SECTION V: PRE FIRE MANAGEMENT TACTICS

A. DIVISION / BATTALION / PROGRAM PLANS

Wildland-Urban Interface Situation

Marin County includes densely populated urban cities and towns along the eastern Highway 101 corridor from the Golden Gate Bridge northward to Novato. Geographically, Marin is a large, southeast-trending peninsula, with the Pacific Ocean to the west, San Pablo Bay and San Francisco Bay to the east, and across the Golden Gate, the city of San Francisco to the south. Marin County borders Sonoma County to the north. Elevation ranges from sea level to the peak of Mount Tamalpais at 2,574 feet. Unincorporated rural villages within the County include coastal communities (Muir Beach, Stinson Beach, and Bolinas), communities near Tomales Bay (Olema, Point Reyes Station, Inverness, Inverness Park, Marshall, Tomales, and Dillon Beach), and rural villages in the interior valleys (Nicasio, Lagunitas, Forest Knolls, San Geronimo, and Woodacre). The communities above are primarily situated within or adjacent to the Wildland-Urban Interface, with dense to moderate concentrations of structures. Marin County has 200,000 acres of watershed with significant WUI problems. Response times present significant challenges to keeping fires from directly impacting communities and sub-divisions. Emergency fire access to most Marin communities (especially those within SRA) is limited by narrow, winding roads lined with dense vegetation. Evacuation maps have been developed by the Marin County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services, the Marin County Fire Department and local police and fire agencies.

Fuels

Plant communities in Marin County are generally defined by the northwest-trending ridges that pass through the County, where non-native annual grasslands dominate south-facing aspects and mixed evergreen forest dominates the north-facing slopes and valleys. Grassland types include coastal prairie and valley grassland; shrubland types include chamise chaparral, Manzanita chaparral, mixed chaparral, serpentine chaparral, coyote brush scrub, and coastal sage-coyote bush shrub; forestland types include coast live oak-California bay-madrone forest, tanbark oak-madrone-live oak-Douglas fir forest, Douglas-Fir Forest, coast redwood forest, bishop pine forest, eucalyptus forest, Monterey pine forest and oak woodland/savannah. Livestock grazing in western Marin generally keeps grasslands short. Conversion of extensive, historically grazed lands in federal and state parkland areas has succeeded to shrubland and timberland. Most vegetation types in Marin present a fire-control problem owing to overgrown conditions due to years of successful fire suppression. Sudden oak death and planted fire-prone forests have also added to the fire problem.

Weather and Fire History

The predominant summer weather pattern includes a strong coastal influence with coastal low clouds and fog in the evening and morning hours, clearing to sunshine and mild temperatures in the afternoon. The potential for large, wind driven fires is great in

Marin, especially under Diablo (foen) wind conditions that occur in autumn. Under these conditions, fire operations are limited by high fire intensities that create extreme fire behavior conditions: long-range spotting, high rates of spread, and long flame lengths. Indirect attack is the most likely control method under these conditions. Historically the largest and most destructive fires have occurred during these Diablo wind events. Most recently the Angel Island Fire (in October of 2008) consumed over 300 acres (although no structures were affected). The most recent Marin County fire with significant structure loss was the Vision Fire of 1995, which destroyed 48 structures in the community of Inverness. The base of Mt Tamalpais, specifically the community of Mill Valley, also suffered a significant fire loss in 1929; that fire footprint is now developed with more than 2,000 homes.

Battalion Priorities

- Compliance inspections (4291), the number of structures located within the department's sphere of influence make this a challenge. Significant staff and department resources devoted to this program have resulted in great progress both with numbers of inspections conducted and compliance.
- Community evacuation drills remain a department priority; the next is scheduled for October 2012 encompassing Throckmorton Fire Station's response zone.
- Continue to educate and prepare communities emphasizing READY SET GO.
- Continue implementation of countywide fuel break and fire plan implementation.
- Cut, pile and burn 1200 piles of volatile fuel in the prescribed project areas.