



# Trapped by Wildfire

## 1. Remain Calm

An approaching wildfire will be extremely loud, create extreme heat and smoke and will likely evoke fear and panic. However, the active flame will pass. Generally, grassland burns for 10 minutes, bushland for 20 minutes and timberland for over an hour.

## 2. Prepare Safe Zones

Near Home:

- Clear the surrounding area of flammable materials.
- Shut all windows and doors to prevent smoke and flame from entering the house.
- Move furniture away from windows to prevent embers from igniting furniture.
- Place a ladder next to home to create alternate escape route.
- Fill the bathtub and buckets with water.
- Place wet blankets or towels around window and door edges inside the house to stop smoke and embers from entering.
- Hose down the structure and 30 feet of surrounding vegetation, turn on your irrigation system if available and prepare for the fire.

Out in Open:

- Select an area that will not burn -- the bigger the better-- and if not this that an area with the least amount of combustible material (e.g., depressions in the ground)
- Examples include irrigated pastures or golf courses, parking lots, large ponds or any other areas that will not support combustion.

## 3. Protect Yourself

Near Home:

- Dress in protective clothing (long sleeve cotton shirt, heavy pants, vibram soled boots) and cover your face with cotton handkerchief to protect yourself from smoke inhalation.

- Stay inside while the fire front passes around the house
- Look out for burning embers landing inside the home and extinguish any spot fires.
- Do not shelter in a part of your home that does not allow you to see the progress of the fire
- If your home catches fire and you are unable to extinguish what has now become a structure fire -- go outside onto burnt ground where the fire front has passed. Do not return to your house for any reason.

#### Out in Open:

- Use every means possible to protect yourself from radiant and convective heat emitted by the flames (e.g., boulders, rock outcrops, large downed logs, trees, snags, etc.)

#### In your Car:

A structure will offer more protection than a car, so if there is a building nearby, get inside it. Otherwise, park and stay in your car. It will be safer than being in the open, where you would be directly exposed to flames and radiant heat.

- STAY IN THE VEHICLE.
- Find a safe place to park with little or no vegetation.
- Turn on headlights and emergency flashers to make your car more visible in heavy smoke.
- Close all windows and doors, shut off air vents, and turn off the air conditioner.
- Get under blankets or coats, preferably wool, and lie on the floor.
- Wait until the fire front passes and the outside temperature has dropped. Then get out and go to a safe area that has already burned.
- Be prepared for power and internet to go out & do not depend on google maps.

## 4. Hazards After Fire

- Continue to wear personal protective clothing.
- Inspect the perimeter of the home and extinguish and spot fires. Common locations include: Inside and on the roof: under the floorboards, under crawl spaces; on decks and patios; window ledges and doors sills; roof lines and gutters; outdoor furniture; doormats; garden beds and mulch; wood piles; outbuildings
- Be wary of trees, brush and rocks which may be weakened or loosened by fire. If rocks have rolled down a slope, expect more to follow.
- If your utility services are off, check for burned service equipment and facilities. DO NOT attempt to repair or turn on these services. Call your local utility company for assistance.
- STAY CLEAR of electrical wires on the ground and CONSIDER THEM ENERGIZED.

## **5. Prepare Early**

### **Choosing Your Shelter**

The most important thing is to choose the place best able to withstand the flaming front of the fire. This may not be your home, but an outbuilding, shop, or even your car. The structure should have:

- A “Class-A” noncombustible roof.
- Noncombustible siding or at least 30-feet between the siding and vegetation.
- Eave areas and areas under decks boxed in, totally enclosed, and cleaned of flammable debris.
- 1/8-inch screens on attic, foundation, and eave vents.
- Dual-pane or tempered glass windows.

### **Inside Your Shelter**

- Close all windows and doors; place wet towels under door and window openings.
- Have your fire extinguishers out and ready to use.
- Fill sinks, tubs, and buckets with water for extinguishing any embers that enter the space as well as for drinking and flushing toilets.
- Plan for loss of power. Have flashlights and batteries ready.
- Disconnect electric garage door openers. Operate doors manually.
- Close metal window blinds. Remove flammable window treatments.
- Move furniture away from windows and sliding glass doors.
- Shut off attic fans, whole house fans, swamp coolers, and interior fans to keep smoke and ash from being drawn into the structure.
- Wet or remove swamp cooler pads to prevent them from catching on fire.
- Bring pets inside and place them in carriers.
- Put livestock and horses in an irrigated pasture or area where fuels have been removed.
- Leave exterior and interior lights on to help firefighters find your house in dense smoke.
- Stay in the center of the structure, away from windows and glass doors.

### **Outside Your Shelter**

- Strategically place sprinklers to wet your shelter and surroundings, and turn them on.
- Protect some hoses from flames and have them ready to use once the fire front has passed.
- Close exterior doors and windows, but leave them unlocked.

- Close or cover outside attic, eave, and basement vents to prevent embers from entering.
- Move all flammable materials at least 30-feet away from your shelter, including vehicles and recreational equipment, lawn furniture, and firewood.
- Plan for loss of power. Have emergency generators ready to power your well's pump.
- Store water for putting out burning embers or small fires after the fire front has passed.
- Shut off natural gas and propane.
- Open gates to prevent flames from spreading from a fence to your shelter.
- **Wet down your surroundings!**

## Wildfire Recovery

Wildfire recovery doesn't happen overnight. It is a steady process of assessing damage, evaluating new conditions and deciding on what to do next. The ultimate goals of renewal, rehabilitation and re-vegetation can be attained, but will take patience and persistence.

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- **Take Care of Yourself:** Contact your local disaster relief service, such as the Red Cross or the Salvation Army. They will help you find a place to stay, food, medicines, and other important things.
- **Assess Home Damage:** Check with the fire department to make sure your home is safe to enter. Be very careful when you go inside. The fire department will tell you if your utilities (water, electricity, and gas) are safe to use.
- **Assess Resource Damage:** Forests, Livestock, and Vineyards damaged by fire will need restoration. The action or inaction taken in the months following fire can have long lasting impacts on how these natural resources recover.
- **Secure Finances:** Check with an accountant or the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) about special benefits for people recovering from fire loss. If you have insurance, contact your insurance company to learn how to keep your home safe until it is repaired. If you are not insured, try contacting community groups for aid and assistance.
- **Prepare for the future:** Preventing the next fire starts as soon as the current one ends. As you begin to rebuild your home and establish your garden, look for fire-resistant building designs to minimize your risk during the next fire.