

"The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy's not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him."



August 2026



Emergency Management Newsletter

Phillips County, KS



Regional Fire Statistics & Major Events

2026: The region experienced historically unprecedented fires, with over one million acres burned across Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Kansas in the early months alone. In March, the Morrill Fire swept through the Nebraska Sandhills, burning over 640,000 acres to become the largest single fire in the state's history. Earlier in February, the Ranger Road Mega Fire scorched over 280,000 acres in Oklahoma and Kansas.

Current National Statistics



44 Incidents
Total Number of Large Fires
Being Suppressed



12 Total
New Large Fires



38,956 Incidents
Year-to-date Wildfires



696,739 Acres
Acres Burned on Large Fires



15,150
Personnel Assigned to
Wildfires



3,578,017 Acres
Year-to-date Acres Burned

Last Updated: Monday, July 13, 2026 - 06:50

* Source for statistics is the [Incident Management Situation Report](#) published by the [National Interagency Coordination Center](#).

Humans are the largest contributing factor to wildfire ignitions, causing approximately 85 percent of all wildfires nationally every year. Most of these fires can be prevented. Preventable wildfires threaten lives, property, and our precious natural resources.

House Fires

Cooking: This is the number one cause of house fires, accounting for roughly half of all residential incidents. Stovetop grease fires and leaving cooking food unattended are the most common catalysts.

Heating Equipment: Space heaters, furnaces, fireplaces, and wood stoves are the second most common culprits. Fires typically occur when portable heaters or open flames are placed too close to flammable materials like curtains or bedding, or when chimneys lack regular maintenance.

Electrical Malfunctions: Faulty wiring, frayed appliance cords, overloaded power strips, and failing outlets rank as the third major cause. Additionally, the improper charging or retrofitting of lithium-ion batteries (e-bikes, scooters, and power tools) has become an increasingly common electrical hazard.

Smoking Materials: While smoking ranks slightly lower in the overall frequency of fires, it is the leading cause of fatal house fires. The primary dangers involve dropping lit cigarettes into upholstered furniture or mattresses and improper disposal.

DID YOU KNOW?

FIGHT FIRE

WITH FIRE

ISN'T JUST A SAYING—IT'S A **REAL** WILDFIRE STRATEGY.

FIREFIGHTERS SOMETIMES USE CONTROLLED BURNS, CALLED BACKFIRES OR BURNOUTS, TO REMOVE GRASS, BRUSH, AND OTHER FUEL AHEAD OF AN ADVANCING WILDFIRE.

WHEN THE MAIN FIRE REACHES THE BURNED AREA, IT HAS LITTLE OR NOTHING LEFT TO BURN, HELPING SLOW OR STOP ITS SPREAD.

WILDFIRES CAN CREATE THEIR OWN WIND, DRIVING FLAMES FASTER AND PUSHING EMBERS MILES AHEAD—IGNITING NEW SPOT FIRES.

THIS TECHNIQUE IS CAREFULLY PLANNED AND ONLY USED BY TRAINED PROFESSIONALS UNDER SPECIFIC WEATHER AND SAFETY CONDITIONS.

REMOVE THE FUEL. REMOVE THE FIRE.

STAY INFORMED. • USE CAUTION. • PROTECT OUR COMMUNITY.

"Readiness is when your desire is stronger than your distraction."

Grain Bin Safety; 30 Seconds to Save a Life

Flowing grain behaves like **quicksand**. If an unloading auger is running, an adult can become trapped to their waist in **5 seconds** and completely submerged in under **30 seconds**. Once grain reaches your chest, the pressure is too immense to break free without assistance

The 3 Deadliest Grain Hazards

Moving Grain: Entering a bin while grain is loading or unloading creates a fatal downward suction.

Grain Bridges: Crusted, spoiled grain leaves a hollow pocket underneath. Walking on it causes it to collapse like thin ice.

Grain Avalanches: Grain built up on side walls can break loose without warning, burying anyone below

The Golden Rules of Safe Bin Entry

If entering a grain bin is necessary, you must follow the Zero-Exception Safety Checklist before stepping inside:

Lockout/Tagout (LOTO): Turn off, disconnect, and physically lock out all power sources for augers and conveyors so no one can accidentally restart them while you are inside.

Test the Air: Decomposing or wet grain depletes oxygen and creates toxic, invisible gases. Use a gas monitor to confirm oxygen levels are above 19.5%. [

Harness & Lifeline: Always wear a full-body safety harness hooked to a lifeline that is securely anchored outside the bin door.

The Observer Rule: Never enter a bin alone. A dedicated spotter must stay outside the door, maintain constant visual or radio communication, and be ready to call 911.

Remember: If you see a coworker trapped, never jump in to save them. You will immediately become a second victim. Call 911 instantly, turn on all ventilation fans to pump oxygen into the bin, and wait for emergency responders with specialized rescue tubes.



Grain engulfment rescues require immediate deactivation of all unloading equipment to stop grain movement. Rescuers use a sectional, cylindrical rescue tube (cofferdam) to surround the victim. Once inserted, they remove the grain inside the tube to relieve pressure so the victim can be safely pulled out.



DID YOU KNOW? An average 10-inch auger moves grain so fast that it clears out a human body's volume (5 to 7 cubic feet) in less than a single minute.

**2-3
SECONDS
TO REACT**

**4-5
SECONDS
UNTIL YOU'RE
TRAPPED**

**22
SECONDS
UNTIL YOU'RE
COMPLETELY
COVERED**

