

6. CONDUCTING THE INSPECTION

6.1 The Inspection Procedure

The inspection for clearance around structures requires the use of some special techniques. However, there are also basic techniques that can be used for most statutory fire prevention inspections.

6.2 Time of Day

The time of day that premise inspections are conducted will vary with the type of premises. Any time after 8:00 a.m. may be fine for inspections of business establishments or recreational camp inspections. Inspection of dwellings, both permanent and seasonal, usually requires the inspection to be made after 10:00 a.m. If inspections are conducted before this time, the inspector may encounter some resistance or ill feeling especially by summer homeowners who usually like to sleep late. The same will apply to rural-dwelling occupants on weekends.

6.3 Approaching the Property

When driving onto the property to be inspected, give attention to the general surrounding of the buildings and their exposures to other buildings. Also, observe the general construction, type, occupancy, and general condition of the buildings. These observations will be of assistance during the inspection and will be of value should a fire occur or threaten the property.

Approach:

- Drive up slowly.
- Leave gates as found.
- Avoid raising dust.

For Personal Safety:

- Note threatening signs.
- Evidence of dogs.
- Evidence of illegal activity.

Observe:

- The grade/condition of the **road** and **accessibility** of approach from the standpoint of hazard reduction and fire protection.
- The general surroundings of buildings and exposures to other structures and vegetation.
- The structures, mechanical equipment, etc., in relation to their use and exposure to hazardous fuels.

6.4 Initial Contact with Occupant

The inspector's first duty is to make contact with the property owner, or whoever is in charge of the premises. The inspector should:

- Inspector should be in official vehicle and uniform.
- Introduce him/herself and show identification.

- Establish communications, avoiding technical or slang language.
- Explain the purpose of the contact and present the idea that the inspection will help protect the property from wildfire.
- Create the idea you are there to help.
- Rather than immediately jumping into a discussion of fire prevention, try a few "icebreakers." This will put the contact on a friendlier basis.
- Obtain permission to inspect. Request that someone accompany the inspector. If permission to inspect is refused, withdraw as cordially as possible and immediately notify your supervisor.
- Offer to return at a later date if the present time is not appropriate or causes inconvenience.
- If resident is uncooperative, leave the property and notify your supervisor.

6.5 Understanding Fire Behavior

Provide the homeowner with a brief understanding of fire behavior. There are three factors that influence the way fire behaves:

Fuel

- How much fuel is around the home?
- Vegetation dead or alive is fuel, as is the house and deck.
- Trees and home – heavy fuels burn longer.
- Grass and shrubs – light/flashy.

Topography

- Fire travels fast when it is climbing a hill.
- Saddles in a ridge act like a chimney. Homes built here will take a wildfire full force directed at the homeowner's front door.

Wind

- Wind provides fire with more oxygen making flames more intense.
- In a firestorm, flames are so intense the fire makes its own wind.
- Burning embers will be carried in the wind and can easily land on the homeowner's property or roof.