



# In-Station Training

## TM 26-12 Vegetation Fire



### Author

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### Purpose

Vegetation fires are likely in the summer and fall, particularly under red flag conditions of high temperature, low humidity, and high wind. But in early March?

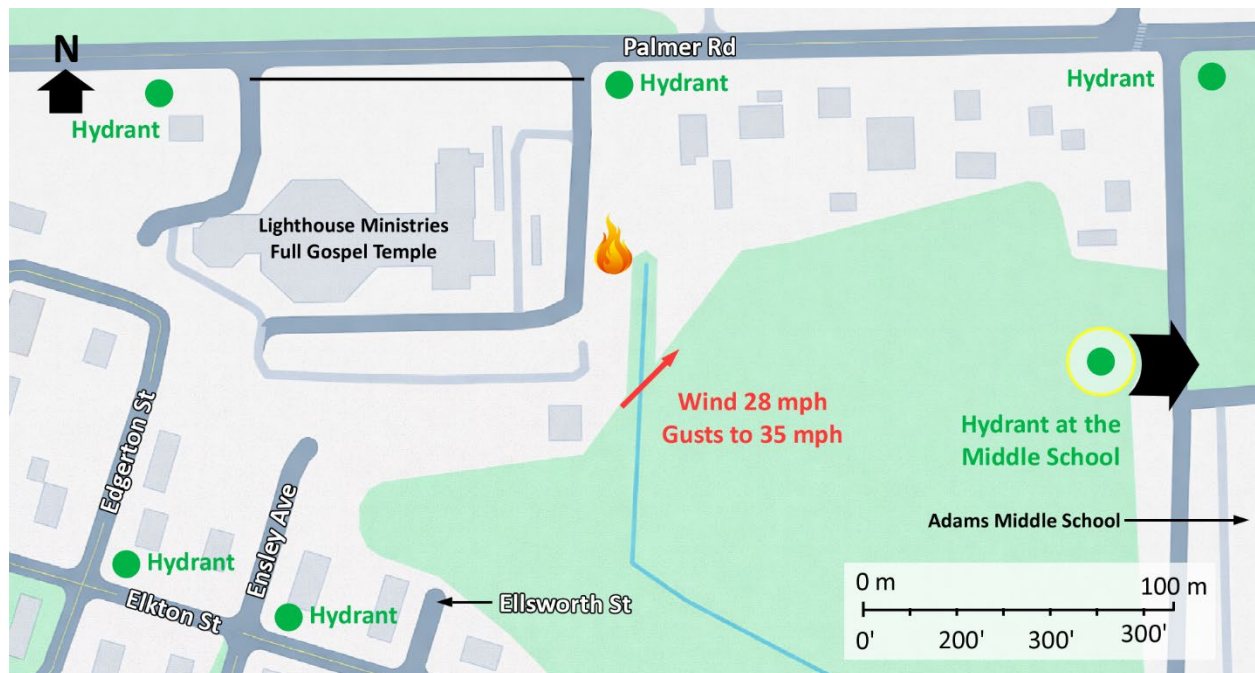
### Learning Outcomes

Initial incident commanders perform an effective size-up, select an appropriate strategy, and implement tactics based on the strategic decision-making model.

### Conducting the Drill

This incident involved a vegetation fire behind Adams Middle School, 33475 Palmer Rd, Westland, Michigan on Monday, March 9, 2026, at 17:34 (Fire and Railroad Photography, 2026; Noyes, 2026; & Broadcastify, 2026). Review the map and photos (Figures 1-6) to gain an understanding of the building and area involved.

