

Pennsylvania Forest Fire Warden Program

DCNR

Bureau of Forestry

Division of Forest Fire Protection

January 2008

**Pennsylvania Forest Fire Warden Program
January 2008**

<i>Program Overview</i>	
<i>Basic Duties</i>	1
<i>Warden Appointment Process</i>	
Five Year Term	2
Probationary period	2
Condition of Appointment Agreement	3
Training	4
Warden Identification	5
Relocation	5
Removal	5
<i>Warden Classifications</i>	
Active/Retired/Inactive	6
Special Assistant Forest Fire Warden	6
Ex-Officio Wardens	6
<i>Jurisdiction</i>	7
<i>Crewmember Training and Qualifications</i>	7
<i>Juvenile Fire Fighters</i>	8
<i>Prevention</i>	9
<i>Investigation</i>	9
<i>Wildland Support Crews</i>	10
<i>Warden's Report of a Wildfire (Form 35)</i>	10
<i>Service Recognition</i>	11
<i>Compensation:</i>	11

APPENDIX:

Condition of Appointment	
Form 35	

Forest Fire Warden Program Overview

Forest Fire Wardens have been engaged in forest fire protection work in Pennsylvania for nearly 100 years (5/13/1909). Their authority and responsibility is established by legislative mandate and their work guided by policy and practice.

The Administrative Code of 1929 established the position of Chief Forest Fire Warden and provided for the appointment of District Forest Fire Wardens and Local Forest Fire Wardens. Specific powers and duties were outlined for each classification. The Conservation and Natural Resources Act of 1995 (Act 18), creating the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources references this statute and carries forward many of its provisions as current law.

Primarily, the **Chief Forest Fire Warden** is charged with the responsibility of assuring reasonable protection from fire to woodlots, forest, and wild land, within the Commonwealth. **District Forest Fire Wardens** act as the field representative of the Chief Forest Fire Warden. **Local Forest Fire Wardens** are appointed to suppress and investigate wildfires and to engage in fire prevention activities.

Along with the responsibility assigned to fire wardens, our legislators provided us with some important powers. One very important power granted to all fire wardens is the authority to enter upon any land at any time for the purpose of suppressing a wildfire. The law also provides local forest fire wardens with the authority ...”to employ and train such other persons (Crewmembers) to render assistance in extinguishing forest fires.”

Today the need for skilled and dedicated Forest Fire Wardens and crewmembers is greater than ever. As our resource values increase and homes appear in the wildland-urban interface our citizens expect a prompt and effective response.

This document is intended to provide Pennsylvania’s forest fire wardens with the basic information they need to provide their service safely and effectively on behalf of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

John G Miller
Chief Forest Fire Warden

Basic Duties: Local Forest Fire Wardens

Conservation and Natural Resources Act, Act 18 of 1995, 71 P.S.; 1340.101-1340.1103

Section 302 (71 P.S. 1340.302):

--It shall be the duty of each local forest fire warden:

- (1) Whenever fire is discovered in or approaching woodlots, forests or wild lands, whether the same be owned by individuals, corporations or by the Commonwealth, immediately to take such measures as are necessary to extinguish the fire.
- (2) Whenever fires have been combated or extinguished, to prepare a correct statement of expenses, upon forms to be furnished by the department, which must be filed with the district forest fire warden and forwarded to the Chief Forest Fire Warden within 60 days of the date of the fire. *(Note) The District Forest Fire Warden requires the statement of expenses normally within 15 days to allow time for district processing.*
- (3) Promptly to investigate the cause of each fire which comes to his knowledge, collect such evidence as may be discovered relating thereto, and such other facts as he may be directed to investigate, and report the same to the Chief Forest Fire Warden.
- (4) To attend an annual meeting of forest fire wardens in his district when notified or present a reasonable excuse.
- (5) When designated as a patrolman or watchman, to perform such duties as may be assigned him by the Chief Forest Fire Warden or by the district forest fire warden.

Warden Appointment Process

The need for the appointment of a local forest fire warden is determined by the district forest fire warden. When an individual is identified as a candidate, they are provided with an overview of the local district fire protection program and are assisted in acquiring the training and experience necessary prior to their appointment.

Local forest fire wardens are appointed primarily to extinguish and investigate wildfires. They may be assigned other duties such as serving as a patrolman or watchman and are expected to promote fire prevention in their community.

Strong leadership qualities are essential as fire wardens are expected to assemble and train a crew of wildland firefighters that are available to respond, under their direction, to wildland fires.

