

---

# Into the flames

Student volunteers to fight Texas wild

By [Madeline Burns](#)

**Published:** Tuesday, October 11, 2011

**Updated:** Tuesday, October 11, 2011 02:10

In many ways, junior agricultural leadership and development major Katlene Lee appears to be just a typical student. However, there is one big exception: when wildfires broke out across Texas, she worked to contain the blazes.

Lee, who serves in the Brazos County Precinct 3 Volunteer Fire Department, is both basic accredited and wild land certified.

"I did go out with the Brazos County Task Force to the tri-county fire," Lee said. "We were there for about 15-16 hours the night I was there, but our county was there everyday for about four days."

Unlike conventional structure fires, this year's Texas wildfires covered thousands of acres and grew in area as winds spread the flames.

Lee said trying to contain these massive fires poses new and unconventional difficulties for firefighters.

"Wild land fires are a different world," Lee said.

Despite the challenges, Lee said the benefits she receives from being involved in such a program have far outweighed the difficulties. She considers fighting fires to be one of her passions.

"My department is like a big family, and no matter what one of us needs, we are all there to help," Lee said. "It



---

Katlene Lee, a student at A&M and a firefighter with the Brazos County Precinct 3 Volunteer Fire Dep

Jay Kapadia — THE BATTALION

has taught me a lot about working as a team, and taking what I learn in a practice or classroom setting and putting it into action. It has also helped me with my social skills."

Jason Ware, assistant fire chief with the Brazos County Precinct 3 Volunteer Fire Department and president of the Brazos County Firefighter's Association, emphasized the importance of the personality traits Lee brings to the team.

"Katlene joined our fire department and brought a unique set of skills with her," Ware said. "She brought an 'I'm just as good if not better than anyone' attitude, and immediately stepped in and started being a leader."

Ware, who accompanied Lee fighting the tri-county fire, said that Lee's resilient nature and problem-solving attitude were important assets to the task force, and contributed the group's success.

"Katlene and I were sent to Grimes-Montgomery-Waller counties as a part of a Wild Land Firefighting Task Force from Brazos County," Ware said. "As a team leader for the Task Force, I was very pleased with Katlene. She worked in a dangerous environment without hesitation and pulled her weight and others'."

Ware also said that Lee's solid track record has been acknowledged before, when she was named Rookie of the Year.

"Katlene was named our Rookie Firefighter of the Year for 2010 for her hard work and dedication to our department," Ware said. "Katlene has earned the trust of not only me, but the rest of the firefighters in Precinct 3 Volunteer Fire Department, therefore making her someone who can be trusted to go into any type of situation without concern."

Kyle Comeaux, class of 2009 and a firefighter with the Friendswood Volunteer Fire Department, also recognizes the importance of having trust in peers during difficult and dangerous tasks.

"I personally believe that this job is hard on anyone who chooses to take it," Comeaux said. "As we were told in our new member training, 'We are 911, so who do we call when we are in trouble?' The answer is we have to rely on the people who go into those life-endangering atmospheres."

In Comeaux' words, Lee was 911 when the Texas wildfires started in September, along with many other responders to the call for courage and aid.