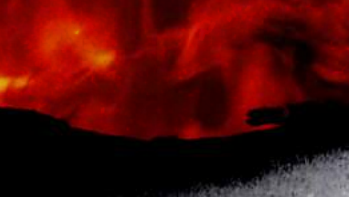
RAGING THROUGH TIME
THE WORLD'S HISTORIC WILDFIRES

Shakespeare once wrote,

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet,"

and for firefighters, a wildfire by any other name would be just as dangerous. Known by numerous monikers, including forest, woods, wildland or bushfires, this dangerous phenomenon feeds off of vegetative fuel, which strengthens its destructive force. **To successfully defeat a wildfire, it must be deprived of fuel, oxygen or heat.**[1]

TECHNIQUES INCLUDE:



Dousing with water and spraying fire retardants.

Building a fire line using the bump-up method, where all firefighters move ahead one space on the line as one overtakes another.

Removing vegetation to create firebreaks, slowing it down for containment.

Setting fires, controlled burns or back-burning at-risk areas can help minimize a fire's potential prior to the season.

HISTORIC WILDFIRES & RESULTING DEVELOPMENTS

8 OCT 1871 — **PESHTIGO FOREST FIRE**[2]
Wisconsin, United States

A small logging town battled multiple fires, which ultimately culminated into one burning more than 1,300 km^2 at an excess of 980°C. Reportedly between 1,500 to 2,500 individuals perished.

RESULTING REGULATIONS/DEVELOPMENT

- Wisconsin's governor diverted $150,000 in aid from the Chicago Fire, while neighboring cities devoted financial aid and resources.

20-21 AUG 1910 — **GREAT FIRE OF 1910**[3]
Northeast Washington, Northern Idaho, Western Montana, United States

The Northern Rockies were engulfed by a legendary firestorm, which burned for two days and required the assistance of 4,000 government soldiers to extinguish. Smoke reached New England and soot reached Greenland.

RESULTING REGULATIONS/DEVELOPMENT

- Strengthened the new U.S. Forest Service.
- Drove public support for the protection of national lands.
- Introduced Smokey Bear in 1944 and helped save 155 protected national forests.
- Fire suppression model emulated globally.

13 JAN 1939 — **BLACK FRIDAY BUSHFIRES**[4]
Victoria, Australia

Drought, northerly winds and high temperatures culminated into a massive fire consuming Victoria's northeast mountain country. Sixty-nine sawmills, 71 lives, 1,000 homes, five townships and huge areas of state and reserved forest were lost or destroyed.

RESULTING REGULATIONS/DEVELOPMENT

- The Forests Act 1939: Forests Commission took control of fire suppression/prevention on public land.
- Enhanced network of public roads and tracks, especially in more remote areas.
- Further development of firefighters' PPE.

1997-1998 — **INDONESIAN FOREST FIRES**[6]
Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore

An estimated total of 90,000 km^2 burned across the islands of Sumatra, Kalimantan and Kalimantan. Fire emissions caused considerable air pollution, reduced visibility, hindered transportation and impacted the region's diverse ecology.

RESULTING REGULATIONS/DEVELOPMENT

- Established the ASEAN Haze Technical Task Force and approved an early warning system through a Regional Haze Action Plan.
- Highlighted the need for revision of land conversion and fire use policies.
- Encouraged greater research into the link between smoke haze and vegetation fires.

9 JUL 1953 — **RATTLESNAKE FIRE**[5]
Grindstone Canyon, California, United States

A wind shift reignited a previously extinguished fire, which jumped the line into the canyon. It trapped 15 men, making this one of the deadliest fires in Forest Service personnel history.

RESULTING REGULATIONS/DEVELOPMENT

- Formed first national task force on wildland firefighter safety.
- Reviewed annually by wildland firefighters as a part of "Lessons Learned."

SOURCES [1] http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/natural-disasters/wildfires/, http://www.fs.fed.us/rmac/fire/terminology.html, https://schools.aemi.edu.au/bushfire/about-bushfires, http://essa.act.gov.au/community-information/bushfires/what-is-a-bushfire/bush-and-forest-fires/, [2] http://www.americanheritage.com/content/fire-makes-wind-wind-makes-fire?page=show, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2003-10-10/news/0310100309_1_firestorm-chicago-fire-fire-museum, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2076476_2076484,00.html, http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/massive-fire-burns-in-wisconsin, http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.asp?dsNav=N:4294963828-4294963788&dsRecordDetails=R:BA13523, [3] http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11424829, http://www.foresthistory.org/ASPNET/Policy/Fire/Famous-Fires/1910Fires.aspx, http://fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors/HTML/articles/2010/1910Fire.htm#.Vfz4QHarTcs, http://discovermagazine.com/2015/march/00-big-burn-review, [4] http://www.abc.net.au/blackfriday/home/default.htm, https://www.depi.vic.gov.au/fire-and-emergencies/managing-risk-and-learning-about-managing-fire/reviews-and-inquiries, http://www.access.provic.gov.au/public/component/daPublic-BaseContainer?component=daPublic&entityId=VA%204478, http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/mendocino/recreation/recarea/?recid=25274&actid=70, http://wiltalwaysremember.org/incident-lists/481-rattlesnake-fire.html, [5] http://www.honoringheroes.com/2011/07/remembering-15-firefighters-rattlesnake-fire-in-1953/, http://www.fireleadership.gov/toolbox/staffride/library_staff_ridez.html, http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/mendocino/recreation/recarea/?recid=25274&actid=70, http://wiltalwaysremember.org/incident-lists/481-rattlesnake-fire.html, [6] http://www.wamis.org/agm/meetings/wofire08/S2-Zaki_Malaysia.pdf, http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/country/id/id_32.htm, http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB5066/index1.html, https://rainforests.mongabay.com/08indo_fires.htm

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