



# NORTHERN ROCKIES COORDINATING GROUP

## COMMUNITY AND STRUCTURE FIRE PROTECTION Guidelines for the Northern Rockies 2008

### Background

Protection of structures and communities is a shared partnership between the home and landowners and their fire agencies. Structure and community protection is a large cost center for all fire agencies. Clarification on what, how and where we will accomplish our structure protection roles and responsibilities must be identified. There needs to be common expectations among all agencies and the public on how structure protection will be handled within the Northern Rockies.

With the increased growth in the wildland urban interface fire agencies do not have the capability to protect all structures. The goal is to support the creation of firewise communities and structures that can survive the effects of a wildland fire without intervention.

All fire agencies have primary responsibility for fire suppression within their respective protection areas. A strong initial attack with suppression as the primary objective will occur on all wildfires. Fire agencies have a responsibility to attempt to prevent a wildland fire from spreading into areas where there are structures, and to assist local fire agencies in protecting communities and structures from the advancing wildland fire.

### Leaders Intent

Our first and foremost intent is to keep our firefighters and the public safe. Secondly, once that safety can be ensured, then we will aggressively work towards keeping the wildland fire away from structures and communities. Our strategies and tactics will be based on that intent. Protecting structures from fire will not be possible in every situation. Fire behavior and availability of resources will dictate the strategies that will be used.

When there is a need to engage in structure protection, we will ensure that we are taking safe, appropriate, and reasonable tactical actions for which we are trained and equipped. Those actions will be cost effective. We will limit the use of tactics such as gelling, wrapping, extensive hazardous fuels modification, and utilization of Type 1 and 2 structure engines.

### Unified Efforts

Fire agencies may have a shared responsibility for wildland fire and structure protection within the scope of their state laws, agreements and annual operating plans. Agency Administrators will discuss with their partners roles and responsibilities, what capabilities each party has, how the parties will interface with each other, and how responsibilities for costs will be addressed. Agency Administrators will provide leaders intent for structure fire protection. Incident management organizations will engage local government agencies (fire departments, law enforcement, disaster services, etc.) in the planning of strategies and tactics for community and structure protection.

There are areas in the Northern Rockies where there is no local fire agency. Through established agreements and authorities, the wildland fire protection agencies may have the responsibility to protect structures from wildland fire. Landowners have the responsibility to determine whether there is a local fire agency that provides structure fire protection.

It is important for NRCG members to:

- **Partner** with communities, home and landowners to identify what actions can be taken to mitigate potential wildland urban interface losses, and identify financial and technical assistance opportunities.
- **Identify** how the parties will work together when the wildland fire impacts another's protection or jurisdictional responsibility.
- **Establish** agreements and/or local operating plans to identify roles and responsibilities prior to the wildland fire.

### **Capabilities**

Wildland fire agencies have no capability or responsibility to do structure fire suppression.

Jurisdictional entities such as local fire agencies may have limited capability within their own areas of jurisdiction to respond to a wildland fire. It is important to understand what capability they do have and if they have options to reach out to others, such as mutual aid, to enhance that capability.

### **Definitions**

The following are defined:

**Wildland Fire Protection:** Protecting natural resources and watersheds from damage from any fire that occurs in the wildland. State, tribal and federal forestry or land management and some local government agencies normally provide wildland fire protection.

**Structure Protection:** Protecting a structure from the threat of damage from an advancing wildland fire. This involves the use of standard wildland protection tactics, control methods, and equipment, including fire control lines and the extinguishments of spot fires near or on the structure. The protection can be provided by both the rural and/or local government fire department and wildland fire protection agencies.

**Structure Fire Suppression:** Interior or exterior actions taken to suppress and extinguish a burning structure or improvement associated with standard fire protection equipment and training. This is the responsibility of local government entities; however there are areas where there is no structural fire agency in place.

***This supercedes any prior Community and Structure Fire Protection guidelines developed by NRCG.***