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Prepare for a Wildfire



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.

Every year across the U.S., some homes survive — while many others do not — after a major wildfire. Those that survive almost always do so because their owners had prepared for the eventuality of fire, which is an inescapable force of nature in fire-prone woodland areas. Said in another way — if it's predictable, it's preventable!

Wildfires often begin unnoticed. These fires are usually triggered by lightning or accidents. 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 below to protect your family, home and property.

Wildfire Preparedness Checklist

- Make a disaster supply kit (<https://www.wunderground.com/prepare/disaster-supply-kit>) and have a family emergency plan (<https://www.wunderground.com/prepare/family-emergency-plan>)
- 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 noncombustible materials on the roof and exterior structure of the dwelling, or treat wood or combustible material used in roofs, siding, decking or trim with fire-retardant chemicals evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (<http://database.ul.com/cgi-bin/ulweb/LISEXT/1FRAME/FireResistanceWizard.html>)(UL)
- Plant fire-resistant shrubs and trees (for example, hardwood trees are less flammable than pine, evergreen, eucalyptus or fir trees)
- 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 Standard 211 (<http://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/all-codes-and-standards/list-of-codes-and-standards?mode=code&code=211>). (Contact your local fire department for exact specifications)
- Use 1/8-inch mesh screen beneath porches, decks, floor areas and the home itself. Also, screen openings to floors, roof and attic
- Install a dual-sensor smoke alarm on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms; test monthly and change the batteries at least once each year

- Teach each family member how to use a fire extinguisher (ABC type) and show them where it's kept
- Keep handy household items that can be used as fire tools: a rake, axe, handsaw or chain saw, bucket and shovel
- Keep a ladder that will reach the roof
- Consider installing protective shutters or heavy fire-resistant drapes
- Clear items that will burn from around the house, including wood piles, lawn furniture, barbecue grills, tarp coverings, etc. Move them outside of your defensible space
- 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

Prepare Your Home For A Wildfire

It is recommended that you create a 30 to 100-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, and clear out 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 power lines
- 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 barbecue grill—use nonflammable material with mesh no coarser than one quarter inch
- Regularly dispose of newspapers and rubbish at an approved site and follow local burning regulations
- Place stove, fireplace and grill ashes in a metal bucket, soak in water for 2 days; then bury the cold ashes in mineral soil
- Store gasoline, oily rags and other flammable materials in approved safety cans, and place the cans in a safe location away from the base of buildings
- Stack firewood at least 100 feet away and uphill from your home, and clear combustible material within 20 feet
- Use only wood-burning devices evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL)
- Review your homeowner's insurance policy and also prepare/update a list of your home's contents

During A Wildfire

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, and leave the sprinklers on, dowsing these structures as long as possible
- If you have gas-powered pumps for water, make sure they are fueled and ready

If asked to evacuate...

- Place a ladder against the house in clear view to aid firefighters
- Disconnect any automatic garage door openers so that doors can still be opened by hand if the power goes out, and 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

Prepare For the Extreme

By the time severe weather hits, it's already too late. Disaster preparedness is about having an established safety plan. Whether it's preparedness for floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, or fires, the key to survival in disasters is planning. Use our preparedness section to stay informed, make a plan, and most importantly—remain safe in an emergency.

Preparedness Links

[Weather Radio \(/prepare/weather_radio.asp\)](/prepare/weather_radio.asp)

[Make A Disaster Supply Kit \(/prepare/disaster_supply_kit.asp\)](/prepare/disaster_supply_kit.asp)

[Family Emergency Plan \(/prepare/family_plan.asp\)](/prepare/family_plan.asp)

Get Severe Weather Alerts

[Twitter \(/twitter\)](/twitter)

[Facebook \(/facebook\)](/facebook)

[iPhone \(/download/index.asp\)](/download/index.asp)

[Android \(/download/index.asp\)](/download/index.asp)

[Email \(/email/emailsettings.asp\)](/email/emailsettings.asp)

[Text \(/email/emailsettings.asp\)](/email/emailsettings.asp)

[Weather API \(/weather/api\)](/weather/api)

Severe Storms

[Tornado Preparedness \(/resources/severe/tornado_safety.asp\)](/resources/severe/tornado_safety.asp)

[Tornado FAQ \(/resources/severe/tornadoFAQ.asp\)](/resources/severe/tornadoFAQ.asp)

[Where Tornadoes Occur \(/resources/severe/tornado_regions.asp\)](/resources/severe/tornado_regions.asp)

[Understand the Fujita Scale \(/resources/severe/fujita_scale.asp\)](/resources/severe/fujita_scale.asp)

[Severe Storms and Supercells \(/resources/severe/severe_storms.asp\)](/resources/severe/severe_storms.asp)

[Flash Floods \(/resources/severe/flood.asp\)](/resources/severe/flood.asp)

[Lightning \(/resources/severe/lightning.asp\)](/resources/severe/lightning.asp)

[Hail \(/resources/severe/hail.asp\)](/resources/severe/hail.asp)

[Radar FAQ \(/resources/about/radar.asp\)](/resources/about/radar.asp)

[Severe Storms Lingo \(/prepare/severe_storms_lingo.asp\)](/prepare/severe_storms_lingo.asp)

Hurricanes and Typhoons

[Hurricane and Typhoon Preparedness \(/prepare/hurricane.asp\)](/prepare/hurricane.asp)

[Storm Surge Basics \(/hurricane/surge.asp\)](/hurricane/surge.asp)

[Storm Surge Survival Myths \(/hurricane/surge_misconceptions.asp\)](/hurricane/surge_misconceptions.asp)

[Storm Surge: Know Your Elevation \(/hurricane/elevation.asp\)](/hurricane/elevation.asp)

[Inland Flooding and Flash Flooding \(/resources/severe/flood.asp\)](/resources/severe/flood.asp)

[Radar FAQ \(/resources/about/radar.asp\)](/resources/about/radar.asp)

[Hurricane Lingo \(/prepare/hurricane_lingo.asp\)](/prepare/hurricane_lingo.asp)

Winter Weather

[Winter Weather Preparedness \(/prepare/winter_weather_preparedness.asp\)](/prepare/winter_weather_preparedness.asp)

[Winter Driving Tips \(/prepare/winterdriving.asp\)](/prepare/winterdriving.asp)

[Winterize Your Home \(/prepare/winterize_your_home.asp\)](/prepare/winterize_your_home.asp)

[Radar FAQ \(/resources/about/radar.asp\)](/resources/about/radar.asp)

[Winter Weather Lingo \(/prepare/winter_weather_lingo.asp\)](/prepare/winter_weather_lingo.asp)

Other Natural Disasters

[Extreme Heat \(/prepare/heat.asp\)](/prepare/heat.asp)

[Earthquakes \(/prepare/earthquake.asp\)](/prepare/earthquake.asp)

[Volcanoes \(/prepare/volcano.asp\)](/prepare/volcano.asp)

[Landslides \(/prepare/landslide.asp\)](/prepare/landslide.asp)

[Tsunamis \(/prepare/tsunami.asp\)](/prepare/tsunami.asp)

[Wildfires \(/prepare/wildfire.asp\)](/prepare/wildfire.asp)

[Our Apps \(/download\)](/download)

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[Careers \(http://ibm.biz/BdH3av\)](http://ibm.biz/BdH3av)

[Site Map \(/sitemap/\)](#)

[PWS Network \(/weatherstation/\)](#)

[WunderMap \(/wundermap\)](#)

[Feedback & Support \(https://www.wunderground.com/feedback\)](https://www.wunderground.com/feedback)

[Data Rights \(/data-rights\)](#)

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