



# Fire Preparedness and Planning

*The Yuba City Fire Department and Fire Analyst III William Fuller have provided the core of this Family Disaster Preparedness Guide. The 13 county health departments of OES Region III are grateful to the Yuba City Fire Department and Fire Analyst William Fuller for the reproduction of their work to be shared by all Californians. You can view the original guide developed specifically for Yuba City at [http://www.yubacity.net/documents/Disaster\\_Preparedness\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.yubacity.net/documents/Disaster_Preparedness_Guide.pdf)*

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## Primary Safety Tips for Planning and Prevention

### Fire Preparedness and Planning

- If your smoke detector goes off or if you notice a fire, remain calm.
- Call 9-1-1 from a safe place such as a neighbor's house.
- Do not try to fight a major fire.
- If your clothes catch on fire, Stop where you are, Drop to the ground, and Roll over and over to smother the flames.
- Feel doors with the back of your hand before you open them. If they are
- hot, find another way out of your residence.
- When exiting, stay as close to the floor as possible – smoke and heat rise and the air is clearer and cooler near the floor.
- Close doors behind you.
- If you are unable to get out of your home for any reason, stay near a window and close to the floor.
- Close the door and stuff the bottom with a towel to avoid smoke.
- If possible, signal for help by waving a cloth outside the window.
- Do not stop to get anything.
- If you live in an apartment building and the fire is NOT in your apartment, evacuate if safe.
- Keep an ABC fire extinguisher and maintain working smoke detectors in the house.

- Check smoke detector batteries twice a year at the start and end of daylight-saving times.
- Consider renter's insurance if you rent an apartment.



## Wildfire!



Wildfires are a seasonal reality for California. If you live in an area where wildfires are a risk, develop a plan of escape. Wind driven wildfires can move unpredictably and create their own weather so at the first sign of an approaching wildfire, evacuate immediately. Don't assume you have time just because the fire is a canyon away. Burning embers can spark fires in advance of the main wave of flames. The following information is provided by California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Public Information Officer *Janet Upton* from the Butte Ranger Unit in Oroville, California.

## Before, During and After Wildfire



### What to do BEFORE a wildland fire:

- Adhere to all local fire and building codes and weed abatement ordinances.
- Use approved fire resistant materials when building, renovating or retrofitting structures. (This is extremely important for roofing materials).
- Install electrical lines underground if possible.
- Be sure your house numbers show clearly from the street, both day and night.
- Create defensible space – separate your home from flammable vegetation and materials (minimum 100' – PRC 4291).
- Keep all trees and shrub limbs trimmed so they do not come into contact with electrical wires or overhang your chimney. (Do not trim around live power lines yourself, call a professional).
- Prune all lower branches 8 feet from the ground.
- Keep trees adjacent to buildings free of dead or dying branches.
- Keep roof surfaces clear of pine needles, leaves and debris at all times.
- Install spark arresters for each chimney (PRC 4291).
- Clean chimneys and check and maintain spark arresters twice a year.
- Keep rain gutters clear of debris at all times.
- Store combustible or flammable materials in approved containers.
- Stack firewood away from your home and other buildings. (Keep clearance around your piles).
- Store all important papers in a fireproof container or keep copies at another location.
- Make evacuation plans with family members. Include several options with an outside meeting place and contact person. Practice regularly.
- Keep battery operated radios and flashlights with additional fresh batteries on hand.

## What to do DURING a wildland fire:



- Turn on a battery operated radio to get the latest emergency information.
- If you have a ladder, prop it against the house so you and firefighter have access to the roof.
- If hoses and adequate water are available set them up. Fill buckets with water.
- Remove combustible materials from the area surrounding your house. (Lawn chairs, tables, etc.)
- Turn a light on in each room for visibility in case of smoke.
- Close all doors and windows, but do not lock them.
- Open or take down flammable drapes and curtains.
- Close all Venetian blinds and non-flammable window coverings.
- Move upholstered furniture away from windows and sliding glass doors.
- Be ready to evacuate all family members and pets when requested to do so.
- Turn off air conditioning/air circulation systems.
- Disengage electrical garage doors so that in event of power failure, you can manually open the garage door.
- Back in your car and leave the keys in the ignition.
- Secure your pets if possible.



