**The Language of Fire**

Hi, This is Esther Frederick with another NIFC podcast.

Twenty-first century firefighting involves a lot of technology. For example, scientists use climate and weather data, along with sophisticated computer models, to predict wildland fire behavior. Communication experts use satellites and digital radio technology to keep people in touch locally, regionally and nationally. Exercise physiologists help firefighters achieve the kind of conditioning that enables them to do hard work in extremely difficult field conditions.

But some parts of firefighting are almost the same as they were 100 years ago. Today’s firefighters use virtually the same terms their counterparts of yesteryear used. Here are a few of those time honored terms—and their meanings.

**Hot spotting**. This is the practice of sending a few firefighters ahead of the main crew to knock down concentrations of flame. Hot-spotting buys the crew a little extra time—and safety—when it is building fireline.

**Mineral soil**. This refers to soil devoid of any burnable material in it. Complete fireline is a path that is dug or scraped down to mineral soil.

A **spot fire** occurs when embers from the main fire land in dry fuels, causing a small, detached fire.

A “**swamper**” clears limbs, logs and other debris cut by the sawyer (a person who saws things using a chainsaw). Swampers also clear small rocks and debris left behind a bulldozer building fireline.

**Spike camps** are smaller, less formal camps set up closer to the fire, when the location of the main fire camp is a long way from the firelines. Spike camps usually have an area for tents, an area where meals are served and a small stockpile of supplies.

**Mop-up** is the dirty, systematic job of making sure the fire is fully put out. Firefighters go through fuels to see if any coals or embers remain. If there are any, firefighters mix the embers with cool soil or water.

A **boneyard** is a cleared area of ground where sticks and limbs are stacked after they’ve been mopped up.

And finally, **Cold trailing** is the process of inspecting the edge of a fire—which appears to be out—to ensure that it really is out. Firefighters cold-trail by taking their gloves off and actually feeling the sooty ashes to detect heat.

Even though firefighting uses a lot of technology today, the language of fire still shows traces of the way it was done a hundred years ago. Thank you.