When responding to a wildfire or when engaged in other fire work as a fire warden, they are responding on behalf of the Commonwealth and at the direction of the district forest fire warden.

Prior to appointment, each forest fire warden is required to sign and agree to comply with a Condition of Appointment document supplied by the district forest fire warden.

Five-Year Term

All wardens are appointed for a five-year term. The term will begin at the time of their appointment and end on their anniversary date. At the end of the five-year period the District Forest Fire Warden will recommend the appointment for an additional five-year period. The Chief Forest Fire Warden will make the reappointment.

Local Forest Fire Wardens who are not reappointed will be notified as such by the Chief Forest Fire Warden. The District Forest Fire Warden will collect their badge and any Commonwealth-owned equipment within 30 days.

Probationary Period

The first year of the initial five-year appointment will be a probationary period. At the end of the year the local Forest Fire Warden will continue to serve unless otherwise advised. The decision to continue or remove the local Forest Fire Warden at the end of this probation period will be based on the warden's interest, attendance at meetings, completion of required training and upon the recommendation of the District Forest Fire Warden.

Following the completion of the initial five-year appointment, subsequent reappointments will not be subject to a probationary period.

Condition of Appointment

When a Fire Warden is appointed it is imperative that both they and the District Forest Fire Warden understand and agree on the conditions and expectations that they both have. The Division has developed a summary of the general expectations for all wardens and produced a *Condition of Appointment* form to be signed upon appointment.

Although a form can list basic expectations, each individual brings unique skills and challenges to their appointment. It is up to the Warden and the District staff to work together on supporting and incorporating the warden into the larger fire program.

Pennsylvania Forest Fire Warden

Condition of Appointment

As a Forest Fire Warden you will be required to follow the conditions of appointment listed below:

- *Forest Fire Wardens are required to: extinguish forest fire; determine cause; complete reports, including suppression costs; and perform other duties as assigned.*
- *Forest Fire Wardens must display a safety first attitude and they must insure that all aspects of fire fighting are carried out in a safe manner.*
- *Forest Fire Wardens must successfully complete all required training.*
- *Forest Fire Wardens must submit completed fire bills to the District Fire Warden within 15 days of the fire.*
- *Forest Fire Wardens must attend one training session per year.*
- *Each Forest Fire Warden must hold one annual training session for their crewmembers.*
- *Each Forest Fire Warden must annually submit an updated crew list to the District Fire Warden.*
- *Every Forest Fire Warden has the power to enter upon any land at any time for the purpose of suppressing fires.*
- *Each Forest Fire Warden should assist in fire prevention activities on a yearly basis.*
- *Each Forest Fire Warden must keep the District Fire Warden apprised of their current address and phone number.*

Each new Forest Fire Warden must successfully complete a one-year probationary period. After completion of this one-year period the District Fire Warden shall submit to the Chief Fire Warden their intentions to have the warden continue to serve as a local Forest Fire Warden. The period will begin: _____ End: _____

- *Each Forest Fire Warden may be reappointed after each five year period.*

Forest Fire Warden

date

District Fire Warden

date

Required Training

The following training is **required prior to an individual's appointment** as a *Pennsylvania Forest Fire Warden* or a *Special Assistant Forest Fire Warden*:

- PA-130 - Basic Wildland Firefighter
- S-190 - Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior
- IS-700* - Introduction to Incident Management
- IS-800* - National Response Plan

*** These are National Interagency Management System (NIMS) required courses for first responders as of 11/07. As these courses are revised or as new NIMS requirements are added, they will also be required for newly appointed and active Forest Fire Wardens and Special Assistant Forest Fire Wardens.**

Required by the end of the first year (Probation year) after appointment.

- FI-110 - Wildland Fire Observation and Origin Scene Protection for First Responders
(Basic Wildfire Investigation)

Annual Training: Each District Forest Fire Warden plans and conducts **annual training** for all fire wardens residing in the district. This is generally an indoor evening session although some districts have opted for outdoor weekend sessions that provide the opportunity for hands-on training with equipment or investigation.

It is one of the basic duties of a fire warden to attend this training annually:

- (4) *To attend an annual meeting of forest fire wardens in his district when notified or present a reasonable excuse.*

Ongoing Training

Training and experience are key elements in maintaining any effective organization. Fire Wardens and crewmembers are required to meet and train regularly particularly in preparation for periods of high fire activity.

There are many courses and training opportunities available, some at the Forest District level and others through the Division or the Mid-Atlantic Forest Fire Compact. As training needs are identified, the local warden should work with the District Forest Fire Warden to determine how best to meet them.

