



# Kansas Forest Service Fire Program

In 1962 the Kansas Forest Service (KFS) began its Rural Fire Protection Program. The goal of the program was to protect nonfederal, rural lands from wildfires. The KFS worked directly with rural fire departments to place these lands under fire protection. The current fire program continues these efforts and consists of four main efforts: the excess property program, fire training, fire prevention, and a cost-share program.

## Excess Property Program

The KFS obtains excess military property, generally limited to vehicles and fire equipment, and lends it to fire districts. This property remains under federal ownership and must be returned to KFS when the district no longer needs it. It is then sold by the federal government at auction. All-wheel-drive vehicles, such as  $3/4$ -,  $1\frac{1}{4}$ -,  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -, and 5-ton trucks, are the most in demand.

When the truck is issued, it is in running condition. It is the local fire district's responsibility to paint, equip, house, and maintain it. **It can be used for fire-control purposes only.** In the past few years, the demand for vehicles, especially the 4x4s, has far exceeded the supply. If a fire district requests a certain type of vehicle and none are available,

the request is placed on a want list, and they are contacted when one becomes available.

The KFS is required by the federal government to make a physical property inventory every 2 years to ensure the program guidelines are being followed. A limited amount of salvaged parts is available to help reduce maintenance costs.

## Fire Training

The fire training offered by the KFS consists of two parts: Basic Rural Firemanship and the Wildfire Simulator.

Basic Rural Firemanship is a classroom session dealing with wildfire behavior, safety, and tactics. It is a two-night class offered in the spring at 10 to 15 locations statewide. This is a basic class designed for the entry-level wildfire fighter and to serve as a review for the more-experienced fire fighter.

The Wildfire Simulator is offered one night in the fall to reinforce the topics discussed in the basic class. This class again stresses safety and fire behavior. It is conducted at the same locations as the basic class. The simulator uses optical and audio equipment to place a fire fighter in realistic decision-making situations.

There is no charge for either class, however, the waiting list may delay a request for a class.

## Fire Prevention

Nearly all of the prevention activities center around the Smokey Bear program. These efforts are targeted at elementary-age children and utilize a variety of educational and fun materials. These include balloons, rulers, pens, pencils, comic books, and coloring sheets. What is available depends on the supply at any time. There is no charge for the materials in reasonable numbers. Smokey Bear costumes are available for loan to fire districts. These can be shipped quite easily or picked up at the Manhattan office and used for parades, open houses, school visits, or other suitable fire-prevention functions.



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## Cost-share Program

The Rural Community Fire Protection Program is a cost-share program using federal dollars to match local funds. The amount of available money varies from year to year, as it is an annual appropriation.

Each year a priority group of equipment is selected. This equipment includes protective clothing, breathing apparatus, communica-

tions, and others. Large purchases, such as fire trucks or buildings, are not funded because of the limited amount of money. Applications are mailed late in the year, and the fire districts have about a month to return them. Those with approved applications have about 6 months to complete the purchases and paperwork, then they receive up to 50 percent of the approved amount.

## Cooperative Agreements

Cooperative agreements between a fire district and KFS must be completed before a fire district can participate in any KFS programs. This is a federal requirement because KFS uses federal funds. The agreement is a fairly simple document and must be signed by both the fire district and state forester to be considered active. It is updated about every 5 years.

### Contact Information

More information on the Kansas Forest Service's Rural Fire Protection Program can be obtained by calling these telephone numbers:

- Cost-share, training, and general ..... (785) 532-3307
- Fire-prevention materials and Smokey Bear costumes ..... (785) 532-3302
- Excess property and parts ..... (785) 532-3319 or (785) 532-3307
- Main office number ..... (785) 532-3300

The mailing address is Kansas Forest Service, 2610 Claflin Road, Manhattan, KS 66502-2798.

**James W. Kunkel**

Fire Manager

## Kansas Forest Service, Manhattan, Kansas

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