

MOUNDVILLE FIRE

Moundville Township, WI

March 19, 2006



FIRE HISTORY

- Thursday, March 16 - Complete Snow Cover
- Friday, March 17 – Fields Open, Woods and Fence Lines contain snow.
- Saturday, March 18 – 108 Acre Koro Fire 1 mile northeast of protection near Berlin



Koro Road Fire



Fire Weather Sunday March 19

- Pardeeville Weather Station: Less than 10 miles from Fire
- 1:00p.m.
- Temperature: 46⁰
- RH: 24%
- Wind @ 1:00 329⁰ (NW) 7-14mph
- Wind @ 2:00 272⁰ (W) 8-15mph
- Wind @ 3:00 1⁰ (N) 6-14mph



STAFFING

- Dodgeville – Shut down still had snow.
- Rapids – Shut down – still had snow.
- Waupaca – Weekend Stand-by for Montello, Waupaca, Wautoma



Fire Activity March 19

- 1:09 p.m. Montello VFD and DNR paged to “grass fire” in Buffalo Township – Cedar Lane Fire
- 1:23 p.m. Montello VFD and Ranger arrive at Cedar Lane Fire – Heavy Unit still en route.
- 1:30 p.m. Endeavor and Briggsville VFD’s + DNR paged to “grass fire” Co. O west of Interstate.
- 1:30 p.m. Montello 1 arrives on scene of Cedar Lane Fire – re-routed to Moundville Fire by Montello Ranger
- 1:35 p.m. Harris Fire and DNR paged to “grass” fire in Harris Township



Three Fires in 26 minutes



Fire Activity Continued

- En route to Moundville Fire – Montello 1 radios Marquette Co. to have Poynette Ranger paged through Columbia County.
- 1:42 Cedar Lane fire contained at 7 acres. Montello Ranger heads to Harris Fire.
- Montello Tractor 1 reports that he is almost around Moundville Fire, an acre or two left, then radio traffic turns scratchy.
- 1:50p.m. Harris Fire reports their fire is very small and will handle it easy, Montello Ranger heads to Moundville Fire.



Moundville Fire 15.73 Acres



Moundville Tactics



- 1st wildfire of year for both VFD's. Endeavor Chief not on scene. No one assumes command.
- Montello 1 is third on scene.
- Firemen in black chasing head without anchoring flanks.
- Montello Tractor 1 parks in black, starts plow line on right flank after anchoring to origin.
- Eventually fire departments come back and catch left flank up to the first fence line.



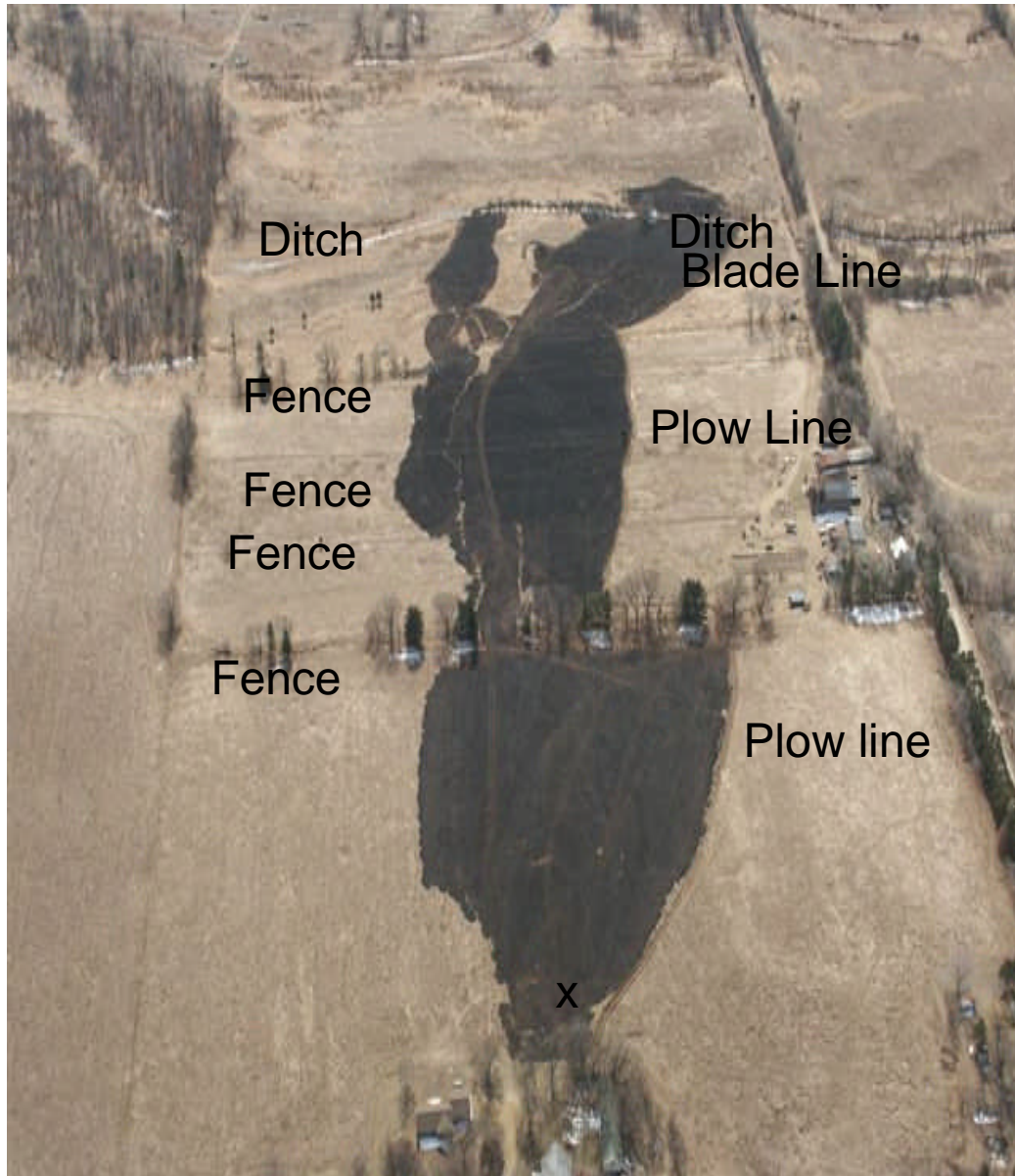
- After crossing the first fence/rock/tree line Montello 1 encountered 3 more fences.
- Each time a fence was encountered the ground was frozen on the north side of fence and the plow skipped out of the ground.