The Division is available to assist the District Forest Fire Warden in securing instructors and scheduling courses. It is often advantageous to combine efforts of several districts or recommend other options.

The Division conducts a Forest Fire Warden training academy every two years. Normally each district is allotted a number of training seats and determines locally which wardens should attend.

Warden Identification:

Identification Cards

The Division issues **Fire Warden Identification cards** that are used to verify an individual's authority as a representative of the Commonwealth in wildfire protection business. The cards include a photograph and are valid during the term for which the individual warden is appointed. These cards are reissued every five years concurrent with the active warden's appointment date.

Badges:

A Pennsylvania Forest Fire Warden badge is issued to each Fire Warden and Special Assistant Forest Fire Warden upon their appointment. It is used to be used as a visible symbol of authority whenever a fire warden is engaged in official fire protection work. When a fire warden's active duty ends, the badge is to be returned to the District Fire Warden.

Relocation

When A Local Fire Warden relocates to another Forest District, **it is the responsibility of the sending district to contact the new district** to determine if warden is needed. **It is the responsibility of the receiving district to acknowledge incorporation** of the transferred warden and to advise the Division of Forest Fire Protection of the warden's new assignment and provide the new address. If the warden is not needed in the receiving district, the warden will be reclassified as inactive and the sending district will be responsible for collecting the warden's tools and badge.

Notification of the reclassification or reassignment must be made by the appropriate District Forest Fire Warden.

Removal

A local Forest Fire Warden may be removed from office by the District Forest Fire Warden at any time if warranted. Failure to perform the basic duties agreed upon at their appointment or other sufficient cause must be cited. The District Forest Fire Warden will notify the warden and the Division of their action. The district will be responsible for collecting the warden's tools and badge.

Warden Classifications

Active Warden:

When **local Forest Fire Wardens** are appointed they **must be available to assist the Bureau of Forestry in wildfire suppression, investigation and detection**. They may also be called upon to perform other duties relating to forest fire protection as authorized by the Secretary of DCNR such as fire prevention, logistics or planning.

District Forest Fire Wardens will maintain a list of **active wardens who have crews (Crew Wardens)** and maintain a current crew list for each crew on file in the district office.

This category will **also include all active Commonwealth employees appointed as fire wardens (Support Wardens)**.

They will receive service credit and the Warden Newsletter.

Retired Warden:

After a warden serves for a significant period of time (5 years of service as an active warden) and upon mutual agreement they will be granted the opportunity to retire. In this status, they will no longer engage in performing any statutory duties of a fire warden and they will no longer be covered by the Commonwealth for workers compensation, general or auto liability.

If, however, they are willing and able to continue to provide support such as fire prevention, logistics, training, or other duties relating to forest fire protection at the direction of the District Forest Fire Warden, **they may continue to serve as an active (Support) warden**”.

A retired warden will still receive the warden newsletter but will no longer receive service credit

Inactive Warden:

This classification will be used as a historical record for deceased wardens and wardens who served less than 5 years.

Special Assistant Forest Fire Warden:

The Chief Forest Fire Warden will appoint Special Assistant Forest Fire Wardens based on the recommendation of the District Forest Fire Warden. Their term will coincide directly with the term served by the local Forest Fire Warden. When the local Forest Fire Warden is no longer active, the Special Assistant's appointment will end.

A Special Assistant Forest Fire Warden has the same authority and responsibility of the Fire Warden they are appointed under in their absence.

Ex-officio Wardens:

Commonwealth employees such as Waterways Conservation Officers and Wildlife Conservation Officers are Ex-officio Fire Wardens.

(Rev. 1/08)

Jurisdiction

Although a fire warden's authority can be exercised border to border within the Commonwealth, local fire wardens often function primarily within specific geographic areas. Some individuals are able to travel and others can be depended upon for more local incidents. This provides the Bureau with a great deal of flexibility, especially when dealing with large or complex incidents that tax local resources beyond their limit.

When a local "Crew" Warden is appointed, there generally is a joint expectation that they will function with a primary area. It is critical that they know their neighboring fire wardens and develop a close working relationship with them.

It is also important that local wardens maintain close contact with the district fire warden and recognize that their authority and responsibility is through them.

Crewmember Training and Qualifications

"Every forest fire warden, appointed as provided in this act (Act 18), shall have the power to:

1. Employ such other persons, as in his judgment may be necessary, to render assistance in extinguishing forest fires..."

Fire wardens have the authority to engage and employ others in fire suppression work on behalf of the Commonwealth. This provision has enabled us to invest in the development of a large cadre of trained wildland firefighters statewide. Individuals are recognized as trained "Wildland Firefighters" when they have completed the Bureau's "***Basic Wildland Firefighter***" course (PA-130) and "***Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior***" (S-190).

