

THE WILDFIRE INCIDENT

Keeping Our Firefighters Safe

by Chad Nelson

Structure pre-treatment and protection is always a hot topic within the firefighting industry. What makes this such an interesting discussion is the role of the firefighter when protecting a structure and more importantly, their safety.

It is a true statement that there is no property worth trading for a firefighter's life and in many cases with traditional firefighting tools, firefighters are not able to safely enter a danger zone and pre-treat a home. Traditional methods allow for applications of products that only provide a short 15-30 minute window of protection and this is an **unacceptable** safety margin for the firefighter.

However, a product trade-named Thermo-Gel® will allow a firefighter to enter a neighborhood, protect



Firefighters applying Thermo-Gel®



multiple structures, and leave several hours in advance of the on-coming wildfire.

Thermo-Gel® is made up of thousands of polymers. When those polymers come into contact with water it creates a gelled water barrier. The product will cling to all types of materials including, glass, vinyl, and overhangs. The product is applied with an end of line nozzle education system or by using an on-board FireDos® proportioner. It allows a wall of water to be applied to the home, effectively protecting it for several hours from the fire. When the fire danger has passed you simply rinse the product away. It is approved by the US Forest Service for applications in National Forests ensuring that it is an environmentally safe product.

In a recent structure burn test conducted by the Forest Engineering Research Institute of Canada (FERIC), they reported that, "Gel can be an effective method for structure protection under extreme fire behavior and conditions." This report was supported during the recent Jesusita fire siege in Santa Barbara, where several homes were saved using the application of gel.

Most importantly, the benefit of Thermo-Gel® is that it provides an important firefighter safety margin when protecting structures in an active wildfire environment. It allows the firefighter to protect their community while still ensuring that every one of them returns home safely at the end of their shift.



Actual home saved by Thermo-Gel® during Jesusita Fire

Watching out for those who protect and serve their communities at risk is what we strive for each and every day at Thermo Technologies.