

WILDFIRES

Essential Elements of Information – (EEI)

EEI contain Situational Awareness information on People, Systems, and Services Providers that is critical to acquire in the first and perhaps second operational periods. Specific elements stated here may not apply in every event. Additional elements must be generated as the event evolves through Recovery.

Impact of Event or Scenario

Large areas of Florida are susceptible to wildfires during the winter month dry season. In some years, the dry season extends into the summer months creating very dangerous conditions.

Wildfires often start suddenly from lightning strikes, downed power lines, carelessness, or arson. When wildfires spread slowly, there are opportunities to mitigate or redirect a fire while it is in progress thorough the application of fire-fighting resources. But wildfires can also spread and change direction quickly when backed by high winds allowing very little time for evacuation. They may smolder for long periods underground only to suddenly re-ignite. Small independent fires may merge into larger fires. All of these factors lead to wildfire unpredictability.

Smoke and haze from wildfires may extend for many miles downwind. The smoke may cause problems for vulnerable populations with chronic respiratory conditions. These persons may require evacuation and sheltering even when there is no immediate threat from the fire.

Smoke and fog can combine to limit response by emergency vehicles and fire crews and obscure Interstates and other major highways creating conditions for multi-vehicle accidents with mass injuries and fatalities. (See Mass Trauma EEI.)

Wildfires may cause significant damage to power transmission infrastructure through the destruction of towers and power lines. This may power outages that can be prolonged because of limited access to the fire areas.

Fires may cause the migration of poisonous snakes, alligators, and dangerous mammals into nearby communities.

People

People include vulnerable populations, the general population, and responders. Vulnerable populations may be classified as static or transitory.

Static populations consist of people who have medically complex conditions, those who are functionally disabled, frail-elderly, and children who are two years old or younger. Evacuation of persons in this category who must leave their homes or health care facilities in advance of a fire can exacerbate medical conditions and cause stress and behavioral health issues. Loss of power for air conditioning can quickly cause heat stress issues among frail elderly.

Transitory populations are those who have chronic medical conditions, seniors in high-rise buildings, and children older than two years old. Power outages will cause immediate issues for persons who are dependent on electricity for oxygen generation and other medical devices. Prolonged power outages with loss of air conditioning and elevators can degrade the health of seniors in high rise buildings who otherwise would not need additional care. Wildfire smoke and haze may seriously affect persons with chronic respiratory conditions. Behavioral health issues may also require monitoring and treatment over time.

Depending on the areas impacted, there may be large numbers of transient vulnerable populations (tourists) that will require post-event assistance.

Systems

Systems include healthcare, medical care, infrastructure, transportation, EMS response, and communications. Fire damage, smoke, and power loss will reduce or negate the effectiveness of key systems when they are most needed for recovery efforts.

Service Providers

Service providers are those who provide health and medical care and support services. Damaged facilities, smoke and fog, power loss, and road debris will reduce or negate the ability of service providers to serve affected populations.

Essential Elements of Information

People Information

- General and Special Needs Shelter locations and opening times
- Special Needs Shelter population updates
- Ad hoc (“Gypsy”) shelter assessments
- Injury Reports
- Verified Mortality reports
- Vulnerable population status
- Responder health and safety issues
- Predicted areas of smoke
- Predicted areas and timing of fire spread

- Current rumors
- Risk communications

Systems Information

- Deployment of RERAs
- Deployment of logistics staging areas
- Federal ESF 8 assets deployments
- School closures
- Evacuation routes out of impacted areas
- Road closures impacting ingress
- Infrastructure damage assessments
- Areas of power outages and anticipated returns to service
- Oxygen resupply
- Agency for Persons with Disability (APD) assessment of sheltering status
- Children's Medical Services (CMS) assessment of sheltering status
- Mental health assessment of sheltering status
- Information on coping/stress reduction/psychological first aid

Service Providers

- Hospital status in the fire path
- Hospital bed status in the area for potential diversion or placement
- Health care and medical facility status reports (including dialysis centers, cancer treatment center, and hospice)
- APD assessment of all facilities and clients
- CMS assessment of all patients
- Pharmacy Status
- Dialysis Center assessments
- Non-evacuated health care facilities status
- Regional Disaster Behavioral Health Assessment Teams deployed – number and location