These trained wildland firefighters are considered to be "**Agency Qualified**". Many go on to acquire additional training and experience to gain "**National Qualifications**". All emergency responders, regardless of the type of emergency, are expected to have the skills, equipment and a common understanding of the emergency response principles.

Individuals who have completed these basic courses and are currently listed as an active member of a warden crew are eligible to be compensated as a "Trained Crewmember" for wildfire suppression when working under the direction of a fire warden.

Juvenile Firefighters

The Child Labor Act (Act of October 24, 2012, P.L. 1209, no. 151, effective January 22, 2013) identifies “forest fire fighting” as a hazardous and prohibited occupation for minors. Forest fire fighting includes any activities in conjunction with/support of fire fighting efforts. No juvenile can be permitted to work on any wildfires or prescribed fires. It is the responsibility of the incident commander to ensure compliance.

A “forest fire” in Pennsylvania is defined by state law (32 P.S. § 316) as “fires which burn in woods, farmers' woodlots, marshes, brush barrens, brush lands, and wild, unseated, uncultivated land.” Because of the nature of the work and similar risks and hazards, this prohibition would also extend to prescribed fires. The occupations listed as prohibited for minors in Pennsylvania are identical to the occupations prohibited under for minors under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

Minors who are 16 & 17 years old may still attend training such as PA-130/S-130/S-190 (as long as there is no live fire involved), assist with fire equipment maintenance, and assist with fire prevention education programs. Involvement in any of these activities requires that the minor and their supervisor satisfy all of the additional criteria in the Child Labor Act.

Fire Prevention

Fire wardens are strongly encouraged to participate in wildland fire prevention activities. Although not specifically mandated under the law, **the delivery of the forest fire prevention message has been a very visible and integral part of Pennsylvania's fire protection program since its inception.**

In an effort to encourage and acknowledge the countless hours devoted by our wardens in fire prevention, the Division developed the **Wardens Helping In Prevention (WHIP)** recognition program. The Division annually recognizes these efforts by producing certificates and issuing patches, pins, caps and vests to our most active wardens.

Often wardens, who are no longer able or available to engage in fire suppression work, continue to actively deliver Smokey's prevention message to children and adults alike.

Investigation

Because local fire wardens are generally the first Bureau representatives on the scene of a wildfire, it is critical that they understand and initiate the investigation process. Although their focus will be on fire suppression, it is important that any initial information they gather is subsequently passed along the district fire warden for their action.

Basic Wildfire Investigation is listed as "Required Training" for newly appointed fire wardens. The objective of the course is to review the basic elements of an investigation and reinforce the importance of documenting early times and observations. The course also emphasizes the importance and techniques of identifying and protecting the general origin area to enable a more thorough investigation. The early initiation of an investigation is one of the basic duties of a local forest fire warden:

(3) Promptly to investigate the cause of each fire which comes to his knowledge, collect such evidence as may be discovered relating thereto, and such other facts as he may be directed to investigate, and report the same to the Chief Forest Fire Warden.

Prompt and thorough investigations into the cause and origin of wildfires are critical to enable us to **understand and mitigate future potential wildfires** and to enable us to **follow-up fairly and appropriately with the persons responsible for causing wildfires.**

The law provides that "*...every person causing a forest fire within this Commonwealth, directly or by the act of an agent or employee, shall be liable to the Commonwealth for all expenses incurred by the "Department" on account of such fire.*"

Wildland Support Crews

The Support Crew program is a voluntary program that is designed to expand our fire warden organization. For over the last 80 years the warden organization has been the backbone of wildfire suppression in Pennsylvania. I expect that the dedicated fire wardens will continue to fill this leadership role. The Support Crews will provide well-trained fire fighters to support their home district on fires that are difficult to contain or may require extended attack while being prepared to go anywhere in the state as a crew.

A Support Crew has to be independently incorporated. All fire line members must have successfully completed the following training: PA 130-Basic Fire Course, S190-Basic Fire Behavior, I-100 Basic ICS, L-180, and Fire Shelter Training with an annual update.

ANNUAL REQUIREMENT: Members must attend a minimum of three (3) training sessions per year totaling at least 12 hours and attend three (3) regular crew meetings per year. It is highly recommended that line members participate in an outdoor training exercise. This outdoor training should be performed just before the spring fire season and should be coordinated through the District Fire Warden. All fire line members must pass the Moderate Physical Fitness test.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS: While engaged in any wildfire incident all fire line members must wear PPE as required in the PA 130 training course. It shall include, but not be limited to, Nomex fire shirt and pants, NFPA approved hardhat, fire shelter, gloves and approved boots. On all emergency incidents, the Crew Fire Warden and or the District Forest Fire Warden will determine proper safety dress.

