

Wildfire

Every year there are thousands of wildfires in North America most of which – 55% are caused by humans. But because the fires we start are usually caught much earlier, the 45% of fires caused by lightning are responsible for about 80% of the total acres that are burned.

If your home is surrounded by forest or grasslands, you need to prepare for the possibility of a wildfire and the first step of preparation begins with good fire practices:

- Don't build fires near trees or shrubs and never leave one unattended
- Have water or an extinguisher close by if you start an outdoor fire
- Have smoke detectors on every level of your home with special attention paid to having them near the bedrooms
- Don't start any fires during hot dry periods.
- Pay close attention to dried grass or brush close to the driveway, barbeque or outdoor fireplace. Use a ¼ mesh screen over your grill and don't use your grill when the fire risk is high.
- Install mesh screen over any opening in your house that could allow embers from a fire to enter your home.
- Install spark arrestors in stovepipes or chimneys to prevent embers from a fireplace escaping from your home.
- Construct your home with fire resistant siding and a non-combustible roof and use safety glass in doors and windows

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Prepare for a Wildfire

- Pay attention to the weather – if you have had a long period without rain you're at a greater risk for a wildfire. Also pay attention to what access firefighters might have to your property. Be certain that roads are clearly marked and in good repair.
- Practice emergency fire drills with your family. Make sure your children know exactly where to go and how to get there. Train everyone in your family to "stop, drop and roll."
- Have more than one evacuation route available.
- Do your best to create a fire safety zone around your home.

- If you have livestock, an orderly evacuation is the best bet, but barring that, don't close them into a corral or barn where they might burn alive, better to leave them out and allow their instincts to defend them.
- Have a Family Emergency Plan
- Have a Family Emergency Kit with extra first aid products to treat burns until help can arrive.
- Create a safety zone around your home.
- Within 30 feet of your home, minimize the vegetation. Pools, patios and stone walls will help to protect your home but you must limit flammable material.
- The best trees will have branches that are at least 15 feet above the ground and have crowns at least 15 feet apart.
- Fallen trees, pine cones, long grass, brush piles should all be kept well away from your home.
- Extend the safety zone out to 100 feet and if your home is on a hill, you'll need to extend that zone since fire will travel more easily uphill.
- Ensure that any porch, deck or balcony does not have any debris under it, which can easily catch fire.

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In the Event of a Wildfire

- If you see a fire call 911
- Evacuate any non essential people and your pets.
- Remove any combustible material like lawn furniture from around your home.
- Connect all your hoses and fill up every large container you can find.
- Put a ladder up against the front of your house.
- Prepare your car to leave at a moments notice. Roll up the windows, get everything you need to take with you inside and have it backed up against the garage door.
- Close all the doors, windows, vents shutters and any other opening.
- Close the interior doors in your house.
- Open the chimney flue but close the screen.

- Remove any flammable curtains or shutters.
- Turn off any fuel at the source including natural gas, oil or propane.
- If you have water, put your lawn sprinklers on the roof and turn them on.
- Turn on all the lights in your house and if you need to leave- don't lock the doors.
- Listen to the TV or news for updates.
- Evacuate if the order is given.

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After the Fire

- Check your roof and you attic immediately and carefully.
- Maintain a fire watch for at least several hours as fires can easily flare up again.

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