Professional Landscapers Firewise Training - 2013

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Definition

- Wildland Urban Interface- the zone where human-made improvements intermix with wildland fuels.
2011 Texas Wildfire Season

November 15, 2010 to October 31, 2011
27,976 Fires (TFS Reported)
3,959,040 acres
2,862 Homes (1,939 Labor Day Weekend)
2,700 “other” Structures
47.3% of total U.S acres burned
6 of the largest fires in TX history
Pinnacle Fire 4/17/2011

Only 100 acres

11 Homes destroyed

Another 10 damaged

Over 100 FF’s
Steiner Ranch 9/4/2011

Only 125 acres

24 Homes destroyed

30 Damaged

Firefighters from as far as Dallas/Fort Worth
Bastrop County Complex
9/4/2011

“Most Catastrophic Wildfire in Texas History”
34,068 acres
1,645 Homes
2 Fatalities
100% Containment on October 10, 2011
Firefighters from every state in US (ex. Hawaii)
2011 a fluke? What about 2012

Fewer Fires....

But, more acres burned
History of fire

Natural

Sculpted our landscape

Texas landscapes are actually fire dependant... whoa....
History of fire

Change of land use
  - lack of grazing
  - poorly planned development
  - lack of land owner responsibility

Native invasives??
  - everything is out of wack!
  - poor/lack of land management
History of fire

Megafires??

“Modern day fires are more a land management failure than a fire management failure”

But, that doesn’t mean that we don’t have a place at the table
Why Do Homes Burn?
Importance of Defensive Space
Ember Storm Video
What Happened to Us?
Wicking Fences
No Tsunami of fire here...
What Happened to Us?

Gutters
Attic vents
Patio Furniture
Wooden Privacy Fences
***No Defensible Space***
Mulch beds
Dead Yard Waste
Highly Flammable Landscaping
But it doesn’t have to be like this!!
What Did we learn??
Lessons Learned

• Embers are our enemy!!

• Limited Resources
  (BOX North and a BOX South)

• Shared responsibility with homeowners

• Community planning and effort
What to expect from FD

• Size-up
• Structural Triage
• Structural Prep
Structure Triage

Defendable

Defendable with some improvements

Non-defendable….Wait, What?!
Structural Prep

• “I don’t care what’s on fire when I get there”

• Sever any connection from vegetation fire to the structure
Structural Prep

• Rip down the gutters

• Rip off gates next to house

• Knock out a section of the wooden fence

• Yard sale the patio furniture from decks
Structural Prep

- Remove any questionable vegetation next to and around the home

- Dealing with the highly flammable landscaping is the toughest and most time consuming part of structural prep
Structural Prep

• If there’s no defensible space or if addressing the landscaping is too time consuming we stop and move on....yep.

• We typically only allow 2-5 mins AT THE MOST for structural prep
So What are We Doing With Homeowners??
Community/Regional Effort

Firewise

Ready, Set, Go!

Fire Adapted Communities
Foundation to 30 Feet
The primary space adjacent to your home.
IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

- Vents & Screens
- Window Boxes
- Space Between Siding & Eaves Gables
- Spackle Around Window
- Cellar Wells & Vents
We can do things to reduce the losses!!
With creative landscaping
With better construction practices
And increased Public Education
Thanks
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