INCIDENT RESPONSE: A Support Crew must respond with a Local Fire Warden as a crew of at least 10 people or as a squad of at least 5 people. The Crew will be expected to respond with fire line hand tools and be self sufficient for one (1) shift and be committed to remain as an intact crew on the incident for two (2) 12-hour shifts. It is recommended that on responses to Out of District Incidents, the crew carry tents, sleeping bags and food.

Wardens Report of Wildfire (Form 35)

The Division provides a standard form to be used by forest fire wardens to gather and document specific information such as the location, cause and cost of wildfires that they respond to. The report is known as the *Wardens Report of Wildfire (Form 35)* and is submitted to the district forest fire warden for processing. The completion of this report is one of the basic duties of a local forest fire warden:

- (2) *Whenever fires have been combated or extinguished, to prepare a correct statement of expenses, upon forms to be furnished by the department, which must be filed with the district forest fire warden and forwarded to the Chief Forest Fire Warden within 60 days of the date of the fire. (Note) The District Forest Fire Warden requires the statement of expenses normally within 15 days to allow time for district processing.*

Service Recognition

The Bureau recognizes that a great deal of time and personal commitment is required to fulfill the duties of a Fire Warden. Although the reasons for assuming the responsibility as a warden vary, "Recognition" is generally not on the list. However, when it is earned, it is always welcomed!

When wardens maintain their commitment over a period of time an important tradition has been to acknowledge that through the issuance of a "Years of Service" certificate. The first is issued after five years and then in five year increments thereafter.

Time in service will continue to accumulate as long as a warden is "active". Wardens who retire will receive recognition for the actual number of years that they have served. A warden who has served in a suppression capacity but is no longer able to do so, can continue to be active by engaging in fire prevention activities, training or some other active support capacity. Their years of service will continue to accumulate.

Compensation

Annually, on the calendar year, the Chief Forest Fire Warden establishes the standards and rates to be used for compensating manpower and equipment engaged by District Forest Fire Wardens in the suppression of wildfires in Pennsylvania.

These rates are provided to the Comptroller's office where they are used to verify and approve payments.

Fire Company Manpower and Equipment

Fire Companies may be compensated for expenses they incur when suppressing a wildfire **when a Fire Warden or Bureau of Forestry employee is directly involved on the scene** either during the **suppression** action **or** in the **follow-up investigation**.

The **Fire Warden or Bureau employee** on the scene is **responsible for documenting and attesting to the nature and scope of the work that was done** and for preparing and submitting a "**Warden's Report of a Wildfire**" to the District Forest Fire Warden. Compensation will be provided for actual work accomplished at rates established by the Chief Fire Warden.

Whenever the Commonwealth incurs expense in suppressing a wildfire, the Chief Fire Warden is authorized and directed to recover the costs from the responsible party.

APPENDIX:

Condition of Employment

Form 35

Pennsylvania Forest Fire Warden

Condition of Appointment

As a Forest Fire Warden you will be required to follow the conditions of appointment listed below:

- Forest Fire Wardens are required to: extinguish forest fire; determine cause; complete reports, including suppression costs; and perform other duties as assigned.
- Forest Fire Wardens must display a safety first attitude and they must insure that all aspects of fire fighting are carried out in a safe manner.
- Forest Fire Wardens must successfully complete all required training.
- Forest Fire Wardens must submit completed fire bills to the District Fire Warden within 15 days of the fire.
- Forest Fire Wardens must attend one training session per year.
- Each Forest Fire Warden must hold one annual training session for their crewmembers.
- Each Forest Fire Warden must annually submit an updated crew list to the District Fire Warden.
- Every Forest Fire Warden has the power to enter upon any land at any time for the purpose of suppressing fires.
- Each Forest Fire Warden should assist in fire prevention activities on a yearly basis.
- Each Forest Fire Warden must keep the District Fire Warden apprised of their current address and phone number.

Each new Forest Fire Warden must successfully complete a one-year probationary period. After completion of this one-year period the District Fire Warden shall submit to the Chief Fire Warden their intentions to have the warden continue to serve as a local Forest Fire Warden. The period will begin: _____ End: _____

- Each Forest Fire Warden may be reappointed after each five year period.

Forest Fire Warden date

District Fire Warden date