

# Surviving a wildfire ...are YOU prepared?

Since recorded history, 2002 is the *worst* fire season in the White Mountains. Wildfires often begin unnoticed but they spread quickly, igniting brush, trees and homes. Reduce your risk by preparing now — *before* wildfire strikes. *Prepare...plan...and then act!*

## prepare

*Before* wildfire threatens, design and landscape your home with safety in mind. Select materials and plants that can help contain fire rather than fuel it. Use fire resistant or non-combustible materials on the roof and exterior structure of the dwelling. Or treat wood or combustible materials used in roofs, siding, decking or trim with UL-approved fire-retardant chemicals. Plant fire-resistant shrubs and trees. (Hardwood trees are less flammable than pine, evergreen, eucalyptus or fir trees.)

### 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.

- ◆ Rake leaves, dead limbs and twigs. Clear all flammable vegetation.
- ◆ Remove leaves and rubbish from under structure.
- ◆ 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 grill — use non-flammable material with mesh no coarser than 1/4-inch.
- ◆ Regularly dispose of newspapers and rubbish at an approved site. Contact the Show Low Police Department for local burning regulations.
- ◆ Place stove, fireplace and grill ashes in a metal bucket, soak in water for two days, then bury the cold ashes in mineral soil.
- ◆ Store gasoline, oily rags and other flammable materials in approved safety cans. Place cans in a safe location away from the base of buildings.
- ◆ Stack firewood at least 30 feet or more away and uphill from your home. Use only UL-approved wood-burning devices.

## Protect your home

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Use 1/2-inch mesh screen beneath porches, decks, floor areas and the home itself. Also screen openings to floors, roof and attic.
- ◆ Install a smoke detector at key locations in your home, especially near bedrooms. Test monthly and change the batteries twice a year.
- ◆ Teach each family member how to use the fire extinguisher (ABC type) and show them where it's kept.
- ◆ Keep a ladder that will reach the roof.
- ◆ Consider installing protective shutters or heavy fire-resistant drapes.
- ◆ Keep handy household items that can be used as fire tools — a rake, axe, hand saw or chain saw, bucket and shovel.

## Disaster Supply Kit

Store everything in easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, duffle bags or trash containers. Include:

- ◆ A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day).
- ◆ Non-perishable food.
- ◆ One change of clothing and footwear per person and one blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- ◆ A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medications.
- ◆ Emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- ◆ An extra set of car keys.
- ◆ Credit card, cash or traveler's checks.
- ◆ Personal hygiene items and feminine supplies.
- ◆ Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- ◆ An extra pair of eyeglasses.
- ◆ Matches in a waterproof container.
- ◆ Signal flare.
- ◆ Map of the area and telephone numbers of places you could go.

## Reminders

- ◆ Keep important family documents in a waterproof container.
- ◆ Store your kit in a convenient place known to all family members. Keep a smaller version of it in the trunk of your car.
- ◆ Keep items in airtight plastic bags.
- ◆ Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh.
- ◆ Rotate your stored food every six months.
- ◆ Rethink your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update clothing, etc.
- ◆ Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications.

# plan

You and your family can cope with disaster by planning in advance and working together as a team. Knowing what to do is your best protection and your responsibility.

## Create a family disaster plan

- ◆ **Meet** with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire to your children. Plan to share responsibilities and work as a team. Keep it simple so everyone can remember the important details. A disaster is an extremely stressful situation that can create confusion. The best emergency plans are those with very few details.
- ◆ **Pick** two places to meet in case family members are separated. In case of a sudden emergency, like a fire, meet a safe distance from your home. Meet at a place outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home or are asked to leave your neighborhood. Everyone must know the address and telephone number of the meeting locations.
- ◆ **Develop** an emergency communication plan. If family members are separated during a disaster, have a plan for getting back together. Separation is a real probability when adults are at work and children are at school.
- ◆ **Ask** a relative or friend who lives outside your area to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it is often easier to make a long distance call than a local call. Family members should call the contact to advise where they are located. Everyone must know the contact's name, address and telephone number.
- ◆ **Discuss** what to do if authorities ask you to evacuate. Make arrangements for a place to stay with a friend or relative who lives out of town and/or learn about shelter locations.
- ◆ **Know** your escape routes. If you need to evacuate your home, plan several escape routes in case a road is blocked or closed. Drive around your neighborhood *before* disaster strikes and learn all the ways in and out.
- ◆ **Plan** how to care for your pets. Pets other than service animals are *not* permitted in public shelters.
- ◆ **Post** emergency telephone numbers (fire, police, ambulance) next to every phone. You won't have time in an emergency to look up critical numbers.
- ◆ **Quiz** your children every six months about meeting places, telephone numbers and safety rules so they remember what to do.
- ◆ **Conduct** emergency evacuation drills at least twice a year. Actually drive evacuation routes so each driver will know the way. Select alternate routes in case the main evacuation route is blocked during an actual disaster. Mark your evacuation routes on a map and keep it in your Disaster Supply Kit.



