

Chapter on Wildland Fire Safety Featured in Wilderness Medicine Book¹

Martin E. Alexander ²

Abstract

Wilderness medicine is the practice of medicine where definitive care is more than one hour away, and often days to weeks away. The practice of wilderness medicine is defined by difficult patient access, limited equipment, and environmental extremes. The development of wilderness medicine has paralleled the evolution of pre-hospital care in the urban setting.

The fifth edition of the definitive medical reference textbook *Wilderness Medicine* was published by the C.V. Mosby Company earlier this year. The book is edited by Dr. Paul S. Auerbach, a practicing physician who serves as Clinical Professor of Surgery in the Division of Emergency Medicine at the Stanford University Medical Center, California. He is also a founder and past president of the Wilderness Medicine Society.

Wilderness Medicine was first published in 1983 under the title *Management of Wilderness and Environment Emergencies* and has gradually expanded in scope. The fifth edition of the book consists of 97 chapters on a variety of topics. A chapter on wildland fires authored by Kathy M. Davis (USDI National Park Service) and Robert W. Mutch (USDA Forest Service retired) has been included since the beginning. For the fifth edition of the book, I was asked to serve as the lead author of the chapter on wildland fires (Alexander et al. 2007).

The chapter on wildland fires is designed to familiarize and define terminology, equipment, resources and emergency management strategies associated with this natural hazard. It describes the current look of fire as a historical force and discusses fire management policies, the nature and scope of wildland fire hazards, fire behavior, typical injuries, fatality fire statistics and incidents, and survival techniques. While the emphasis is on North America, reference is made to other regions of the globe, most notably Australasia. Readers will find the chapter to be quite well illustrated with nearly 40 photographs and diagrams. Over 400 bibliographic references are cited and are included on a DVD that accompanies the book. In addition, over 100 additional suggested readings are given.

The primary audience for *Wilderness Medicine* and in turn the book chapter on wildland fires, are emergency medical and search & rescue personnel. However, the material is also considered very relevant to the general public who may live or recreate in the wildlands as well wildland fire professionals as evident from the comments that I have received to date.

Reference

Alexander, M.E.; Mutch, R.W.; Davis, K.M. 2007. Wildland fires: dangers and survival. In: Auerbach, P.S., ed. *Wilderness Medicine*. Fifth ed. Philadelphia, PA: Mosby: 286-335.

¹ Poster paper presented at the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference, 13-17 May 2007, Seville, Spain.

² Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service, Northern Forestry Centre, 5320-122 Street, Edmonton, AB, T6H 3S5, CANADA. E-mail: malexand@nrcan.gc.ca