

# **Wildfire Field Guide for Search and Rescue Personnel**



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# Suggested Supplies

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In addition to other Search and Rescue Personal Protection Equipment:

- Tyvek Suits
- P95 Masks/Respirators
- Work gloves
- Colored flagging tape
- Surveyor Flags
- Permanent Marker

# Appearance of Burned Remains

Fire can alter bone and results in a variety of colorations and textures depending on the temperature and location of the heat source. This image serves to showcase this variety within a single individual.

Remains can appear black to dark grey to blue all the way to heavily burned and calcined (white).

Depending on exposure and temperature of the fire, remains may also include black tissue masses with portions of the torso, head, or extremities intact with charred tissue.

Burned remains are fragile and should be handled with care to maximize identifiable material.



# Appearance of Burned Remains



# Conducting the Search

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## Wildfire Search Protocol – Order of operations

- Perimeter search (residence and property)
- Small group line search in residence (5 people or less) – STOP here if no missing persons report from address
- Large scale search through debris layers (only when nothing is found during first two steps AND missing persons report from address)

# House Diagram

## Target Areas

- 11% of individuals were found within vehicles
- 16% of individuals were found outside of their residences
- 73% of individuals were found within their residence



Most Likely

Least Likely

Based on wildfires  
2015-2018

# Wildfire Recovery Statistics

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- A majority (> 85%) of the individuals were visible on the surface.
- Human remains should be easily detected in trailers and one-story structures, although rough material may need to be removed first
- Extensive excavation is not usually needed to locate remains. Most remains will be in the first few inches of debris.
- Remains may be charred, charred and calcined, or completely calcined