

West Lafayette Fire Department
June 2009

Fire Spread and Calling 911 Last month's report included a section on the Robinson Street house fire and how that fire threatened a neighboring house. Fire spreading from house to house is a concern deserving renewed attention. Years ago response times and equipment set up times were longer and as a consequence caused significant concern about fire spread. The initial stage of a modern fire is hotter than one in years past and this along with other factors are driving the need for renewed attention.

About two weeks after the Robinson Street fire, four houses were burned in a Lafayette neighborhood. These are the houses in the pictures below. The fire started in the middle house (top left photo) and spread to each adjacent house plus a fourth house (top right photo). In both the Lafayette and West Lafayette fires the crews arrived very quickly after being notified however, in both fires there was a delay in calling 911. LFD arrived and found three houses already on fire and this illustrates the point of hotter initial stages. As the fire moved from section to section and then house to house each section initially burned hotter and this led to an exponential increase in the rate of fire spread.

Action Point: Recognize that the initial heat difference in a modern fire accelerates spread and maximize the effectiveness of the 911 system by calling immediately.



Chief Drew