



POSITION PAPER

DATE: June 16, 2025

TO: State Training and Education Advisory Committee (STEAC)
Office of the State Fire Marshal
Sacramento, CA

FROM: FIRESCOPE Task Force

SUBJECT: URBAN CONFLAGRATION TRAINING

SUMMARY

Urban conflagration fires are recognized as IDLH events and are becoming increasingly more regular. Firefighters in California are responding to urban conflagration fires more frequently and may not have any previous training or experience. Currently, formal urban conflagration training does not exist.

Urban conflagrations differ from typical fires due to their magnitude and the challenges they pose. These fires can spread rapidly through residential, commercial, and industrial areas, often exacerbated by escalating factors such as wind, fuel load, and building density. Notable historical examples include the Oakland firestorm (1991), the Panorama Fire (1980), and more recently, the Cedar Fire, the Grand Prix Fire, the Old Fire (2003) and the January 2025 Eaton and Palisades Fires in Los Angeles County.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Development of a training curriculum that emphasizes the preparedness for urban conflagrations. Effective response to such emergencies lies in comprehensive and specialized training programs for fire departments and emergency responders. Such concerted focus would enhance their ability to swiftly and efficiently manage large-scale urban conflagration fire incidents.

Key Characteristics should focus on:

- Rapid Spread: Urban fires can quickly engulf large areas, fueled by closely packed structures.
- High Heat Intensity: The intense heat generated can compromise building integrity and hinder firefighting efforts.
- Complex Evacuations: Dense populations necessitate well-coordinated evacuation



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strategies to ensure civilian safety.

- Resource Demands: Extensive resources and inter-agency cooperation are needed to effectively manage and extinguish these fires.

Components of an Effective Training Program should include:

- Simulated Drills: Regular, realistic drills in urban environments to mimic potential conflagration scenarios.
- Virtual Reality (VR): Training that enables decision-makers and operators to train on urban conflagration scenario fires in advance of real time experience.
- Cross-Agency Coordination: Training that involves collaboration with police, medical services, and utility companies.
- Advanced Firefighting Techniques: Instruction on the latest firefighting technologies and methodologies.
- Risk Assessment and Management: Training in identifying and mitigating risks associated with urban fires.
- Communication Strategies: Effective communication protocols to ensure seamless coordination among responders.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This issue will be presented to STEAC for consideration of curriculum development and follow the standard process for committee solicitation and OSFM SFT rollout. As determined by STEAC, such training could be incorporated into FF1 curriculum as an awareness level, expanded singularly as a stand-alone class, and/or included as an additional module(s) of existing ICS training.

FINDINGS

With the exception of Urban Conflagration training, the California Fire Service has comprehensive training in place for nearly every all-hazards emergency/disaster imaginable. Real life experience is currently the only means of preparing firefighters for urban conflagration fires. There currently exists no specialized training for the growing problem of urban conflagration fires.

CONCLUSION

Urban conflagration training is essential for preparing emergency responders to tackle large-scale urban conflagration fires effectively. By incorporating advanced methodologies, fostering inter-agency collaboration, and engaging with the community, we can enhance our preparedness and response strategies. Investing in such training programs not only safeguards lives and property but also strengthens the resilience of our urban environments against future fire threats.