

How to Prepare for a Wildfire Emergency or Evacuation

Planning Checklist (use for the advance/prep list)

Wildfires can threaten with little warning. Use this planning checklist to harden your home, set up communications, and map evacuation routes—so you're ready.

Create Wildfire Emergecy Plan

Planning ahead is essential. Here's how to get started:

- ❑ **Emergency Contacts:** List key numbers: local fire and police, family, neighbors, friends, and your insurance agent.
- ❑ **Evacuation Plan:** Identify multiple evacuation routes from your neighborhood and select a designated meeting place. Know the location of nearby shelters.
- ❑ **Manual Garage Access:** Learn how to manually open your garage door in case of power outage.
- ❑ **Communications Plan:** Decide how you'll stay in touch with household members if you're separated.
- ❑ **Emergency Kit:** Prepare a go-bag with essential items: medications, food, water, documents, phone chargers, flashlights, first-aid supplies, and extra clothes.
- ❑ **Home Prep Roles:** Assign responsibilities for removing combustibles, securing the home, and gathering pets.
- ❑ **Pet Plan:** Create a specific plan for transporting pets, including carriers, leashes, food, and vet records.

Stay Informed

Be alert and aware of wildfire conditions in your area.

- ❑ **Weather Alerts:** Download a weather app to receive real-time alerts from the National Weather Service.
- ❑ **Community Notifications:** Sign up for local emergency alerts through your county, city, or local fire department.
- ❑ **Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs):** Make sure your mobile phone is set to receive these automatic emergency broadcasts.

Review Insurance Coverage & Document Your Belongings

Ensure your coverage is adequate and your assets are well-documented.

- ❑ **Review Your Policy:** Understand what your insurance covers – including wildfire-related damage. Confirm that wildfire is listed as a covered peril. Review coverage limits, exclusions, and deductibles. Ask your agent if additional coverage is recommended for your area.
- ❑ **Improve Your Risk Profile:** Homes that meet wildfire resilience standards, like Critical Home Prep and Home Upgrades (or a Wildfire Prepared Home designation), may qualify for better insurance rates or coverage options. Shop around for the best fit.
- ❑ **Document Your Belongings:** Create a photo or video inventory of every room, including garages and outdoor areas. Store this securely in the cloud or off-site. This will make filing claims faster and easier.

Prepare Your Home for Firefighter Intervention

Help first responders quickly locate your home to render services.

- ❑ **Visible Addressing:** Post house numbers that are at least 4 inches tall, in a contrasting color or reflective material, and clearly visible from the street in both directions.
- ❑ **Driveway Access:** Ensure at least 12 feet of width and 13.5 feet of vertical clearance for emergency vehicles.
- ❑ **Gated Entrances:** Gates should open inward and be set back at least 30 feet from the road and from any roadway intersection.

Work With Your Neighbors & Community

Wildfire risk is shared—so is the responsibility.

- ❑ **Start the Conversation:** Talk with neighbors about wildfire mitigation strategies and look for ways to work together.
- ❑ **Understand Shared Risk:** In dense neighborhoods, one home's ignition can threaten many others. What your neighbors do – or don't do – matters.
- ❑ **Join Local Groups:** Partner with Fire Safe Councils, preparedness groups, and your HOA to spread awareness and take coordinated wildfire readiness action.

Learn more from IBHS research: ibhs.org/wildfireready



How to Prepare for a Wildfire Emergency or Evacuation

Last-Minute Evacuation Checklist (use for the urgent list)

When fire weather escalates or an evacuation is likely, use this quick checklist – **if time allows** – to secure your home, lower ignition risks, and leave safely **when every second counts.**

Safety note: If an evacuation is ordered, leave immediately—do not delay to complete tasks.

RED FLAG WARNING: Stay Alert and Ready

When Red Flag Warnings are issued, take action immediately. These conditions mean heightened fire danger due to high wind and low humidity.

LAST-MINUTE PREP: OUTSIDE THE HOME

If you still have time before evacuating, complete these final wildfire risk reduction tasks:

- ❑ **Clear the 0–5 Foot Noncombustible Zone:** Remove flammable items such as door mats, cushions, and patio furniture, trash/recycling bins, toys, and potted plants and tree debris.
- ❑ **Relocate Propane Grills:** Place 30+ feet from home, away from neighboring homes.
- ❑ **Secure Gates:** Prop open any combustible fence gates attached to the house.
- ❑ **Clean Roof & Gutters:** Remove debris from roof, gutters, and downspouts. Place ladders outside in plain view for firefighter access.
- ❑ **Clean Vents:** Clear any debris from vents. Ensure your dryer vent flap/louvers are closed.
- ❑ **Shut Off Gas Supply:** Turn the valve clockwise to shut it off. Never store propane cylinders near the home. Shut off stationary tanks and clear at least 10 feet around the base.
- ❑ **No Sprinklers:** Avoid using sprinklers, preserve water pressure for firefighters.

LAST-MINUTE PREP: INSIDE THE HOME

- ❑ **Move Combustibles:** Pull curtains, blinds, and furniture away from windows, doors, and vents.
- ❑ **Leave Lights On:** Keep exterior lights on to help first responders locate your home in smoky conditions.
- ❑ **Close All Doors & Windows:** Prevent flames and embers from entering or spreading inside the home.
- ❑ **Move Car Out of the Garage:** Park in the driveway, facing out, packed, and ready to go. If power is out, you'll have to open the garage door manually.

BE READY TO EVACUATE

- ❑ **Monitor Evacuation Orders:** Use official websites, local media, and emergency alerts apps.
- ❑ **Trust Your Instincts:** If you feel unsafe leave – don't wait for an official notice.
- ❑ **Evacuate Immediately if Ordered:** Follow your wildfire plan, take your go-kit, and leave without delay.
- ❑ **Never Stay to Defend:** Defending your home against wildfire is extremely dangerous. Your safety is the top priority.