



# Access

When a wildfire threatens, the first few minutes are the most critical for saving your home. Firefighting personnel must be able to immediately locate and safely travel to your home in order to effectively protect it.

Street signs and house addresses must be clearly posted, and roads must be able to accommodate busy traffic. At the same time that fire engines and other emergency equipment are trying to drive into your area, you must be able to escape in your car with your family and valuable personal possessions.

## Street Signs and Addresses

Proper identification of your home is essential. During a major wildfire, firefighters from throughout the state (or even the nation) will arrive to assist local firefighters. They will rely on clear street signs and addresses to find your home.



- ❑ Street names and addresses should be printed in letters and numbers at least four inches tall on a contrasting color background. They should be visible from all directions of travel for at least 150 feet.
- ❑ Signs should be made of fire resistant materials (e.g. metal).
- ❑ Each street and road in your area should be labeled and each should have a different name or number.

- ❑ Your home should have its own house number which should be in numerical order along your street or road.
- ❑ If your house is set back from the street or road, your address should be posted at the entrance of your driveway.
- ❑ In situations where more than one home is accessed off a single driveway, all addresses should be posted at the street and at each appropriate intersection along that driveway.

## Access to Your House

Even if your street and house are clearly identified for firefighters, precious time can be lost if firefighters have difficulty getting to your house. Narrow roads, dead-end streets, steep driveways and weak bridges can delay firefighters, or prevent them from arriving at all; firefighting equipment is much larger and heavier than your family car or truck.



- ❑ Single lane roads or driveways should have turnouts at regular intervals with enough space to allow emergency vehicles and cars to pass.

- ❑ Road and street systems must be designed to provide safe emergency evacuation and fire department access. A minimum of two primary access roads should be designed into every subdivision and development.
- ❑ All private and public streets should be constructed to provide two traffic lanes, each a minimum of ten feet wide. This is just



enough space for a fire engine and car to pass each other.

- ❑ Curves and intersections should be wide enough to allow large fire equipment to easily pass and turn.



- ❑ Roads, driveways and bridges should be built to carry at least 40,000 lbs., the average weight of a fire engine. (By comparison, the average family station wagon weighs about 4,000 lbs.)

- ❑ Streets and driveways must not be too steep or have sharp curves – this can prevent emergency equipment from gaining access to your home.



- ❑ Dead-end streets and long driveways should have turnaround areas designed as either a “T” or a circle large enough to allow fire equipment to turn around.

Each of these steps will give firefighters a chance to find and protect your home. A few minutes delay can make a difference in saving your home. If you have any question about emergency access to your home, including construction widths, grades or strengths, contact your local fire department.