

S-215 Fire Operations in the Wildland/Urban Interface

II. STRUCTURE PROTECTION: LESSONS LEARNED II.

A. Tactics employed in structure protection are the same for both wildland and structural firefighting agencies regardless of the type of resources utilized.

B. Most interface fires occur under high wind conditions, creating rapidly moving fires, extreme fire behavior, long range spotting and multiple fire fronts.

C. The scattered location of structures in the interface can limit tactics commonly used in wildland firefighting, such as direct attack or burnouts.

D. Spot fires create multiple fire fronts and firefighters protecting structures are often surrounded by flames, showered by burning embers and are subjected to dense smoke during the battle to save someone's home.

E. Escape routes and safety zones are easily compromised in structure defense by remaining at the structure beyond what we would consider safe in wildland fire operations.

F. Mobility is one of the most important tactics employed in structure defense. Engines must be able to quickly move from house to house in the protection effort. Structure engines are larger and less mobile than wildland engines. Consider actions in the deployment of firefighting equipment that will allow for rapid response to the changing fire environment, as well as maintaining the ability to escape to a safety zone.

G. Wise water use is critical to structural defense. Water may be most effectively used in foam solutions to wet down structural exposures prior to the arrival of the fire front.

H. Coordination, organization and communications may not be adequate during initial operations.

I. Resources required may not be available and those on scene may not be able to control the spreading fire. Resources defending structures must be mobile, resourceful, and self-reliant.

J. The ability to communicate among all agencies responding to interface fires is an absolute must. Regular communication among all resources

is essential.

K. Situational awareness is required due to the numerous factors that can quickly compromise the safety of everyone involved.

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Wildland-Urban Watch Outs

- Poor access and narrow one-way roads
- Wooden construction and wood shake roofs
- Powerlines, propane tanks, and HazMat threats
- Inadequate water supply
- Natural fuels 30' or closer to structures
- Structures in chimneys, box canyons, narrow canyons, or on steep slopes (30% or greater)
- Extreme fire behavior
- Strong winds
- Evacuation of public (panic)

Incident Action Plan (IAP) written for Day Shift 5-6-09

Spot Forecast inserted into the IAP for the dayshift of 5-6-09

- The weather discussion was for the night of 5-5-09 and not for the day of 5-6-09. This may have led to some confusion of what time the winds may surface.
- Northwest to North 28 to 38 MPH with gust near 55 MPH were noted for the day of 5-6-09 with no surface time.

Control Operations for the Structure Branch

- Prep and Triage structures which could be threatened by advancing fire.