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Wildfire... Are You Prepared?

More and more people are making their homes in woodland settings — in or near forests, rural areas or remote mountain sites.



There, homeowners enjoy the beauty of the environment but face the very real danger of wildfire.

Wildfires often begin unnoticed. They spread quickly, igniting brush, trees and homes. Reduce your risk by preparing now — *before* wildfire strikes. Meet with your family to decide what to do and where to go if wildfires threaten your area. Follow the steps listed in this brochure to protect your family, home and property.



Practice Wildfire Safety

People start most wildfires . . . find out how you can promote and practice wildfire safety.

- Contact your local fire department, health department or forestry office for information on fire laws. Make sure that fire vehicles can get to your home. Clearly mark all driveway entrances and display your name and address.
- Report hazardous conditions that could cause a wildfire.
- Teach children about fire safety. Keep matches out of their reach.
- Post fire emergency telephone numbers.
- Plan several escape routes away from your home — by car and by foot.
- Talk to your neighbors about wildfire safety. Plan how the neighborhood could work together after a wildfire. Make a list of your neighbors' skills such as medical or technical. Consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs such as elderly or disabled persons. Make plans to take care of children who may be on their own if parents can't get home.

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PROTECT YOUR HOME

- Regularly clean roof and gutters.
- Inspect chimneys at least twice a year. Clean them at least once a year. Keep the dampers in good working order. Equip chimneys and stovepipes with a spark arrester that meets the requirements of National Fire Protection Association Code 211. (Contact your local fire department for exact specifications.)
- Use 1/2-inch mesh screen beneath porches, decks, floor areas and the home itself. Also, screen openings to floors, roof and attic.
- Install a smoke detector on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms; test monthly and change the batteries two times each year.
- Teach each family member how to use the fire extinguisher (ABC type) and show them where it's kept.
- Keep a ladder that will reach the roof.
- Consider installing protective shutters or heavy fire-resistant drapes.
- Keep handy household items that can be used as fire tools: a rake, axe, handsaw or chainsaw, bucket and shovel.

Before Wildfire Threatens

Design and landscape your home with wildfire safety in mind. Select materials and plants that can help contain fire, rather than fuel it. Use fire resistant or non-combustible materials on the roof and exterior structure of the dwelling. Or treat wood or combustible material used in roofs, siding, decking or trim with UL-approved fire-retardant chemicals. Plant fire-resistant shrubs and trees. For example, hardwood trees are less flammable than pine, evergreen, eucalyptus or fir trees.

Create a 30-50 foot safety zone around your home

Within this area, you can take steps to reduce potential exposure to flames and radiant heat. Homes built in pine forests should have a minimum safety zone of 100 feet. If your home sits on a steep slope, standard protective measures may not suffice. Contact your local fire department or forestry office for additional information.

- ❑ Rake leaves, dead limbs and twigs. Clear all flammable vegetation.
- ❑ Remove leaves and rubbish from under structures.
- ❑ Thin a 15-foot space between tree crowns, and remove limbs within 15 feet of the ground.
- ❑ Remove dead branches that extend over the roof.
- ❑ Prune tree branches and shrubs within 15 feet of a stovepipe or chimney outlet.
- ❑ Ask the power company to clear branches from powerlines.
- ❑ Remove vines from the walls of the home.
- ❑ Mow grass regularly.
- ❑ Clear a 10-foot area around propane tanks and the barbecue. Place a screen over the grill — use non-flammable material with mesh no coarser than one-quarter inch.
- ❑ Regularly dispose of newspapers and rubbish at an approved site. Follow local burning regulations.
- ❑ Place stove, fireplace and grill ashes in a metal bucket, soak in water for two days, then bury the cold ashes in mineral soil.
- ❑ Store gasoline, oily rags and other flammable materials in approved safety cans. Place cans in a safe location away from the base of buildings.
- ❑ Stack firewood at least 100 feet away and uphill from your home. Clear combustible material within 20 feet. Use only UL-approved woodburning devices.

PLAN YOUR WATER NEEDS

- Identify and maintain an adequate outside water source such as a small pond, cistern, well, swimming pool or hydrant.
- Have a garden hose that is long enough to reach any area of the home and other structures on the property.
- Install freeze-proof exterior water outlets on at least two sides of the home and near other structures on the property. Install additional outlets at least 50 feet from the home.
- Consider obtaining a portable gasoline powered pump in case electrical power is cut off.

