

Incident Summary Page for the 100 Fires Project

Incident Name: East Amarillo Complex	Incident Date & Time: 03/12/2006
Incident Location: Northeast of Amarillo, Texas	Incident Size: 907,245 acres
Types of resources involved: Civilians and Volunteer Fire Departments	# of Fatalities/injuries: 12 fatalities
Reason this fire was selected for the 100 Fires list: ➤ Civilian mass casualty event	
Conditions leading up to the event:	
<p>The East Amarillo Complex was but a moment in a fire season that officially totaled 515 days in length as determined by the Texas Forest Service. This season resulted in the loss of 734 homes and 1,320 other structures, and it took the lives of two firefighters and 17 civilians. There were several other significant interface fires during this fire season to include the Cross Plains Fire where a whole community was completely destroyed in December of 2005.</p> <p>The above-average rainfall in west Texas during the spring and summer of 2005 started to taper off in early fall. By November 2005, drought conditions were starting to escalate. For the month of December the area only received 10% of its normal precipitation. From September to December 2005, the area had only received 17% of its normal rain fall.</p>	
Brief description of the event:	
<p>Made up of two large fires and six smaller ones merging together to burn over five days, the fire resulted in the evacuation of eight towns. Winds of 45 mph with gusts of 60 mph, temperatures in the 70s, and relative humidity as low as 9% enabled the fire to burn more than 900,000 acres, taking 12 lives, destroying 89 structures, and causing an estimated 4,296 head of livestock to perish during the devastating wildfire event.</p>	
Fire behavior factors that were present during the event:	
<p>The majority of vegetation in the area was cured grasses. The fine fuel loading was elevated due to changing land practices as well as vigorous spring and summer growing seasons.</p> <p>Strong frontal winds combined with warm temperatures and extremely low relative humidity.</p>	
Operational lessons available for learning from this incident:	
<p>A Southern Plains Wildfire Outbreak (SPWO) is a phenomenon that is recognized in Texas and surrounding states as specific conditions that lead to extreme fire behavior and rapid growth. The environment conducive to an SPWO is characterized by dry vegetation, dry west-southwest winds across an area with low relative humidity, above average temperatures, and an unstable atmosphere with a clear sky.</p>	
Notable impact or historical significance for the wildland fire service from this incident:	
Not applicable	
Links to more information on this incident:	
<p>https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/6365/east-amarillo-complex-fires-texas https://ticc.tamu.edu/FireInformation/Case%20Studies/Cross%20Plains/CrossPlainsFire_CaseStudy.pdf https://texashighways.com/things-to-do/wildlife/the-new-reality-of-destructive-wildfires-in-the-texas-panhandle/ https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/SPWO/</p>	
This summary page was proudly provided by: Jim Cook & Kurt La Rue	October 2023

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Single engine air tanker drop on the East Amarillo Complex

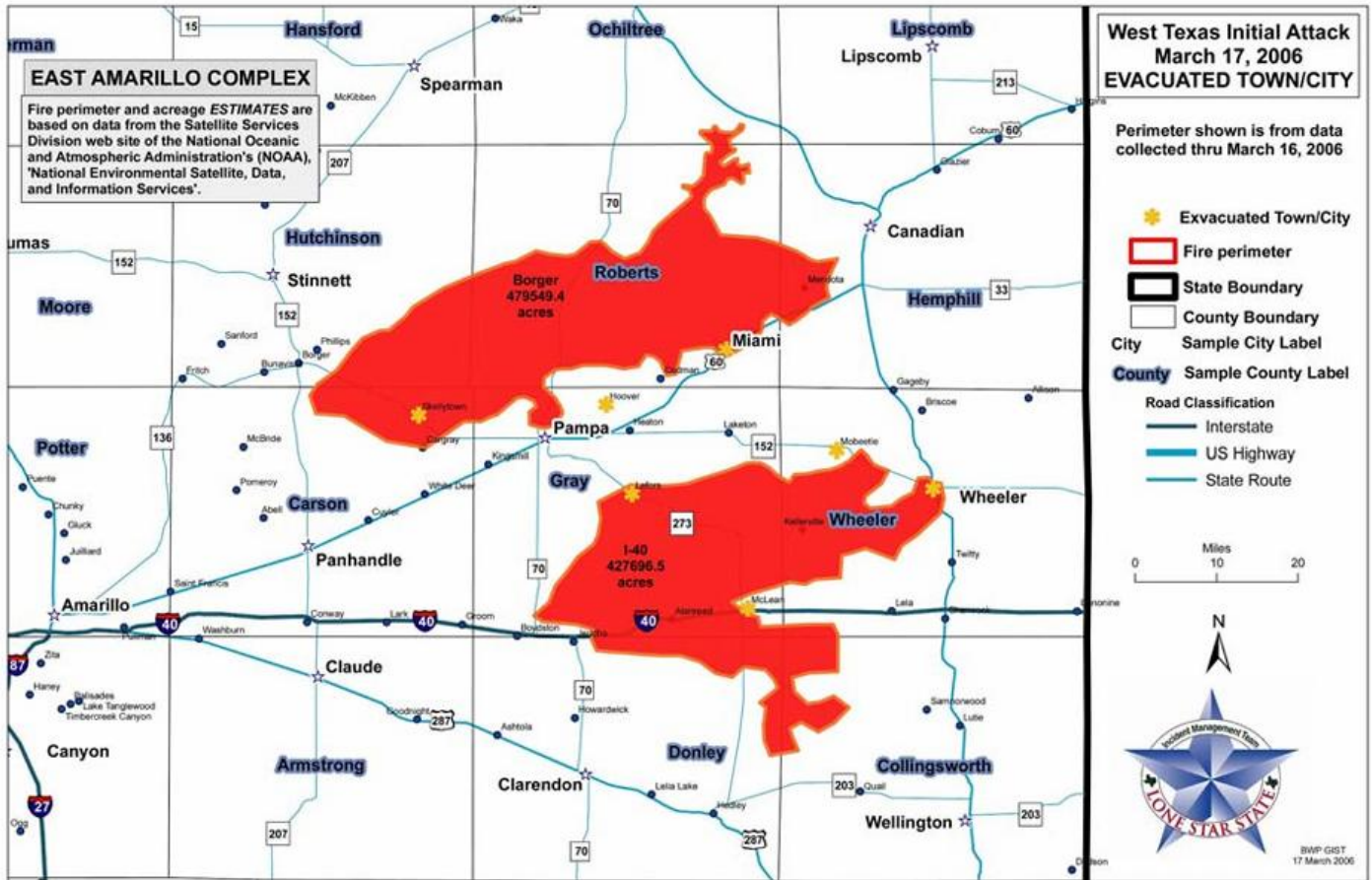


Fig. 3. Extent of wildfires within the East Amarillo Complex in March 2006.