Communities in Action

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2011 Wildfire Activity

- 10 of 14 largest documented wildfires
- Most homes destroyed in single wildfire – Bastrop
- Largest wildfire in East Texas - Bear Creek
- Nine Southern Plains Wildfire Outbreaks (Texas Firestorms)
- Most acres burned in single wildfire season – 4 million
- Most homes saved in single fire season – 38,962
2011 National Wildfire Perimeters

Total: 9,960,191

Texas
3,953,420

National
6,006,771
10% of wildfires that burn 70% of the acreage
2011 Texas Wildfire Season

30,547 Fires
3,993,700 acres
“New Normal”

- Significant wildfire seasons have occurred in 10 of the last 15 years...and it’s not over yet!
- 70% of wildfires are individual caused
- 80% occur within 2 miles of a community
Based on Point of Ignition, 80% of Texas Wildfires Occur Within 2 Miles of a Community
Weather

- Change in climate cycle
- Drought
- Red Flag Days
  - Low Relative Humidity
  - Windy

Feb. 22

April 5th

June 14th

September 13th
Changes in Land Use

Fire Issues today lead back to how we are managing lands & fire prone landscapes
Land Use

- Increase in woody vegetation
- Change in grazing
- Wildfire management
- Change in commercial crop production
- Fragmentation of land ownership
- Transitions in industrial forestry
- Unmitigated vegetative areas
- Suppression activities
Population

- More than half of the 254 counties in Texas experienced homes lost.
Population

• Majority of wildfires started by humans
• New developments
• 41% Texas Population in UWI
Wildfire Activity
2011 Wildfire Season – Homes destroyed per County

Total Homes Lost: 2,947
Counties Affected: 136
2011 Texas Wildfires
Common Denominators of Home Destruction

TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE
Common Denominators

- Embers
- Combustible attachments
- Windows
- Structure to Structure
- Landscape elements
EMBERS

Wildfires driven by high winds sent a profuse amount of embers ahead of the main fire.
Combustible attachments to homes that were not pre-treated with fire-resistant paint or chemicals acted as a fuse that led fire right up to the home.
Fires often spread to surrounding homes from vehicles, outbuildings, firewood and other combustible items that already had caught fire and were generating a tremendous amount of heat.
Windows not designed to withstand heat fractured, creating an opportunity for flames and embers to penetrate homes.
LANDSCAPE

- Landscapes with highly combustible vegetation, railroad ties, railings and walkways created a path for fire to follow and made homes more susceptible to ignition.
Homes that caught fire generated so much heat and so many embers that they essentially became fuel for the fire and ignited surrounding homes and structures.
So now what?

That’s why you are here!
Communities in Action

- Have acknowledged their wildfire risk
- More importantly have taken ownership of reducing their risk
- Have done so in innovative ways
Wildfire Mitigation Resources

- Community Wildfire Protection Plans
- Firewise Communities
- Ready Set Go
- Mitigation Action Plans
Cedar Hill

- First Municipality to Develop CWPP
- Trained FD in Wildland FF
- Hosted WUI Summit
- Completed Community Fuels reduction Project compatible with tree preservation ordinance
Borger

- First Municipal Firewise Community and CWPP in the panhandle
- Utilize prescribed fire as primary mechanism for fuels reduction
- All firefighters obtained NWCG qualifications
- Insisted on transparency
Borger
Travis County/Austin

100 acres
12 homes
Travis County Wildland Task Force

- Developed cross jurisdictional CWPP stakeholder group
- Developed localized educational materials
- Prepared.ly
- Identified individuals with primary responsibility for addressing WUI issues
- AFD established Wildland Division
Walker Co.

Midway Fire 2,045 acres
Walker County

- First Countywide CWPP in Texas
- First cross trained NWCG qualified municipal Fire
- First Ready Set Go department in Texas
- First recipient of FEMA approved HMGP project for wildfire mitigation
- First joint RSG Department and Firewise Community
Harris County

- CWPP for the highest unincorporated area in Texas
- Leveraged the Wildland Urban Interface planning concept to other Interface threats
  - Marine Urban Interface
  - Industrial Urban Interface
- Developed Countywide fire prevention campaign
Lake Travis Fire and Rescue

- Hosted Central Texas Wildland Urban Interface Summit
- Worked with Steiner Ranch to Develop CWPP and receive Firewise recognition
- Built local capacity through the development of Fuels Mitigation Crew
Steiner Ranch Fire - Travis Co.
September, 2011

125 acres
35 homes
Bastrop Fire Complex

September 4, 2011

**Destroyed**

Homes: 1,660 (61%)
Commercial: 36 (35%)
Total: 1,696
Over 600 homes were burning in the first 2 ½ hours

1,000 homes burned on first day
Bastrop County

- Developed County Wide CWPP
- Received first multi-aspect HMGP
- Initiated and led largest private land recovery effort in state history
Questions?

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