



STORM SCOUTS

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WILDFIRE

Definition: A Wildfire is an unplanned fire burning in natural or wildland areas such as forests, shrub lands, grasslands, or prairies.

About

Wildfires are uncontrolled fires that burn in natural areas like forests, grasslands, or prairies. They can be massive and dangerous, spreading quickly and causing significant damage. Here's a breakdown of wildfires:

Causes: Lightning strikes are a natural cause, but human activity is the leading culprit, either accidental (discarded cigarettes, campfires) or intentional (arson).

Impact: Wildfires can destroy homes and property, threaten lives, and harm the environment. Smoke inhalation is a major health concern.

Climate Change: Unfortunately, climate change with hotter temperatures, drier conditions, and strong winds creates ideal conditions for wildfires to become more frequent and severe.

Prepare

Stay Informed:

Multiple Alert Systems: Utilize a combination of apps like FEMA for National Weather Service alerts, and local community alerts. Don't forget about the always-on Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA).

Air Quality: Pay attention to air quality alerts, especially during wildfire season.

Plan and Prepare:

Evacuation Plan: Create a clear evacuation plan for your household, including everyone knowing what to do and where to go. Practice your escape routes and designate meeting points. Consider plans for workplaces, daycare, and other frequented locations.

Important Documents: Ensure your insurance policies and personal documents (ID etc.) are up-to-date. Make digital copies and store them securely with password protection.

Home Fire Safety: Use fire-resistant materials for construction, renovations, and repairs. Identify an outdoor water source and ensure a hose reaches all areas of your property. Create a fire-resistant zone of at least 30 feet around your home, clear of leaves, debris, and flammable materials. Designate a sealed room with air purifier for smoke filtration during wildfires.

Be Ready to Evacuate:

Evacuation Routes: Learn your evacuation routes and practice them with your family, pets, and identify a designated evacuation location.

Follow Instructions: Always follow instructions from local authorities for the latest recommendations and safety measures.

Gather Supplies:

Go-Bag: Prepare a well-stocked Go-Bag with essentials like a first-aid kit, for your household and car. This can help avoid unnecessary trips during emergencies and allows you to address minor medical needs at home.

Financial Considerations: Wildfire preparedness can be financially straining. Consider building your supplies gradually over time.

Safety Essentials: Be cautious with flammable household products like aerosols and hand sanitizer. If possible, store an N95 mask for smoke protection.

Communication: Keep your cell phone charged and consider backup charging devices for emergencies.

During

If advised to evacuate, do so immediately. Take your disaster supply kit, lock your home and choose a route away from the fire hazard. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of the fire and smoke. Tell someone when you left and where you are going.

If you see a wildfire and haven't received evacuation orders yet, call 9-1-1. Don't assume that someone else has already called. Describe the location of the fire, speak slowly and clearly, and answer any questions asked by the dispatcher.

If you are not ordered to evacuate, and have time to prepare your home, FEMA recommends you take the following actions:

- Arrange temporary housing at a friend or relative's home outside the threatened area in case you need to evacuate.
- Wear protective clothing when outside – sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothes, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- Gather fire tools such as a rake, axe, handsaw or chainsaw, bucket and shovel.
- Close outside attic, eaves and basement vents, windows, doors, pet doors, etc. Remove flammable drapes and curtains. Close all shutters, blinds or heavy non-combustible window coverings to reduce radiant heat.
- Close all doors inside the house to prevent draft. Open the damper on your fireplace, but close the fireplace screen.
- Shut off any natural gas, propane or fuel oil supplies at the source.
- Connect garden hoses to outdoor water faucet and fill any pools, hot tubs, garbage cans, tubs or other large containers with water.
- Place lawn sprinklers on the roof and near above-ground fuel tanks. Leave sprinklers on and dowsing these structures as long as possible. Be mindful of water use restrictions for areas affected by wildfires.
- If you have gas-powered pumps for water, make sure they are fueled and ready.
- Place a ladder against the house in clear view.
- Disconnect any automatic garage door openers so that doors can still be opened by hand if the power goes out. Close all garage doors.
- Place valuable papers, mementos and anything "you can't live without" inside the car in the garage, ready for quick departure. Any pets still with you should also be put in the car.
- Place valuables that will not be damaged by water in a pool or pond.
- Move flammable furniture into the center of the residence away from the windows and sliding-glass doors.
- Turn on outside lights and leave a light on in every room to make the house more visible in heavy smoke.

The following are guidelines for different circumstances in the period following a fire:

- Go to a designated public shelter if you have been told to evacuate or you feel it is unsafe to remain in your home. Text **SHELTER** + your ZIP code to **43362** (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area (example: **shelter 12345**).
- If you are with burn victims, or are a burn victim yourself, call 9-1-1 or seek help immediately; cool and cover burns to reduce chance of further injury or infection.
- If you remained at home, check the roof immediately after the fire danger has passed. Put out any roof fires, sparks or embers. Check the attic for hidden burning sparks.
- For several hours after the fire, maintain a “fire watch.” Re-check for smoke and sparks throughout the house.
- If you have evacuated, do not enter your home until fire officials say it is safe.
- If a building inspector has placed a color-coded sign on the home, do not enter it until you get more information, advice and instructions about what the sign means and whether it is safe to enter your home.
- If you must leave your home because a building inspector says the building is unsafe, ask someone you trust to watch the property during your absence.
- Use caution when entering burned areas as hazards may still exist, including hot spots, which can flare up without warning.
- If you detect heat or smoke when entering a damaged building, evacuate immediately.
- If you have a safe or strong box, do not try to open it. It can hold intense heat for several hours. If the door is opened before the box has cooled, the contents could burst into flames.
- Avoid damaged or fallen power lines, poles and downed wires.
- Watch for ash pits and mark them for safety—warn family and neighbors to keep clear of the pits also.
- Watch animals closely and keep them under your direct control. Hidden embers and hot spots could burn your pets’ paws or hooves.
- Follow public health guidance on safe cleanup of fire ash and safe use of masks.
- Wet debris down to minimize breathing dust particles.
- Wear leather gloves and heavy soled shoes to protect hands and feet.
- Cleaning products, paint, batteries and damaged fuel containers need to be disposed of properly to avoid risk.
- Discard any food that has been exposed to heat, smoke or soot.
- Do **NOT** use water that you think may be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice or make baby formula.
- Remain calm. Pace yourself. You may find yourself in the position of taking charge of other people. Listen carefully to what people are telling you, and deal patiently with urgent situations first.