

We proceeded to the western Tri-Lakes area to Red Rocks Drive. When we stopped and were determining which homes to evaluate, Ann Marsico came out of her home and questioned what the fire personnel were there for. She immediately agreed to a home evaluation.

Firefighters Rudi Gillette and Steve Buckner conducted the evaluation.

Marsico's home site received a matrix rating of 32, which placed it in the "Easy" to save category. Some actions were recommended to her to lower that rating even more. No records are kept by fire personnel for these requested matrix evaluations, because the one that counts is the one that is made at the time of a fire incident.

You can invite fire personnel to evaluate your home site at any time by calling Jennifer Martin at 719-484-0911. The matrix number that is derived from the inspection of your home site is the evaluation for that time and place. If a matrix number is high, the homeowner can take appropriate action to mitigate the area from the fire destruction probability. If

a forest fire occurs, a new matrix rating would be determined at that time.

Some of the items that make up the triage rating are: slope angle of the property to determine equipment accessibility; fuel type present, which includes such items as woodpiles and pine needle accumulations; fuel clearance, which is the proximity of the nearest trees

to the home; aerial fuel, which is the density of the canopy of the trees nearest the home; the makeup of the roof, such as asphalt shingles or concrete tile; and they type of siding, such as wood or stucco.

Firefighters also note any other structures adjacent or close to the home that might intensify the incendiary properties of the site. They note whether

the equipment access, such as driveways, is sufficient for fire vehicles. They also evaluate the exposed utilities and the closest water source. Finally, they check for the fuel storage facilities on the property, such as propane or diesel tanks, and other unnamed hazards that might increase the destructibility of the site.

The matrix rating is for a property owner's information only. What is done with that information is entirely up to the owner. It will not be provided to any insurance company. Gillette and Buckner emphasized the need for homeowners to become proactive in recognizing the condition and taking any action necessary to decrease the matrix number to the lowest possible.

Bernard Minetti can be contacted at bernardminetti@ocn.me.

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