If you are warned that a wildfire is threatening your area, listen to your battery-operated radio for reports and evacuation information. *Follow the instructions of local officials.* Most importantly, *remain calm.*

Emergency evacuation is primarily the responsibility of law enforcement personnel. Evacuation warnings and alerts will take place by several methods, depending on time availability. Do *not* call 911, unless you have a medical or life-threatening emergency!

- ◆ Local radio — There will be 30-second broadcasts by emergency officials through the Emergency Alert System (EAS). Regular radio programming will be interrupted on all local channels as often as necessary.
- ◆ In the community — Law enforcement or other emergency vehicles will sound sirens and provide information over public address loudspeakers as well as making door-to-door contacts.

## If you receive word of an emergency...

Confine pets to one room. Prepare food, carriers, etc. in case you must evacuate.

Call your out-of-town family contact to arrange for temporary housing.

If advised to evacuate, do so *immediately*. Remember to:

- ◆ 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 Supply Kit and important documents and valuables.
- ◆ Take prescription glasses and dentures.
- ◆ Close heavy drapes and blinds.
- ◆ Turn on exterior lights.
- ◆ Lock doors and windows.
- ◆ Tell your family contact when you leave and where you are going.
- ◆ If you have the time — and know-how — turn off propane gas service.
- ◆ You may be instructed to tie a white towel or large white cloth to the front doorknob to advise rescuers that your residence has been evacuated.

Your evacuation route will vary depending on where the fire is located. Choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.

*Evacuation routes cannot be pre-established.* The location of the wildfire, the behavior of it and conditions such as wind direction will determine safe travel routes.

Pay close attention to the evacuation route signs and/or personnel assigned to direct traffic. They will direct you away from roads that may be blocked or that could put you in further danger. Stay on designated evacuation routes.

If an evacuation is ordered a registration site will be designated. Whether you stay or not, *it is important you sign in* so emergency officials and family members know where to find you.

## Transportation

- ◆ *Always keep your gas tank at least half full.*
- ◆ You will be expected to use your personal vehicles in case of an evacuation.
- ◆ Pre-planning should be made with other family members and neighbors to transport children, individuals with special needs or those without a means of transport.
- ◆ When school is in session, transportation of schoolchildren will be conducted by local school districts. Do *not* attempt to pick up your children. It will only lead to confusion, congestion and reduced safety for everyone.
- ◆ The *safest* evacuation routes will be identified by the appropriate agencies and will be made public during broadcasts of evacuation warnings and alerts.

## Home security

Regarding the security of your home, law enforcement personnel will make every effort to provide security for evacuated areas. The nature of the emergency and the safety of personnel will determine where perimeters are established.

# What to do in case of a wildfire emergency

Wildfires can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services, such as water, gas, electricity and telephone, were cut off? Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away.

## Prepare

The *more* you prepare before disaster strikes, the better chance you have of protecting yourself, your family and your property. Be firewise. Keep the area around your home free of debris. Make sure that fire vehicles can get to your home. Clearly mark all driveway entrances and display your name and address.

## Plan

This brochure provides valuable tips for dealing with a wildfire emergency. Teach children about fire safety. Keep matches out of their reach. Plan several escape routes away from your home — by car and by foot. Meet with your neighbors and plan how the neighborhood could work together. Know your neighbors' skills (medical, technical). Consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as elderly or disabled persons. Make plans for child care in case parents can't get home.

## Act

In case of a wildfire emergency, you must act *immediately*. Turn on your radio and follow closely the instructions of local officials.

### Whom do I call for more information?

Show Low Police Department (ask for the Disaster Preparedness Team)..... (928) 537-5091  
Show Low Fire Department ..... (928) 537-5100

This brochure was produced by the City of Show Low in April 2002. Call (928) 532-4060 for additional copies.



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**Keep this life-saving information handy!**