



GROUP 6

CALIFORNIA WING - CIVIL AIR PATROL

Two-minute safety advisor

Wildfire safety

Editor's note – As wildfires ravaging Southern California demonstrate, disasters can strike quickly and without warning. You can better cope with disasters by preparing a disaster plan in advance. Here is advice from a number of sources, including the Red Cross.

- Post fire emergency telephone numbers.
- Plan several escape routes away from your home by car and by foot.
- Plan how the neighborhood can work together. Consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as elderly or disabled persons.
- Make plans to take care of children who may be on their own if parents can't get home.
- Listen to a battery-operated radio for reports and evacuation information.
- Back your car into the garage or park it in an open space facing the direction of escape. Shut doors and roll up windows. Leave the key in the ignition. Close garage windows and doors, but leave them unlocked. Disconnect automatic garage door openers.
- Make plans to care for your pets.
- Arrange temporary housing at a friend or relative's home.
- Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights. Show responsible family members how and when to shut off water, gas and electricity at main switches.
- Close windows, vents, doors, Venetian blinds or non-combustible window coverings, and heavy drapes. Remove lightweight curtains.
- Open fireplace damper.
- Close fireplace screens.
- Move flammable furniture into the center of the home away from windows and sliding-glass doors.
- Wear protective clothing -- sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- Take your disaster supplies kit (A three-day supply of water, one gallon per person per day; food that won't spoil; one change of clothing and footwear per person and one blanket or sleeping bag per person; a first aid kit that includes prescription medications;

emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight, and plenty of extra batteries; an extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash, or traveler's checks; sanitation supplies; special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members; an extra pair of eyeglasses; important family documents in a waterproof container).

- Lock your home.
- Tell someone when you left and where you are going.
- Choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.

Here is advice on how to protect your home in advance of a wildfire:

- Regularly clean roof and gutters.
- Inspect chimneys at least twice a year. Clean them at least once a year. Keep dampers in good working order. Equip chimneys and stovepipes with a spark arrester.
- Use 1/2-inch mesh screen beneath porches, decks, floor areas, and the home itself. Screen openings to floors, roof, and attic.
- Install a smoke detector on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms; test monthly and change batteries at least once each year.
- Teach each family member how to use ABC-type fire extinguisher.
- Keep handy household items that can be used as fire tools: a rake, axe, handsaw or chainsaw, bucket, and shovel.
- Create a 30- to 100-foot safety zone around your home (rake leaves, dead limbs, and twigs; clear all flammable vegetation; remove leaves and rubbish from under structures and dispose of them properly; 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; remove vines from the walls of the home; mow grass regularly; clear a 10-foot area around propane tanks and the barbecue; regularly dispose of newspapers; store gasoline, oily rags, and other flammable materials in approved safety cans; place cans in a safe location away from the base of buildings; 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.

California is having another very dry summer this year, which is making the state's chronic fire disaster potential even worse than normal. Although many disasters cannot be prevented, proper preparation can make increase chances of survival and coping easier.