



THE ABCs OF A CONTROLLED BURN

A burn boss's first priority is to conduct a safe burn, which requires long hours of preparation. **Wind speed and direction**, humidity and a host of other factors must meet safety requirements before a burn can begin. After establishing a perimeter of natural and hand-cleared **firebreaks** devoid of fuel, the crew will light a downwind **backfire**, which burns slowly as it moves into the wind. As the backfire burns away fuels, it creates a **blackline**. The crew patrols the firebreak perpendicular to the backfire, establishing a **handline**, where an **igniter** will use a drip torch to set a **flank fire** to clear fuels along the handline. When the flank fire has burned away enough fuel, an igniter will set the **headfire** along the windward firebreak. Fueled by the wind, the headfire typically burns quickly, but extinguishes itself by burning straight into the backfire.