



Today's discussion is from the
Miscellaneous Category.

Wildfires in/near Oil and Gas Fields

As energy production increases across the country, many firefighters are responding to an increasing number of wildland fires in areas with oil and gas production, exploration, and development. As with any wildland fire operation, firefighters must maintain situational awareness at all times; however, areas of oil and gas production create an environment where firefighters may not be cognizant of potential hazards that could be encountered in these areas. First and foremost - Only engage the wildland fire when it is safe to do so and recognizing hazards in the oil field should be a part of the incident size up prior to engagement/suppression action.

- Driving hazards are amplified by narrow one lane roads and high amounts of large truck traffic. Roads often are dead-ended.
- Well sites and other facilities with flammable and/or hazardous materials in tanks, pits or other containers.
- Pipelines are common with some on the surface or buried just below the surface. *This is a watchout situation for dozers, engines and other equipment.*
- Poisonous gases including hydrogen sulfide (H₂S).
- Use and storage of explosives is common in oil fields. These explosives may be detonated using two-way radio frequencies. Two-way radio use is not allowed within 500 feet of these areas.
- Untrained and unequipped personnel may be trying to suppress the fire. Often this is done with heavy equipment.
- Construction of raised pads could contain buried woody material. This material can be ignited and burn underground.
- Failures of production facility valves, gauges and fittings may result in leaks, fire, explosions, hazardous material spills and toxic vapors.
- Vents on oil and gas infrastructures often release pressure. The gases vented may be highly flammable and have the potential to ignite if a flame is nearby. Stay clear of these areas if "venting" is encountered.
- Hazard Mitigations As with any wildland fire operation; risk management, safety guidelines and practices should be implemented (e.g., LCES, Fire Orders) prior to and during wildland fire operations. Additional mitigation measures should be considered for suppression efforts in or near oil and gas production:
 - Identify hazards – agency resource advisors/oil and gas specialists can be of great assistance.
 - Ensure oil and gas operators in that area have been contacted - utilize dispatch to make contacts if necessary.
 - Firefighters should limit their time near oil and gas infrastructures.
 - Firefighters should never manipulate any valves, fittings, etc. in any way.

References:

http://gacc.nifc.gov/rmcc/dispatch_centers/r2drc/Handbook_Oil_&Gas_Well.pdf
[Oil and Gas Field Risk Assessment Worksheet](#)
http://www.nifc.gov/wfstar/oil_gas.htm

Have an idea? Have feedback? Share it.

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