plan, and SOPs/SOGs.
Ensure ongoing supervision of and communication with remote crews.

INCIDENT COMMANDERS

Develop and implement an Incident Action Plan based on several factors that include but are not limited to: strategic priorities, resources, capabilities, weather, involved fuel, size of fire, time of day, exposures, etc.
Ensure all arriving personnel are briefed before entering the hazard zone.
Maintain accountability of personnel in the hazard zone.

FIRE DEPARTMENT LEADERS

Ensure SOP/SOG based high-quality training for wildland fire operations.
Ensure your 1910.132(d) PPE hazard assessment clearly identifies proper PPE for wildland operations.
Weigh the risk vs. benefit of operating UTVs at wildland fires. UTVs do not provide an enclosed cab for refuge and may access areas that are difficult to rapidly evacuate.

ALL PERSONNEL

Implement the **LCES** system at all wildland fires **before** engaging.

LOOKOUTS: Position for best view of fire and crew. Everyone is a lookout when needed. Enhance with technology (drones, cameras).

COMMUNICATIONS: Individual radios, closed-loop, radio checks, information flows up to IC and down to firefighters.

ESCAPE ROUTES: More than one. Takes you to safety zone. Alternative routes.

SAFETY ZONES: Refuge from danger. Identify and communicate location(s).

