

Ready, Set, Go! Is a program of the International Association of Fire Chiefs



Prepare Ahead for Evacuation

By now everyone knows that the United States is experiencing longer and more severe wildfire seasons than ever before. Here in Benton County we are seeing drought conditions, and we are in the midst of fire season - a period characterized by high temperatures, no significant rainfall, and vegetation that has dried to a crisp. Plentiful rainfall during the wet months has resulted in abundant growth of fine vegetation, increasing our wildfire risk considerably. One spark in tall grasses on a breezy day, and we too could experience a wildfire catastrophe.

Each year many homes survive wildfires, while others do not. The homes that survive often owe their survival to the fact that their owners prepared for the possibility of wildfire.

Ready – Take personal responsibility and prepare in advance (Level 1 Evacuation)

Defensible Space - First and foremost, be sure you have prepared your home and property by creating defensible space, and getting your home ready for wildfire. Actions such as removing pine needles from your roof and gutters, keeping the landscape within 30 feet of your home lean and green will make a difference. Learn how to create defensible space at our website: www.co.benton.or.us/cd/cwpp/protection

Before a Wildfire - Plan more than one escape route from your home or subdivision by car and by foot.

Prepare a family evacuation kit that includes:

- Three changes of clothing and a change of footwear per person
- One blanket or sleeping bag per person; toiletries for three days
- A three-day supply of food and water (food that won't spoil)
- A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medications
- Emergency tools including a battery-powered AM/FM radio
- Flashlight, extra batteries, cell phone charger
- Extra car keys, credit card, cash, or traveler's checks
- Special items for infants, elderly, or disabled family members
- An extra pair of eyeglasses/sunglasses
- Important family documents: Will, insurance policies, contracts, deeds, stocks, bonds, passports, social security cards, immunization records, bank account numbers, credit card account numbers and companies, inventory of valuable household goods, important phone numbers, family records such as birth, marriage, death certificates, computer hard drive backup
- Residents in wildfire risk areas should make a home inventory – lists, photos or videos of the contents of your home. Insurance adjusters will expect you to *prove* what you had with either receipts or photos
- Make a family communication plan and pick two meeting places for your family: 1) A place a safe distance from your home; 2) A place outside of your neighborhood in case you can't return home
- Make temporary living arrangements for livestock and pets.

Set – Maintain Situational awareness (Level 2 Evacuation)

Pack your emergency items. Stay aware of the latest news and information on the fire from local media, your local fire and public safety departments.

Wildfire Approaching- Prepare to Evacuate

If you are warned that a wildfire is threatening your area:

- Back your car into the garage or park in an open space facing the direction of escape.
- Shut doors and roll up windows. Leave the **key in the ignition!**
- Place your evacuation kit in the car for quick departure.
- Confine pets to one room so they can be easily located.
- Arrange temporary housing at a friend or relative's home outside the threatened area.

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

- Close windows, vents, doors, blinds or non-combustible window coverings.
- Shut off gas or propane. Turn off pilot lights.
- Move flammable furniture into center of the home away from windows and doors.
- Turn on a light in each room to increase the visibility of your home in heavy smoke.
- Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.
- Remove gas grills from decks and patios, place propane tanks in garage.
- Place combustible patio furniture inside.
- Disconnect garage door openers so that they can be opened manually.
- Place a non-combustible ladder on house in clear view for access to roof for firefighters.
- Remove firewood or any other stored combustibles near your home.
- Leave a note or sign inside your home with contact information.
- Place fire-fighting tools, such as 100 feet of pre-connected garden hose, shovel, rake, bucket, and containers filled with water in an obvious place for firefighters.
- Wet down shrubbery within 25 feet of your home, beginning on the downhill side.

Go! Time to Evacuate - Act early! (Level 3 Evacuation)

Follow your personal wildland fire action plan. Doing so will not only support your safety, but will allow firefighters to best maneuver resources to combat the fire.

If advised to evacuate, do so immediately and safely:

- Wear protective clothing-sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, long sleeved shirt, gloves and a bandanna to protect your face.
- Take your evacuation kit. Lock your home.
- Tie a white towel, sheet or ribbon on your front door or other visible location; this advises emergency responders that your home has been evacuated.
- Tell someone when you left and where you are going; also place this information on your front door.
- Choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.

What if You're Not at Home?

Think of ways to protect some of your property if you're not home when your neighborhood is evacuated.

- Keep copies of your prescription numbers in your wallet.
- Keep your most important papers in a bank safe deposit box.
- Use fire-resistant boxes to store papers and computer disks that must stay in your home.
- Store a set of computer backup disks at work, or a friend's home.
- Exchange plans and keys with neighbors you trust.