Wilderness medicine is the practice of providing medical attention when definitive care is further than 1 hour’s travel time to provide medical treatment. In very remote locations, it can take days or weeks for rescuers to reach victims.

The practice of wilderness medicine comes into practice when it’s necessary to seek medical attention for an injured or ill patient and, because of their location, rescue efforts are hindered or limited by access, terrain, available equipment, and extreme environments.

To help provide guidance in these situations, the C.V. Mosby Company published the fifth edition of Wilderness Medicine last year with Dr. Paul S. Auerbach as editor.

Dr. Auerbach is a practicing physician serving as the Clinical Professor of Surgery in the Division of Emergency Medicine at the Stanford University Medical Center, California, and a founder and past president of the Wilderness Medicine Society.

Wilderness Medicine, first published in 1983 under the title Management of Wilderness and Environment Emergencies, has grown expansively. This fifth edition consists of 97 chapters with a variety of topics, such as lightning injuries, emergency care of the burned victim, heat-related illnesses, injury prevention, and essentials of wilderness survival.

Since the first edition of Wilderness Medicine, a section has been dedicated to wildland fire, with Kathy Davis, National Park Service, and

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Bob Mutch, Forest Service retired, participating as authors (Davis and Mutch 1987).

In the fifth edition, I was asked to serve as the lead author of the wildland fire chapter (Alexander and others 2007).

The wildland fire section familiarizes the reader with wildland fire terminology, equipment, resources, and emergency management strategies and policies. It takes a look at fire as a historical force, the nature and scope of wildland fire hazards, fire behavior, typical injuries, fatality fire statistics and incidents, and survival techniques.

While the chapter emphasizes North America, other regions of the globe are referenced, most notably is Australasia.

Readers will find the wildland fire chapter well-illustrated with nearly 40 photographs and diagrams. As a part of this chapter, Wilderness Medicine’s accompanying DVD cites more than 400 bibliographic references and the titles of more than 100 additional suggested readings.

Naturally, Wilderness Medicine’s primary audience is emergency medical and search and rescue personnel. According to comments and feedback, however, the general public who visit the wilderness would also benefit from the descriptive information as would any “student of fire.”

Thanks to the efforts of Paula Nasiatka, Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center, and Dave Thomas (Forest Service, retired), Wilderness Medicine publishers have agreed to produce offprints of just the wildland fire chapter for distribution within wildland fire community.

For further information about Wilderness Medicine visit: http://www.us.elsevierhealth.com/product.jsp?isbn=9780323032285

Comments on the Book Chapter “Wildland Fires: Dangers and Survival” from Down Under:

“A concise, but impressively comprehensive, account of both wildfire behavior and human behavior in the presence of wildfires. A compelling case is made that even in apparently mild wildfires there is a need for constant vigilance, not only by firefighters, but also by civilians and medical response teams.

I am making your chapter “essential” reading for any student or research staff that joins us to study the role of human factors in firefighter decisionmaking.”

Dr. Mary M. Omodei
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References