

(1987)

Detection is the discovery, location, and reporting of uncontrolled fire.

It is accomplished by utilizing a variety of techniques, including fixed lookout observations, supplemental air flights, ground patrols, local citizen reports, remote sensing devices, and information obtained from cooperating agencies.

The objectives of the CDF wildland fire detection system are as follows:

- To report all fires in high-value areas within two minutes of the first visible smoke.
- To provide timely detection in other areas on high-hazard days through supplemental means.

Research and development of detection equipment and methods are continuous. New tools such as remote scanning and sensing devices are now in use. Aircraft with sophisticated radios, electronics, and radar are increasingly used not only to detect fires but also to pinpoint and map their location.

The lookout, however, remains the backbone of CDF's wildland fire detection system. With proper equipment and training, these fixed observers can give an accurate location and description of smoke as far as thirty miles away.

Fixed lookouts are generally staffed in areas of high risk and high fire danger where reliable local reporting is not available. Lookouts allow an area to be protected at day time. New fires are promptly discovered, old fires are constantly watched, and up-to-date reports about going fires are relayed to emergency command centers (ECCs). The existing lookout system has proved to be a reliable method of detecting fires in remote wildland areas.

Aerial detection or remote sensing systems generally supplement fixed lookout detection to more closely monitor remote areas of high hazard and inaccessibility during periods of extreme fire danger. Supplemental detection also addresses specific problems such as lightning activity, periods of decreased visibility, or detection of problem areas on large incidents.

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