



Volunteer Fire Departments and Prescribed Fire: Rx Fire Partnership

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Smithland Fire Department



Why did they start?

- Lots of emergency grass fire calls – rather do it themselves on their own time
- VFD members work for Co. Cons. & DNR
 - Knew that more fire was needed



Smithland Fire Department



- Doing burns since 1999
- Over a 3-year period:
 - 25 burns (~8/yr)
 - 2,400 acres (~800 acres/yr)
 - \$12,500 donations from burns (~\$4,000/yr)

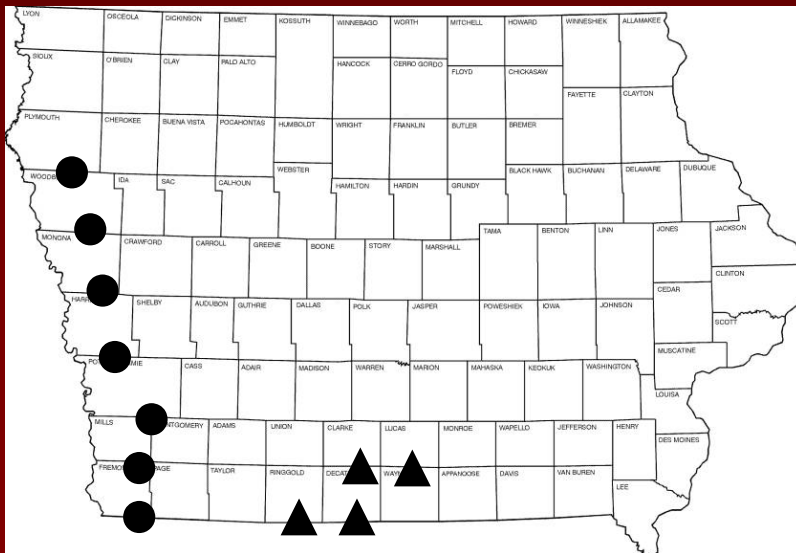


The Project



Pilot area

- Grassland counties in Loess Hills and South-central Iowa (11)
- 10 participating VFDs



The Project



Purpose

- Educate & train volunteer firemen
 - Plan and conduct a safe fire
 - Setting up a service
 - The ecological benefits of a prescribed fire
- Provide resources

The Project



Currently

- 2nd year of project
- VFDs have burned 915 acres
- 17 Volunteers worked 104 hours
- Completed the reference binder

Top 10 Reasons to Develop a Prescribed Fire Service



10. Prescribed Fire is an important ecological tool.

- Native grasslands
- Woodlands
- CRP
- WRP

Top 10 Reasons to Develop a Prescribed Fire Service



9. Motivation to attend more formal education opportunities

- Course-work such as S130/S190
- Abbreviated course – Crosswalk Training

Top 10 Reasons to Develop a Prescribed Fire Service



8. Further Opportunities

- With red-card, can be deployed on wildfires

Top 10 Reasons to Develop a Prescribed Fire Service



7. Learn to play better with your neighboring VFDs.

- Currently, may only work together during mutual aid
- Have opportunity to work under non-emergency situations
- Share resources

Top 10 Reasons to Develop a Prescribed Fire Service



6. Learn to play better with your crew members.

- Non-emergency activity
- Team building
- Better understand strengths and weaknesses

Top 10 Reasons to Develop a Prescribed Fire Service



5. Grant Opportunities

- VFA (Volunteer Fire Assistance) grants available thru DNR

Top 10 Reasons to Develop a Prescribed Fire Service



4. Safety

- Burning under non-emergency situation
- Better understanding of grassland fires
- Can experiment with various tools
- Can use this as training exercises

Top 10 Reasons to Develop a Prescribed Fire Service



3. Fund-raiser

- Beats the heck out of flipping pancakes
- Can use funds to buy wildland fire gear
 - Nomex clothing
 - Leaf blowers
 - Slip-on pumper units
 - Backpack units

Top 10 Reasons to Develop a Prescribed Fire Service



2. You decide when to burn

- Not called out when the fire escapes
- Less interference with your normal schedule

Top 10 Reasons to Develop a Prescribed Fire Service



- # 1. Conducting Rx burns can serve as a recruitment tool for new members
- Gets new members active & gives them something to do.
 - Why join if there is nothing to do?

How does Smithland do it?



Crew

- 20 on dept.
- 12 to call on for burns
- Training
 - 4-5 with S130/190 or higher
 - On-the-job training



How does Smithland do it?



- Insurance
 - Ok'ed by their upper echelon and attorney
- Revenues
 - Suggested donation
- More toys
 - Easy to get grants with a good reputation for doing burns

Advantages that VFDs Have



- Exist locally
- Interspersed throughout whole state
- Can respond quickly to right weather conditions



Advantages that VFDs Have

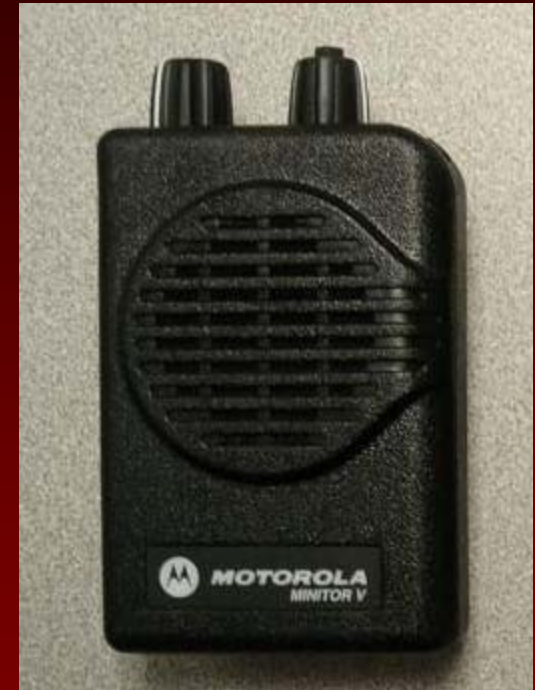


- Extensive support network
 - Pre-existing interest and expertise in fire (albeit structural)
 - Reservoir of crew members to draw from
 - Support from other fire departments if problems arise (mutual aid)
 - State & county wide training

Advantages that VFDs Have



- Communications
 - Com. center in every county
 - Every fireman has a pager
 - Department can send pages to members only, or to whole county



Advantages that VFDs Have



- Economic efficiency \$\$\$
 - Integrated fire protection and fire service
 - Cross-functional equipment and training
 - Minimal labor costs
 - Grant and donation eligible

The Key



An Advocate

VFDs & Prescribed Fire



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