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Getting fired up for class at North Georgia Technical College

Forest Service fire managers from the US Forest Service and the Georgia Forestry Commission spent a week on the Clarkesville Campus of North Georgia Technical College conducting a Wildland Fire Suppression course. Along with students from the NGTC Environmental Technology program, participants from across North Georgia joined the training session.

The 32-hour training included a mix of classroom and outdoor training stations focused on fire suppression and prescribed fire implementation. All forestry personnel, including emergency firefighters, engaged in fireline operations must have completed the four modules in this training: Firefighting Training, Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior, Human Factors in the Wildland Fire Service, and Introduction to Incident Command System (ICS).

Across the campus, stations were set up so the students could rotate through in groups small enough to engage with the instructor. All students were provided with the minimum Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) needed for the class including a fire resistant shirt, eye protection, and gloves.

“When we come onto campuses like this, we do provide the minimum equipment necessary,” explained Ryan Peacock of the US Forest Service Chattooga River Ranger District. “This is a great campus for this class, and it was good to see enthusiastic participation from the students as well as other residents in the area.”

The course covered a variety of topics including fire suppression, communications, shelter deployment, using maps and compasses, cultural resources, and more.

For example, Dave Martin and Alex Juame from the Gainesville office of the US Forest Service, demonstrated firing devices used to start controlled burns. From safety techniques including transportation considerations and ignition strategies, Martin and Juame also warned the participants of the classic “rookie mistakes” and how to avoid them.

Dequincy Gordon, also with the Gainesville office, and Shawn Alexander of the Georgia Forestry Commission worked with the participants on the basics of creating a fire line to contain low-intensity fires. As the students cleared a two-foot wide path through the woods, Dequincy explained
how reaching the wet mineral soil will inhibit a fire from spreading. Teamwork, communications, and efficiency were stressed throughout all of sessions.

Across the fish pond on campus, Blue Ridge Ranger District Engine Captain Nick Peters demonstrated the means and methods of moving water. With the assistance of Adam Shirley with the Georgia Forestry Commission, the students were able to experiment with the various pumps, nozzles, hoses, and containers used for applying water and foam to spreading fires.

On the final day of class, the students will complete the Work Capacity Testing during which they will have to walk 3 miles in 45 minutes carrying a 45 pound pack. This activity is critical because wildland firefighters often have to carry to a site a variety of gear and resources that might include shovels, fuses, nozzles, hoses, and even 8-gallon bladders of water.

“We appreciate the agencies and the time they devoted to offering this course on campus,” said NGTC Environmental Technology Instructor Kevin Peyton. “The more hands-on field training we can provide to our students, the more equipped they will be to enter the job market when they graduate.” After this training, the students will also have the opportunity to volunteer to assist with prescribed burns with the commissions.

For more information on wildland fire prevention training, visit http://www.nps.gov/fire/wildland-fire. For more information on the Environmental Technology Program at NGTC, contact Kevin Peyton, kpeyton@northgatech.edu, or visit www.northgatech.edu.

Picture: Dave Martin demonstrates firing devices.


Picture: Dequincy Gordon describes the basics of a fire line.

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