STRUCTURE TRIAGE CATEGORIES

NON-THREATENED
- Safety zone nearby or present at structure
- Construction features/defensible space make the structure unlikely to ignite
- Residents may/may not have evacuated

THREATENED DEFENSIBLE
- Safety zone nearby or present at structure
- Construction features/defensible space require structure defense tactics during fire front impact
- Residents may/may not have evacuated

THREATENED NON-DEFENSIBLE
- Lack of adequate safety zone nearby
- Structure cannot be safely defended
- Residents must be evacuated
When making decisions about tactics and resources, as well as setting priorities during the structure triage process, it can be difficult to remember all of the factors that need to be considered.

One helpful tool developed by the CAL-Fire WUI Working Group is the Survival Facts, or S-FACTS, memory aide.

**S-FACTS DEFINED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S-FACTS</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S-FACTS</td>
<td>Survival, Fire Environment, Construction/Clearance, Access, Time Constraints, Stay or Go?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survival**

When evaluating the potential for and risks of survival at a structure incident, the most basic question to ask is, can I survive here? If the answer is no, leave immediately. Other questions to ask:
- Is there a viable escape route? If not, can egress be improved to create one?
- At what point will you leave? This decision is based on fire behavior and rate of spread.
- Is there a safety zone nearby? If not, can one be constructed near the structure?
- Do you have communications with your supervisor and adjoining forces?

**Fire Environment**

Triage includes onsite observations of current fire behavior and predictions of what the fire may do in the near future. Evaluate the fuel, weather and topographical features around the structure and estimate the intensity of the expected fire behavior.

- Fuel loading: How much fuel is present and how will fuel load impact structure preparation timetables?
- Fuel continuity: Assess vertical and horizontal continuity and how it will impact structure preparation efforts
- Wind: What is the current speed and direction? Are changing winds expected?
- Terrain: What is your position relative to topography? Are you in a chute, chimney or saddle? If so, leave immediately. Are you mid-slope or on top of a ridge? Is wind in alignment with topography?
- Fire behavior: Is the fire spotting, crowning or seeding? What is the rate of spread? What is the current and forecasted flame length and height?

**Construction/Clearance**

Evaluate the structure to determine how it was constructed. Determine whether the structure has adequate defensible space, based on topography, fuels and current and expected fire behavior. If defensible space is minimal or non-existent, determine whether problems can be mitigated quickly. Questions to ask:
- Will building materials and yard clutter compromise safety?
- Are there hazardous materials or equipment present, such as propane tanks, fuel tanks or power lines?

**Access**

Access to the structure must be safe for fire fighters to enter and exit the area. It must also allow enough time and distance to serve as an escape route to a safety zone. Scout ahead before committing larger apparatus to specific locations and consider the following:
- Is access compatible with time and distance factors necessary to use as an escape route to a safety zone?

**Time Constraints**

The final triage variable to consider is time. Firefighters must determine how much time they have before the fire front impacts the structure, and whether they have enough time (and resources) to:
- Perform an adequate size-up and mitigate any safety concerns.
- Properly prepare and defend the structure before the fire front arrives.
- Retreat to a safety zone, if necessary, if fire conditions change. If the answer is no, again, leave immediately.

**Stay or Go?**

After considering all of these elements, categorize each structure as not threatened, threatened, defensible or threatened.

- Is the road surface adequate for the necessary speed?
- Does the road offer an adequate width for apparatus, and are there places that apparatus can turn around? Are there turnouts?
- Are there bridges and if so, can their weight limits accommodate apparatus?
- Is there a safe place to spot apparatus?

**Access**

Access to the structure must be safe for fire fighters to enter and exit the area. It must also allow enough time and distance to serve as an escape route to a safety zone. Scout ahead before committing larger apparatus to specific locations and consider the following:
- Is access compatible with time and distance factors necessary to use as an escape route to a safety zone?

**Construction/Clearance**

Evaluate the structure to determine how it was constructed. Determine whether the structure has adequate defensible space, based on topography, fuels and current and expected fire behavior. If defensible space is minimal or non-existent, determine whether problems can be mitigated quickly. Questions to ask:
- Will building materials and yard clutter compromise safety?
- Are there hazardous materials or equipment present, such as propane tanks, fuel tanks or power lines?

**Time Constraints**

The final triage variable to consider is time. Firefighters must determine how much time they have before the fire front impacts the structure, and whether they have enough time (and resources) to:
- Perform an adequate size-up and mitigate any safety concerns.
- Properly prepare and defend the structure before the fire front arrives.
- Retreat to a safety zone, if necessary, if fire conditions change. If the answer is no, again, leave immediately.

**Stay or Go?**

After considering all of these elements, categorize each structure as not threatened, threatened, defensible or threatened.

- Is the road surface adequate for the necessary speed?
- Does the road offer an adequate width for apparatus, and are there places that apparatus can turn around? Are there turnouts?
- Are there bridges and if so, can their weight limits accommodate apparatus?
- Is there a safe place to spot apparatus?