## If Evacuation Is a Possibility

- Locate your *Evacuation Checklist* and assemble the items on it. Be sure to include your “Go Kit” and “Emergency First Aid”
- PLACE THEM IN YOUR VEHICLE.
- Park your vehicle facing outward and carry your car keys with you.
- Locate your pets and keep them nearby. See Wildlife Safety for Livestock and Pets.
- Prepare farm animals for transport.
- Place a ladder outside for roof access.
- Place connected garden hoses and buckets full of water around the house.
- Assemble fire fighting tools near an outside door (shovel, rake, hoe, etc.).
- Move propane BBQ appliances away from structures. Cover up.
- Wear long pants, long sleeve shirt, heavy shoes/boots, and cap, dry bandanna for face cover, goggles or glasses. 100% cotton clothing preferable.
- Leave lights on in the house - door unlocked. Leave windows closed - air conditioning off.

# The Evacuation Process

- Officials will determine the areas to be evacuated and the routes to use depending upon the fire's location, behavior, wind, terrain, etc.
- Law enforcement agencies are typically responsible for enforcing an evacuation order. Follow their directions promptly!
- You will be advised of potential evacuations as early as possible. **You must take the initiative to stay informed and aware. Listen to your local radio/TV and for announcements from law enforcement or emergency personnel.**
- You may be directed to temporary assembly areas to await transfer to a safe location.
- When heavy smoke reduces visibility, movement may be restricted only to escorted convoys.

## **If You Become Trapped**

### **While in your vehicle:**

- Stay Calm.
- Park your vehicle in an area clear of vegetation.
- Close all vehicle windows and vents.
- Cover yourself with wool blanket or jacket.
- Lie on vehicle floor.
- Use your cell phone to advise officials – 9-1-1.

### **While on foot:**

- Stay Calm.
- Go to an area clear of vegetation, a ditch or depression if possible.
- Lie face down, cover up.
- Use your cell phone to advise officials – 9-1-1.

### **While in your home:**

- Stay calm, keep your family together.
- Call 9-1-1 and inform authorities of your location.
- Fill sinks and tubs with cold water.
- Keep doors and windows closed, but UNLOCKED.
- Stay inside your house.
- Stay away from outside walls and windows.
  - Note – it will get hot in the house, but it is much hotter, and more dangerous outside.

**After the fire passes, and if it is safe, check the following areas for fire:**

- The roof and house exterior.
- Under decks and inside your attic.
- Your yard for burning trees, woodpiles, etc.
- Extinguish embers and sparks.

## **What to do **AFTER** a wildland fire:**

Check with fire officials before attempting to return to your home.

- Use caution when re-entering a burned area...flare-ups can occur.
- Check grounds for “hot spots” – smoldering stumps and vegetation.
- Use wet blankets or buckets of water.
- Check the roof and exterior areas for sparks and embers.
- Check the attic and throughout the house for hidden burning sparks and embers.
- Continue to check for problem areas for several days.
- Contact 9-1-1 if any danger is perceived.
- If burning outside your home was extensive watch for soil erosion.
- Consult local experts on the best way to restore and re-plant your land with fire safe landscaping.

## **Returning Home**

**Fire officials will determine when it is safe for you to return to your home. This will be done as soon as possible considering safety and accessibility.**