When Wildfire Threatens

If you are warned that a wildfire is threatening your area, listen to your battery-operated radio for reports and evacuation information. *Follow the instructions of local officials.*

- ❑ Back your car into the garage or park it in an open space facing the direction of escape. Shut doors and roll up windows. Leave the key in the ignition. Close garage windows and doors, but leave them unlocked. Disconnect automatic garage door openers.
- ❑ Confine pets to one room. Make plans to care for your pets in case you must evacuate.
- ❑ Arrange temporary housing at a friend or relative's home outside the threatened area.

If advised to evacuate, do so immediately

- ❑ Wear protective clothing — sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- ❑ Take your Disaster Supplies Kit.
- ❑ Lock your home.
- ❑ Tell someone when you left and where you are going.
- ❑ Choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.

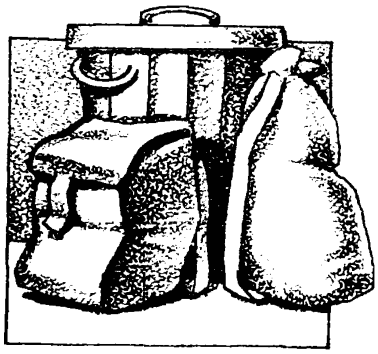
If you're sure you have time, take steps to protect your home:

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 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 wildfire threatens, you won't have time to shop or search for supplies. Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit with items you may need if advised to evacuate. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, dufflebags or trash containers.

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.

CREATE A FAMILY DISASTER PLAN

Wildfire and other types of disasters — hurricane, flood, tornado, earthquake, hazardous materials spill, winter storm — can strike quickly and without warning. You can cope with disaster by preparing in advance and working together. Meet with your family to create a disaster plan. To get started...

Contact your local emergency management or civil defense office or your local American Red Cross chapter

- ❑ Find out about the hazards in your community.
- ❑ Ask how you would be warned.
- ❑ Find out how to prepare for each type of disaster.

Meet with your family

- ❑ Discuss the types of disasters that could occur.
- ❑ Explain how to prepare and respond to each type of disaster.
- ❑ Discuss where to go and what to bring if advised to evacuate.
- ❑ Practice what you have discussed.

Plan how your family will stay in contact if separated by disaster

- ❑ Pick two meeting places:

  1) a place a safe distance from your home in case of a home fire.

  2) a place outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home.

- ❑ Choose an out-of-state friend as a "check-in contact" for everyone to call.

Complete these steps

- ❑ Post emergency telephone numbers by every phone.
- ❑ Show responsible family members how and when to shut off water, gas and electricity at main switches.
- ❑ Contact your local fire department to learn about home fire hazards.
- ❑ Learn first aid and CPR. Contact your local American Red Cross chapter for information and training.

Practice and review these steps.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Family Protection Program is a nationwide effort to help people prepare for disasters of all types. For more information, please contact your local or state office of emergency management.

Local sponsorship provided by:

Ask for: *Your Family Disaster Plan, Disaster Supplies Kit, and Emergency Preparedness Checklist*

Or write to: FEMA
P.O. Box 70274

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Federal Emergency Management Agency

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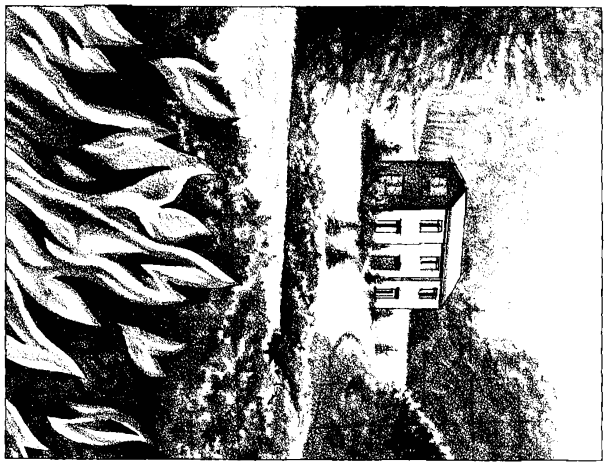

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