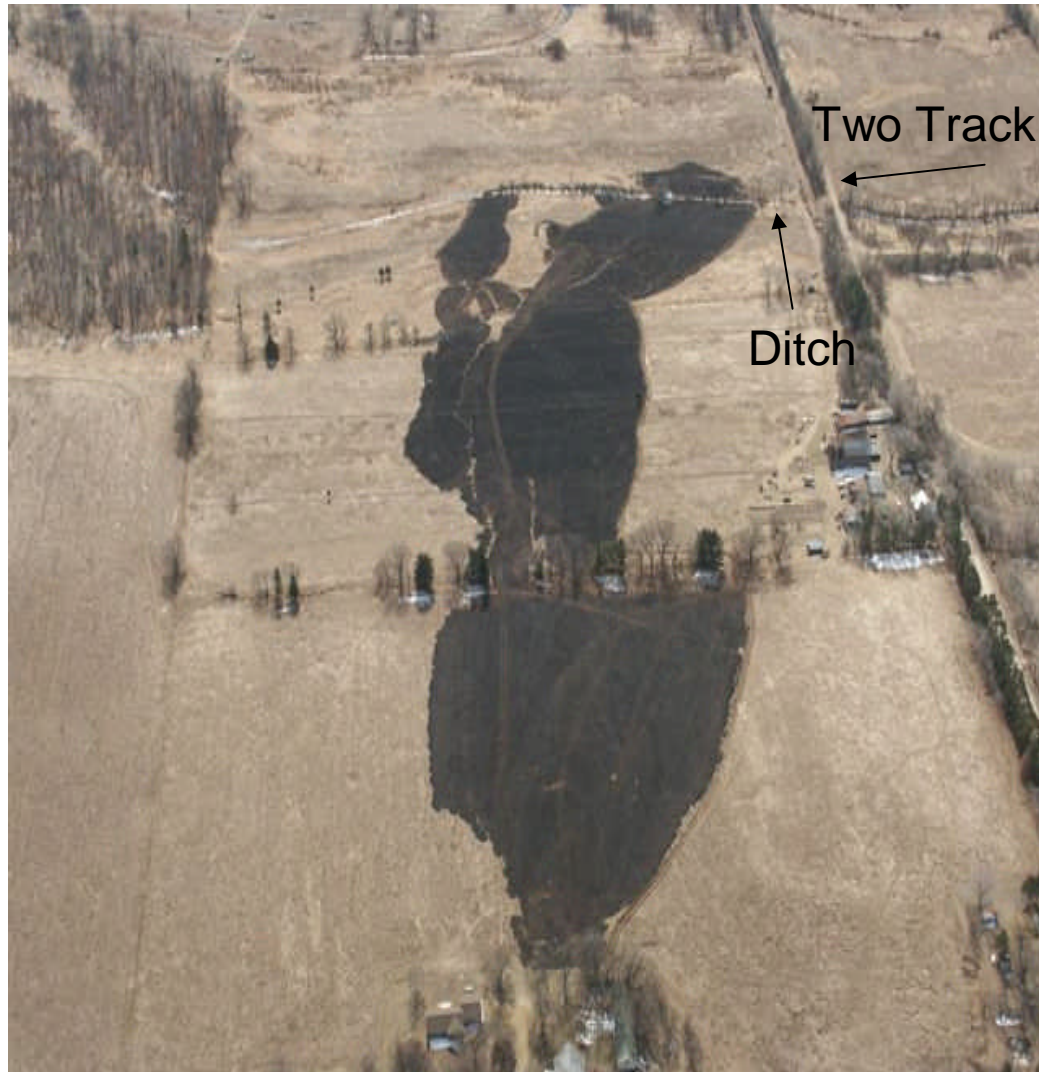
- Approximately 1:50 - 2:00p.m wind shift occurs as Montello 1 reaches bottom of hill and fuel switches to marsh grass.
- Ground is now frozen and the plow is useless.



