



### Monster Fire at Minong: Wisconsin's Five Mile Tower Fire of 1977

Bill Matthias

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Ignited by a single match on April 30, 1977, the Five Mile Tower Fire raged out of control for 17 hours. It would be one of the largest wildland fires in Wisconsin history, ultimately destroying more than 13,000 acres of land and 63 buildings. As a column of black pine smoke reached high in the sky, citizens from Minong, Chicog, Webster, Gordon, Wascott, Hayward, Spooner, Solon Springs, and other communities began showing up to help. The grassy field designated as fire headquarters quickly became a hub of activity, jammed with trucks, school buses, dozers on trailers, dump trucks, tanker trucks, fuel trucks, and hundreds of people waiting to sign in. More than 900 came in the first four hours, clogging the road with traffic in both directions. Headquarters personnel worked valiantly to coordinate citizens and DNR workers in a buildup of people and equipment unprecedented in the history of Wisconsin firefighting.

Based on his own experiences during the long battle, plus dozens of interviews and other eyewitness accounts, Bill Matthias presents an in-depth look at the Five Mile Tower Fire, the brave citizens who helped fight it, and the important changes made to firefighting laws and procedures in its aftermath.



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