



Figure 4—Large rockslides make excellent sites for deploying fire shelters, but firefighters must deploy their shelters well away from grass, brush, and trees.

✓ A bench or a roadbed on the side of a hill can be a good deployment site. Level areas like these can keep you below the path of flames and convective heat (Figure 5).



Figure 5—Four firefighters deployed their fire shelters on this road during a burnover. All four survived with only minor burns.

✓ **DO NOT** deploy in chimneys, saddles, or in the bottom of a draw. Flames and convective heat are funneled into these areas (Figure 6). If you are on a road, **DO NOT** deploy where the road passes through a chimney, draw, or saddle. Move out of these areas before deploying (Figure 7).

✓ Large objects that will not burn, such as a large rock or pile of dirt, can act as barriers to heat if they are between you and the approaching flames.

✓ Open ridgetops can be effective deployment sites because the convective heat and flames will generally continue rising above them. Fire intensity often drops when a fire reaches a ridge. Recommendations for staying away from fuels still apply (Figure 8).

What if the burnover happens so fast that I cannot get to a cleared area? If you follow safe firefighting tactics, you should not end up in a situation where you have to deploy your shelter. If you must deploy and there is time, clear away any fuels to mineral soil. Otherwise, you will have to make the best of your situation. Remember, deploy as far as you can from fuel concentrations, trees, and brush. Do not deploy in tall grass. Look for the sparsest fuels you can find (Figure 9).



Figure 6—Chimneys and draws are poor sites for deploying fire shelters because flames and hot gases funnel through them.



Figure 7—Stay out of draws even when deploying on a road.



Figure 8—Broad ridgetops can offer effective deployment sites. Do not deploy in draws.

If I am in a shelter and flames contact it, what should I do?

✓ **DO NOT PANIC.** Rely on your training. Keep your face in the dirt. You must protect your lungs and airway from the hot gases.

✓ If you find that you must move to lessen the impact of flames or intense heat on your shelter, keep your nose and mouth close to the ground. Air on the ground is much cooler than air even inches above the ground. Scoot along the ground, but **DO NOT RISE UP OFF THE GROUND.** One breath of hot air can kill you.

✓ Even if fire is inside the shelter, the shelter provides your best chance of survival. You may be burned. Be prepared to steel yourself against the pain. Conditions outside the shelter will be much worse than they are inside. Firefighters who have panicked and left the shelter have died.



Figure 9—If no area is available that is free of fuels, fire shelters are more likely to be effective in areas with sparse fuels than in areas with heavy fuels.

One survivor of an entrapment received serious burns while he was in his fire shelter. He felt certain he was dying and thought his legs were burning off. He stayed on the ground and endured the pain. In the end, he completely recovered from his burns. He credited the shelter with saving his life.

Remember: The fire shelter has saved hundreds of lives. If you deploy it in a location where flames will not contact the shelter, you will greatly improve your chances for survival.