- Ground is frozen.
Blade line is difficult to put in at best.
- Firefighters assist in holding line with bladder bags.
- Line has held so far.



- Fire runs up hill to first fence line then down hill to last fence line, then levels off into marsh.
- Plow line on most of the right flank.
- Blade line line starting in frozen ground at point of wind shift.



Once Montello 1 gets to the ditch he has to stop, get back to the two track, cross and come back to begin blade line again.



- Once Montello 1 crosses water and ties into the ditch, the head is just crossing the ditch. Montello 1 starts around head blading as he goes. Firefighters holding the line behind him.



- Fire to right of blade line not present at time of incident.
- Blade line from right flank looking across head.
- Fire is still at ditch, Montello 1 having difficult time getting blade to make good line.
- Fire behavior changes from 5' to 20' in fine flashy fuels.



- Tractor is located in area indicated by arrows when fire hits it.
- Operator reaches for pump lever on floor that isn't there.
- Then reaches up and pulls down curtain as flames enter tractor cab. Operator ducks down in seat as fire burns past tractor.



As soon as fire passes, operator rolls up curtain, turns around, ties back into blade line and continues around head.

Fire behavior much reduced.

Fire is contained less than 7 paces from deployment using blade/plow line.

Arrow points to TP location



- Operator is standing in position of deployment.
- Fire did not have much room to make a run at the tractor.

Area where fire makes run over ditch, deployment occurs, fire is contained.





Montello and Poynette Rangers arrived on scene after incident occurred. Worked in tandem on remainder of left flank with VFDs to tie in wet line to plow line. Right flank and head was all plow line. Left flank was wet line.

Basic Common Denominators Of Fire Behavior On Fatal Or Near Miss Fires

- Most fatalities occurred on relatively *small* fires or *isolated* parts of larger fires
- Most fatalities occurred on fires in relatively light fuels such as *grass* and brush
- Unexpected *wind* shifts or sudden increase in *wind speed* caused erratic fire behavior. Often times these fires were innocent in appearance or in the mop up stages just prior to the blow ups.
- Fire ran *uphill* on steep slopes

Critical Events on Moundville Fire

- No Defined Command
- Fire Departments didn't anchor and work flanks, went for head, but did stay in the black.
- Frozen ground in many places lead to poor line construction rates and results.
- Multiple fences hindered line construction.
- Additional DNR resources tied up on other fires.
- No aircraft – no lookouts assigned.



LESSONS LEARNED

PRACTICE AND BECOME FAMILIAR WITH
USING SHOWER SYSTEM ON ALL TYPES OF
TRACTOR PLOWS

- Lever to engage pump in different locations between C's and H's. In “fight or flight” mode you go back to how you have trained and practiced.
- Tractor must be idled way up to operate pump.
- Depressing deceleration pedal will stop everything, including pump!!!!



LESSONS LEARNED

PRACTICE AND BECOME FAMILIAR WITH USING TRACTOR CURTAINS

- Three Velcro straps took time to unhook.
- No time in fine fuels to drop all curtains and Velcro together.



CONTINUOUSLY WATCH FIRE AND FIRE
BEHAVIOR, ESPECIALLY IN FINE,
FLASHY FUELS

FIGHT FIRE AGGRESSIVELY, NOT OVER
AGGRESSIVELY, HAVING PROVIDED
FOR SAFETY FIRST!

