

HEALTH & SAFETY @ FIRES

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Lions River Fire Protection Association
By Landowners - For Landowners

Every year, landowners and firefighting personnel are requested in terms of obligations and responsibilities to protect their properties and other assets. Lions River FPA endeavours to assist with protecting the lives of all its members and member personnel during these unpredictable and dangerous events.

When fighting fires, you will often be faced with long hours, possibly for a number of days, often under stressful conditions, which can negatively impact your health, increase the likelihood of injury and affect your overall performance³

This guideline was developed to keep YOU safe and healthy @ fires.

Veld & Forest fires present unique challenges and all firefighting personnel must understand how to best protect their health and safety while fighting fires and always work on a buddy-buddy basis. You should know and be aware of the following fire acronyms which will most certainly help you when dealing with unwanted fire:

LACES

FIRE ORDERS

WATCHOUT

HEALTH: Maintain physical fitness; exercise regularly, eat properly, and get sleep.

REST: When necessary, stop working, rest in cool areas and drink water.

VEHICLES: Always wear your seatbelt; be aware of abnormal road conditions. Never drive when tired or ill.

PPE: Always wear the correct PPE.

REPORT: all work related injuries, hazards and unsafe work conditions to fellow firefighters, as well as to first aiders, and your employer.

HEAT ILLNESS: be aware of such risks which can result in heat rash, cramps, exhaustion or heat stroke. It is important to understand your risk, the symptoms of heat-related illness, and how to prevent and treat heat-related illness.

During any veld and forest fire, the environment is constantly changing. The landowner and or most experienced fire “manager” should identify, communicate and mitigate potential hazards at each fire and develop strategies to minimize or avoid them. You must always:

SAFETY: Promote a safe work environment, encourage firefighters to report and mitigate hazards, work-related injuries, illnesses and “near misses.”

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS: Maintain and provide updates to crew members as changes occur or are anticipated (e.g., weather, fire behaviour).

MANAGE & MONITOR: rest periods procedures and policies to prevent heat-related illness

HEALTH: Encourage physical fitness and report all heat related illnesses

FPA: Inform the Lions River FPA of all unwanted fires, progress being made in terms of suppression, assistance which may be required during suppression operations.

REDUCE EXPOSURES: limit exposure to smoke, ash and debris. Strategies to reduce exposure include:

- Rotating fire personnel out of areas of heavy smoke
- Avoiding downwind fire fighting
- Monitoring fire personnel for health problems
- Locating staging areas (for those coming to assist) upwind of the fire

Common Work-related Hazards Faced on the Fire line

Safety Hazards @ Fires

Working with aircraft

Working near power lines

Vehicles – reversing, rollovers & collision

Heavy Machinery

Trees, rocks and steep slopes – being struck, slips, trips and falls

Health Hazards @ Fires

Smoke and dust hazards

Fatigue

Dehydration

Heat related illness –
heat cramps
heat stress
heat exhaustion
heat stroke

Burns

Respiratory illnesses

Stress – heat, physical & mental

Contact with plant irritants (e.g., poison ivy, thorns)

Environmental conditions (e.g, cold weather)

Insect bites or stings

Survival @ Fires

Take refuge from radiant heat

Take refuge on foot

Take refuge in a building

Take refuge in a vehicle