

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 4-7

ISSUE: WILDLAND FIRE FIGHTING, PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT FOR MUNICIPAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS

This Guidance Note is intended to provide information and guidance to municipal fire departments that may become involved in grass, brush and wildland fires. Firefighters working in stations where the fire department has an agreement with the Ministry of Natural Resources, and/or where all three of the following criteria are met, should be provided with appropriate head, foot, and eye protection for wildland firefighting:

- If the station's fire related responses are more than 15% grass, brush, or wildland fires based on a five-year average, and
- If 5% of grass, brush or wildland fires exceed more than one hectare in size based on a five-year average, and
- If 15% of grass, brush or wildland fires are more than one hour duration (Attack and Suppression) on a five year average.

Fire departments involved in grass, brush, or wildland fires that do not meet the above criteria, should consider the following issues:

- Structural fire fighting helmets provide adequate protection but can become overly heavy in these circumstances. Fire departments should consider other head protection that can be properly secured to the head by way of a chin strip and eye protection where appropriate.
- Although rubber fire fighting boots provide adequate protection, they can add to fatigue if worn for a long period of time or to travel long distances on uneven terrain. Fire departments should consider alternative footwear where this potential exists. Footwear should provide toe protection and address puncture resistance and melting when exposed to hot embers, etc.

- Outerwear should be flame resistant and provide protection to the legs, torso and arms. When worn as an ensemble with gloves and boots, the pant cuff and wrist design should be such that skin exposure is prevented.
- Current practice is to consider wildfire smoke not immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH). Exposure to wildfire smoke should be limited as much as possible by operational procedures.

The majority of documented injuries to wildland fire fighting are related to heat stress (reference Appendix D1 and D2).