

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

I. General

Annex C (The State of Florida Emergency Response Team Guidelines for Wildfire Operations) identifies the actions that may be taken by the Florida Division of Forestry and those State and local agencies in support of the Division of Forestry in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from wildfire event(s). This Annex addresses the role of State and local government in providing the necessary support to the Florida Division of Forestry in its statutory responsibilities in responding to, controlling and suppressing wildfires.

II. Purpose

The Department of Community Affairs, Division of Emergency Management has the overall responsibility for coordination of the support to the Florida Division of Forestry and local government in response to a wildfire event. The Division of Emergency Management in cooperation with the Division of Forestry will update and coordinate the plans with other response and support agencies. Within the Division of Emergency Management, the Bureau of Preparedness and Response has the responsibility for coordinating with the Division of Forestry the state's planning efforts for wildfire events.

III. Scope

This Annex covers any and all wildfires that occurs in the State of Florida which the Division of Forestry and local governments respond. The purpose of the response is to contain, control and extinguish the wildfire.

IV. Assumptions

1. The Division of Forestry is statutorily responsible for wildfire prevention, detection, and suppression on 26,000,000 acres in Florida.
2. The United States Forest Service and the Department of Interior are responsible for wildfire suppression on their respective federal lands throughout the State.
3. Each year, lightning fires that are associated with Florida's thunderstorm season (April through September) can create tremendous wildfire activity when associated with the State's dry spring conditions.
4. From 1981 through 1998, an average of 5,656 wildfires occurred per year, burning an average of 209,371 acres. In 1999, the wildfire season saw 4,500 wildfires consume more than 365,000 acres statewide.

5. Because of changing weather conditions, the yearly figures ranged from a low of 3,343 wildfires (with 48,586 acres burned) in 1995 to record high 13,917 wildfires in 1981.
6. In 1989, a record 645,331 acres burned statewide. However, the most intense fire season on record occurred in 1998 due to the escalating wildland/urban interface in the State.
7. The President is authorized to provide assistance, including grants, equipment, supplies, and personnel, to any State for the suppression of any fire on publicly or privately owned forest or grassland, which threatens such destruction as, would constitute a major disaster.