



Are You Ready?

WILDFIRES

A Fact Sheet for People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing



The threat of wild fires for people living near wild land areas or using recreational facilities in wilderness areas is real. Planning ahead and knowing how to protect buildings in these areas can lower the damage of a wild fire.

Plan ahead.

Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and near sleeping areas. Develop an evacuation plan.

Learn and teach fire safety practices.

- Build fires away from nearby trees or bushes.
- Always have a way to put out the fire quickly and completely.
- Never leave a fire, even a cigarette, burning alone.

Find out the city code and laws for structures or buildings near wooded areas.

- Use fireproof materials when building or renovating structures.
- Create a safety zone to separate the home from flammable plants.
- Stone walls can work as heat protection and draw away flames.
- Swimming pools and patios can be a safety zone.

Check for fire hazards around home.

- Install electrical lines underground, if possible. Keep all tree and shrub limbs trimmed so they don't come in contact with the wires.
- Prune all branches around the residence to a height of 8 to 10 feet. Keep trees close to buildings free of dead or dying wood and moss.
- Remove all dead limbs, needles, and debris from rain gutters.
- Store flammable materials in approved safety containers and keep them away from the house.
- Keep chimneys clean.
- Avoid open burning completely, and especially during dry season.
- Avoid using wooden shakes and shingles for a roof. Use tile, stucco, metal siding, brick, concrete block, rock, or other fire-resistant materials. Use only thick, tempered safety glass in large windows and sliding glass doors.

Stock up on supplies, such as:

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Cell phone with text message feature or two-way pager and charger to use in your automobile
- Portable TTY with extra batteries
- Batteries and back-up hearing assistive technology
- Portable battery-operated television with extra batteries and charger to use in your automobile
- NOAA radios with text alerts and visual and/or tactile alerts, or AM/FM portable radio if you can hear it with a neckloop or headset
- Extra contact lenses or eyeglasses
- Paper and pens
- First aid kit
- Food and water (for up to 72 hours)
- Non-electric can opener
- Cash and credit cards
- Work or hiking shoes/boots to protect your feet when walking thru disaster areas

Develop an emergency communication plan.

In case household members are separated from one another during a wildfire, have a back-up plan for where you can meet each other. Before disaster strikes, ask an out-of-state relative or friend to be a contact person. During or after the disaster, contact that person by pager or TTY. If you don't have a pager or a working TTY, ask a hearing person with a cell phone to call for you. Be sure everyone in the household knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.

During a wildfire:

- Check your television or the Internet for the latest updates.
- Remove flammable items from the house, such as:
 - Lawn and poolside furniture
 - Umbrellas
 - Tarp coverings
 - Firewood

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- Take steps to protect your home.
- Close all doors and windows inside your home to prevent draft.
- Close gas valves and turn off all pilot lights.
- Turn on a light in each room for visibility in heavy smoke.
- Place valuables that will not be damaged by water in a pool or pond.
- If hoses and adequate water are available, leave sprinklers on roofs and anything that might be damaged by fire.

Be ready to evacuate all family members and pets when fire nears or when instructed to do so by local officials.

After a wildfire:

Take care when re-entering a burnt area. Hot spots can flare up without warning. Check the roof immediately and extinguish any sparks or ashes. Check the attic for hidden burning sparks. For several hours afterward, re-check for smoke and sparks throughout the home.

If trapped in a wildfire:

You cannot escape a fire. Bend down in a pond or river. Cover head and upper body with wet clothing. If water is not available or nearby, look for shelter in a cleared area or among a bed of rocks. Lie flat and cover body with wet clothing or soil. Breathe the air close to the ground through a wet cloth to avoid scorching your lungs or inhaling smoke.



An aerial image of homes that were destroyed by a wildfire in Los Alamos, NM, in April 2000. (Photo by Andrea Booher/ FEMA News, www.fema.gov).

Information adapted from materials by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (www.fema.gov).



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