

Wildfires – Being Prepared For An Evacuation

When a natural disaster strikes, such as the recent wildfires in the Southwest, you need to be prepared to evacuate immediately. Wildfires are especially dangerous because all it takes is a shift in the wind to threaten your area. If your community is threatened by a wildfire, you will most likely have little time to prepare yourself. In the ensuing chaos and confusion, you may not be thinking clearly about what you need to do and take with you.

In case of evacuation, below are recommended tips from the American Red Cross. Keep this tip sheet handy and use it to prepare in advance to ensure your family's and your home's safety as much as possible.

Immediate Evacuation¹

If you have been advised to evacuate the area, do so immediately. These warnings come from officials who know when there is imminent danger. Heed their warnings and evacuate. You cannot put a price on a life but you can always rebuild your home.

Things to Do When Evacuating

- Wear protective clothing—sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- Take emergency supplies (see list below).
- Lock your home.
- Tell someone who does not live in the evacuated area when you left and where you are going. Be sure to check in with them when you arrive at your destination.
- Choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.

Things to Take With You

- Pets
- Eyeglasses
- Car keys
- Cell phone
- Change of clothes
- Prescription medications in their original bottles
- Checkbook, cash and credit cards
- Insurance documents
- Personal identification
- Social Security Card
- Proof of residence
- Birth and Marriage Certificates
- Stocks, bonds and other negotiable certificates
- Wills, deeds and copies of recent tax returns
- Irreplaceable photos

Keep receipts for all expenses incurred while you are evacuated. You will need them when you are working with your insurance company.

If You're Sure You Have Time, Take Steps to Protect Your Home

Inside:

- Close windows, vents, doors, venetian blinds or non-combustible window coverings, and heavy drapes. Remove lightweight curtains.
- Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights.
- Open fireplace damper. Close fireplace screens.
- Move flammable furniture into the center of the home away from windows and sliding-glass doors.
- Turn on a light in each room to increase the visibility of your home in heavy smoke.

Outside:

- Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Place combustible patio furniture inside.
- Connect the garden hose to outside taps.
- Set up the portable gasoline-powered pump.
- Place lawn sprinklers on the roof and near above-ground fuel tanks. Wet the roof.
- Wet or remove shrubs within 15 feet of the home.
- Gather fire tools.

Emergency Supplies

When danger is close to your area, prepare an emergency supply kit. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers. You will be thankful in the long run.

Include:

- A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and food that won't spoil.
- One change of clothing and footwear per person and one blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medications.
- Emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash or traveler's checks.
- Sanitation supplies.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- An extra pair of eyeglasses.
- Keep important family documents in a waterproof container. Assemble a smaller version of your kit to keep in the trunk of your car.