

## **What are the Types of Fires**

Fires are classified according to whether they occur in buildings, wild land, or other locations. Fires that involve structures often are referred to as conflagrations. (Urban conflagration is a fire that destroys several buildings in built-up areas.) Forest fires and wildfires burn in forests and wild land, respectively. Their greatest impact is on the environment and wildlife rather than on the health of humans and domestic animals. A forest fire can develop into a firestorm. Firestorms produce a convection air system that draws hot gases and air in at the base of the fire. As the hot air converges at the center of the fire, it rises and rotates counterclockwise, forming its own cyclone. Firestorm winds can reach peaks of 120 mph and spread rapidly and violently across land. Fires also occur commonly after earthquakes.

## **Examples of Large-Scale Fires**

- Fire in 1871 in Peshtigo, Wisconsin, burned over 2000 square miles and killed approximately 2300 people.
- Fire in 1967 near Sundance, Ohio, destroyed 70 square miles of land within 9 hours.
- Fire in 1991 in Oakland, California, destroyed over 6000 acres and 2700 homes within 4 hours.
- After the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake over 500 fires were reported within 8 hours of the quake.
- California spends approximately \$300 million a year on fighting fires.