

Ready, Set, Go!

Long before a fire threatens, plan your evacuation

Make a list of items you want to take with you during the evacuation. Prioritize the list. Break into sections of time, i.e. 5 minutes, 10 minutes, up to an hour, with the most important things to be collected, packed and loaded listed in the first 5 or 10 minutes. Keep 5-minute items close at hand.

Here's an example, but prepare your own list.

- Prescriptions, medications
 - Eyeglasses
 - Important documents (contact list of important numbers, birth certificates, passports, insurance papers, written and video inventory, personal phone and address book, tax records, personal finance floppy disks, children's school records, inoculation & vaccination records, genealogy, photos, art). Keep documents in a waterproof container, Create a CD of important documents and store off site.
 - Jewelry
 - Scriptures
 - Pet, pet food, leash, carrier
 - Child's favorite toy
 - Medical equipment
 - \$200 cash, small bills/coins, credit cards
 - Other
- Keep your "Important Stuff" list handy.
 - Keep sturdy boxes/containers/dresser drawers ready for collecting things on your list.
 - Prepare 72-hour kits. When wildfire threatens, you won't have time to shop or search for supplies. Store these items in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, duffle bags or trash containers. Include items such as:
 - 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. Store batteries outside of item.
 - An extra set of car keys, credit card, cash or traveler's checks
 - Sanitation supplies.
 - Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members
 - An extra pair of eyeglasses
 - Dust mask/bandana
 - Work gloves
 - Have a phone that doesn't require electricity to function
 - Other games, toys fun items
- Arrange for an out-of area family/friend to be the contact between you and the rest of your family/friends as communication may be limited. Where will you stay?
 - If possible, involve your children in the planning. Let them feel part of the process.
 - Check with your child's school on their student release policy.
 - Keep a flashlight, cell phone and portable radio handy at all times.
 - Review and update your "Important Stuff" list and 72-hour kits periodically.
 - Learn familiar routes that lead in and out of your neighborhood, in case the usual way becomes blocked.
 - Plan how you will transport your pet. Where will you keep your pet?
www.petswelcome.com has an excellent database of "pet friendly" lodging.
 - You may not be home when wildfire threatens. Authorities must close roads for safety and you may not be able to enter. Make arrangements in advance for persons or pets that will be home when you are not.
 - Check your insurance coverage and limits.
 - Make sure your driver's license or ID card has your local mountain address on it. It may be required to enter your neighborhood during or after an event.
 - Prepare the outside of your home. Create defensible space.
 - Keep more than half a tank of gas in your vehicle at all times.
 - Prepare a will and keep a copy at various safe locations.

Get Set

When evacuation seems likely, put your plan into action.

- Take a deep breath, and remember that you have planned well. Remember too, that lives always take priority over property.
- Use your list of "Important Stuff." Collect those items in boxes/containers you can easily carry.
- Face your car out, so you have the best visibility when you do have to leave.
- Load your "Important Stuff" and 72-hour kits into the car.
- Load pets at the last minute when the family leaves.
- Start the car (if the air is smoky)

And if there is time..

- Be sure all windows and doors are closed.
- Close metal window blinds.
- Remove light curtains and other thin combustibles from windows.
- Cluster lawn furniture and other things that might snag fire fighter hose lines.
- Leave interior & exterior lights on. This helps firefighters find the house in smoke.
- Don't leave garden sprinklers on - they can waste critical water pressure.
- Connect garden hose to outside spigots.
- Lean a ladder on house for roof access by fire fighters.
- Shut off propane tank or natural gas valves.
- Change voicemail message to indicate that you have left and where you are going and how to get a hold of you.
- Lock up the house.
- Check to see if your neighbors need help.
- Forward home phone to your cell phone. That way people can find you!

Get Moving - GO!

- Don't wait to be told to evacuate. Authorities may not have time to order an evacuation. If you feel threatened, leave on your own initiative.
- Obey orders of law enforcement and fire officers. They understand the risk and are acting on current fire information.

- Drive with headlights on for visibility.
- Drive calmly and with special attention for fire trucks. They are not as maneuverable as your car.
- Do not block the access roadway for fire trucks.
- DO NOT call 9-1-1 for non-emergencies.
- For your own safety, do not attempt to re-enter the area until officials allow it.
- Check-in at an evacuation center established by the Red Cross. Law enforcement officials can direct you. Whether you stay there or not, your checking in will help others know you are safe.

If caught in your car

- Park in an area clear of vegetation, close all vehicle windows and vents, cover yourself with a blanket or jacket.
- If fire overtakes you, you are far safer in the car than out. Don't be fooled, the heat and smoke will be much worse outside the car.

If caught in your home:

- Move furniture away from windows and sliding doors to keep it from igniting from the heat of fire radiating through the windows.
- Remove your curtains and drapes. If you have metal blinds or special fire resistant window coverings, close them to block heat radiation.
- Stay inside your house, away from outside walls.
- Close all doors, but leave them unlocked.
- Keep your entire family together and remain calm. Remember: if it gets hot inside the house, it is many times hotter and more dangerous outside.

After the fire passes

- Check the roof immediately, extinguishing all sparks and embers.
- Check inside the attic for hidden burning embers.
- Check your yard for burning woodpiles, trees, fence posts or other materials.
- Keep the doors and windows closed.
- Continue rechecking your home and yard for burning embers for at least 12 hours.

Compiled by: Aaron Scullin

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