

Command Corner: Indicators of extreme fire behaviour

By Chief Tim Murphy, US Forest Service Africa
Disaster Management Technical Advisor



Chief Tim Murphy



It is critical for firefighters to maintain situational awareness of live and dead fuel moisture conditions as well as predicted and current weather conditions. As fire behaviour changes, it is critical to act decisively to the changing situation. Discuss the following indicators of extreme fire behaviour:

- Relative humidity less than 15 percent
- Fine fuel moisture less than five percent
- Transition from surface to crown fire.
- Smouldering fires that exist in the early part of the day are beginning to burn very actively as the day progresses.
- Approaching thunderheads with dark clouds beneath.
- Presence of dust devils indicating an unstable atmosphere.
- Increased spotting
- Sudden calm high clouds moving fast in direction different from surface wind

Fire whirls video:

[Video link](#) 🔥