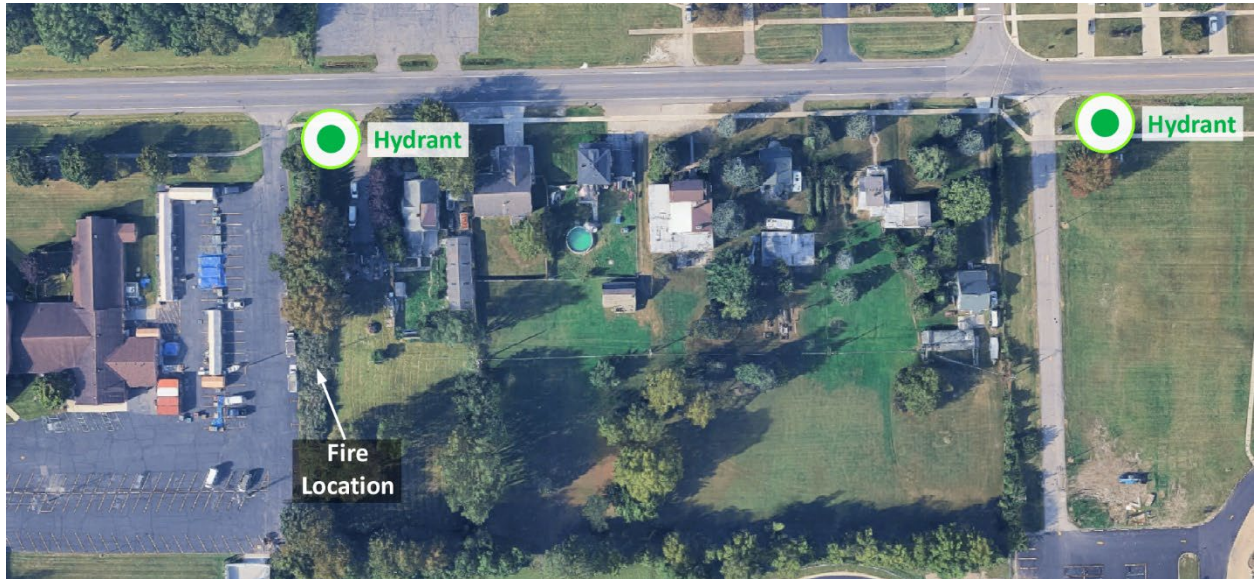
Figure 1. Map of the Incident Area



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026a). [Map, 33475 Palmer Rd, Westland, MI]. Map data ©2026 Google. <https://bit.ly/3NwjYUW>.

The closest hydrants are on Palmer Road at the entrance to the Lighthouse Ministries Full Gospel Temple and the entrance to the Adams Middle School. There are additional hydrants in the area as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 2. Aerial View



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026b). [Aerial view 33475 Palmer Rd, Westland, MI]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. <https://bit.ly/4xNLSO>.

Figure 3. Entrance to the Lighthouse Ministries Full Gospel Temple from Palmer Road



Note: Adapted from Google. (2021a). [Street view 33475 Palmer Rd, Westland, MI]. ©2026 Google. <https://bit.ly/4brOx64>.

Figure 4. Side Alpha-33749 Palmer Road (South Southwest of the Fire Location)



Note: Adapted from Google. (2021b). [Street view 33475 Palmer Rd, Westland, MI]. ©2026 Google. <https://bit.ly/4sMujkN>.

Figure 5. Entrance to Adams Middle School from Palmer Road



Note: Adapted from Google. (2021c). [Street view 33475 Palmer Rd, Westland, MI]. ©2026 Google. <https://bit.ly/4uQz0FY>,

Figure 6. Fire Area



Note: Adapted from Google. (2023d). [3d Aerial view 33475 Palmer Rd, Westland, MI]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. <https://bit.ly/3NIEszH>.

The incident area is in a suburban corridor in Westland, Michigan, characterized by a mix of commercial development along arterial roadways and adjacent residential neighborhoods. Occupancies in the area include retail centers, service businesses, and multifamily apartment complexes, with surrounding subdivisions of detached single-family homes largely constructed between the 1950s and 1970s. Residential occupancies include a mix of owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing, with owner occupancy more common in single-family homes. The population is stable in owner occupied homes with some turnover in rental units. English predominates, with a minority of households speaking other languages.

Common vegetation includes turf grass lawns, ornamental shrubs (e.g., foundation plantings and hedges), deciduous trees such as maple, oak, and ash, and scattered coniferous trees such as pine or spruce used for screening or decoration. Additional fuels may include mulch beds, leaf litter accumulation in yards or along fence lines, and unmanaged vegetation in vacant lots, drainage areas, or utility corridors. Seasonal variations include dormant grass and accumulated leaves in fall and spring.

The temperature is currently 72° F (22° C) with wind from the southeast at 28 mph (45 kph) with gusts to 35 mph (56 kph). (Weather Underground, 2026). It is Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup> and you are dispatched as a single engine to a report of a small brush fire behind Adams Middle School, 3375 Palmer Road at 17:34. The engine has four-person staffing<sup>1</sup>. **You are the officer of engine company.**

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<sup>1</sup> If your first alarm deployment is different, use your own resource assignment and staffing.



**Time starts now!** Answer the first nine questions within the next 10 minutes. Save discussion for after answering these questions.

While responding, dispatch reports that a second caller indicates this is a “big” brush fire.

1. What critical factors would you consider when dispatched and during response? What conversations would you have with your crew during response?
  
2. Based on the dispatch information and what you know about the response area, what do anticipate finding on arrival?



**Important!** Answer questions three through nine in the form of communication you would have with your crew, dispatch, other companies, and the first arriving command officer. State the communications exactly as you would say them face-to-face or over the radio. Save explanation or discussion until after you have completed these questions.

Approaching the incident from the west on Palmer Road, you observe a column of smoke pushing across Palmer Road from just east of the Lighthouse Ministries Full Gospel Temple.

