

## **Mr. Brent Berkompas**

### **Testimony:**

1. Nearly every state has been devastated by wildfires in the last century. Over 140,000 wildfires occur in the United States on average each year.<sup>[1]</sup>
2. Wildfires occur regularly. Whether started by humans or by lightning, they are part of a natural cycle that helps to maintain the health of our forests. As communities expand, people are moving into wooded areas, without addressing the dangers that exist around them. A tremendous wildfire danger exists where homes blend together with the wildland, creating the wildland/urban interface (WUI). The addition of homes there interrupts the natural cycle of wildfires. Ultimately, this contributes to a dangerous build-up of old vegetation, leading to an uncontrollable wildfire.<sup>[2]</sup>
3. 44 million U.S. homes are currently located in "Wildland Urban Interface" (WUI) areas.<sup>[3]</sup> This situation is growing at a 22% growth rate (from 1990-2000)<sup>[4]</sup> as the U.S. population grows and communities expand into areas that are highly susceptible to wildfires.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Institute for Business and Home Safety, 2001

<sup>[2]</sup> City of Lewes, Delaware, 2008, [www.ci.lewes.de.us/index.cfm?fuseaction=disasterpreparedness.wildfires](http://www.ci.lewes.de.us/index.cfm?fuseaction=disasterpreparedness.wildfires)

<sup>[3]</sup> "Mapping the Wildland Urban Interface and Projecting its Growth to 2030," Susan Stewart et al., USDA Forest Service, January 2005, p. 4

<sup>[4]</sup> "Mapping the Wildland Urban Interface and Projecting its Growth to 2030," Susan Stewart et al., USDA Forest Service, January 2005, p. 5