You arrive to find the fire located east of the parking lot of the church and behind 33749 Palmer Road. Watch the [incident video](#) (Fire and Railroad Photography, 2026) from 00:05 to 00:30 and examine Figure 7 illustrating conditions on arrival. Click the link above or scan the QR code to access the video.

Figure 7. Conditions on Arrival in the East Parking Lot of the Church



*Note:* Adapted from F Fire and Railroad Photography. (2026). Westland Fire Department arriving at a grass fire with exposures - windy conditions [Video]. <https://bit.ly/4dtLIEb>

3. State your initial radio report (IRR) exactly as you would transmit it to dispatch.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What specific actions would you take (as the company officer) immediately upon arrival and exiting the apparatus and what task orders would you give your crew?

Reconnaissance identifies that the fire has extended from the vegetation to a fence, combustibile materials, and vehicles stored in the backyard house at 33749 Palmer Road. Embers and brands are being carried downwind from the fire. Watch the [incident video](#) (Fire and Railroad Photography, 2026) from 00:30 to 01:00.



5. Would you change the action you are taking or modify the assignments given to your crew? If so, what task orders would you provide?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. State your follow up report exactly as you would transmit it to dispatch.

The following questions are based on an upgraded resource determination, adding two additional engines (any type<sup>2</sup>) and a command officer. If your resource determination was different, use the additional resources that you requested.

7. Engine 2 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on a hydrant on Palmer Road west of the incident. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.
  
8. Engine 3 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on a hydrant on Palmer Road east of the incident. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.
  
9. Based on anticipated effectiveness of your tactical operations, state your conditions, actions, and needs (CAN) report that you would provide to the first arriving command officer as part of command transfer to IC #2.



Reflect on your strategic decision-making and responses to questions one through nine before answering the next eight questions. Think about what cues, patterns, or anomalies (differences from conditions that you would anticipate) informed your answers.

10. What information most influenced your expectations?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Did anything in the incident post-arrival challenge your initial expectations?

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<sup>2</sup> Engine company resource typing defines and categorizes engines by capability; tank capacity, pump rating, hose capacity, staffing, and drive train (2- vs 4 wheel drive) based on National Incident Management System/National Wildfire Coordinating Group Standards. A typical structural fire engine is normally Type 1 and a small wildland engine may be Type 5 or Type 6. For additional information see: [NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Resource Typing, PMS 200](#) (NWCG, 2025).

12. What was the actual problem once you arrived?
  
13. What were your tactical priorities and what was getting in the way of achieving them?
  
14. During initial operations, was there an immediate threat of serious injury or death to you, your crew, or other companies?
  
15. Was it reasonable to believe that the downwind exposures were occupied?
  
16. Do you believe it was possible or likely that the fire could spread to structural exposures?
  
17. If you believed that the fire could extend to structural exposures, what could you do about it?

In this incident, Westland Engine 4 assisted by Rescue 4 and Engine 3 stretched multiple attack lines to confine and extinguish the fire. Watch the [incident video](#) (Fire and Railroad Photography, 2026) from 01:00 to 05:00 before answering the remaining questions.



18. What are the major factors that influence potential for extension from vegetation (or vegetation and other non-vegetation materials in the built environment) to structural exposures?
  
19. In this incident, the firefighters and officers were wearing a mix of structural firefighting clothing, some with self-contained breathing apparatus and others without. Given the mix of vegetation and non-vegetation fuel types, what type of personal protective equipment would be appropriate? Why?

20. The hoselines used in this incident all appeared to be standard structural attack lines, likely 1 ¾" (45 mm). If your apparatus was equipped with both 1 ¾" (45 mm) structural and 1 ½" (38 mm) wildland attack lines, which would you choose in this situation? Why?

**Additional Learning:** While this incident was small and did not extend to structural exposures, this is a common threat that is not limited to typical wildland urban interface areas. Even in suburban or urban areas, fires can spread from vegetation to structures and between structures with fire spread driven by complex interactions between wind, ember lofting (spotting), and the ignition of structural fuels like fences, decks, and homes.

1. Get a head start on understanding this type of fire threat by completing the Underwriters Laboratories Fire Safety Research Institute (UL FSRI) [Structure Triage Considerations for Wildland Urban Interface Firefighting](#) (2025) on-line course with the members of your crew.
2. Review the wildland firefighting equipment carried on your apparatus. If you only carry wildland equipment during "fire season" think about when this starts in your region.
3. As you are out and about in your response area, Identify where you may encounter fires that could spread from vegetation to structural exposures and vice versa. Also consider areas in which structure to structure fire spread is a concern (this is essentially the same problem, but with a different fuel type).

## References

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