**When you do return home:**

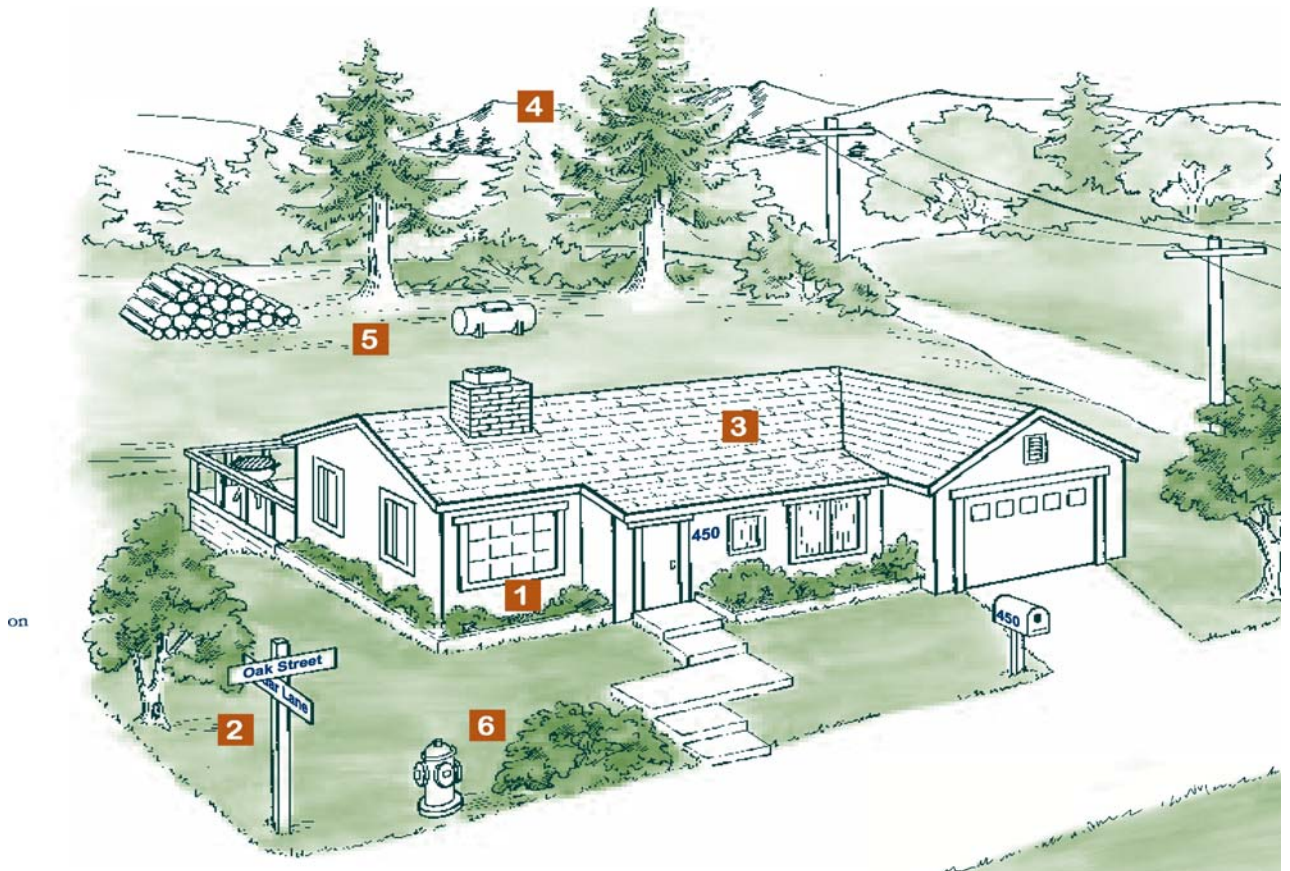
- Be alert for downed power lines and other hazards.
- Check propane tanks, regulators, and lines before turning gas on.
- Check your residence carefully for hidden embers or smoldering fires.

# Homeowner's Checklist

## Outside Preparedness:



[www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov)



# 1 Design/Construction

- Consider installing residential sprinklers
- Build your home away from ridge tops, canyons and areas between high points on a ridge
- Build your home at least 30-100 feet from your property line
- Use fire resistant materials
- Enclose the underside of eaves, balconies and above ground decks with fire resistant materials
- Try to limit the size and number of windows in your home that face large areas of vegetation
- Install only dual-paned or triple-paned windows
- Make sure that electric service lines, fuse boxes and circuit breaker panels are installed and maintained as prescribed by code
- Contact qualified individuals to perform electrical maintenance and repairs
- Make sure that your street is named or numbered, and a sign is visibly posted at each street intersection

# 2 Access

- Identify at least two exit routes from your neighborhood
- Construct roads that allow two-way traffic
- Design road width, grade and curves to allow access for large emergency vehicles
- Construct driveways to allow large emergency equipment to reach your house
- Design bridges to carry heavy emergency vehicles, including bulldozers carried on large trucks
- Post clear road signs to show traffic restrictions such as dead-end roads and weight and height limitations
- Make sure dead-end roads and long driveways have turn-around areas wide enough for emergency vehicles
- Construct turnouts along one-way roads
- Clear flammable vegetation at least 10 feet from roads and five feet from driveways
- Cut back overhanging tree branches above roads.
- Construct fire barriers such as greenbelts

# 3 Roof

- Remove branches within 10 feet of your chimney and dead branches overhanging your roof
- Remove dead leaves and needles from your roof and gutters
- Install a fire resistant roof. Contact your local fire department for current roofing requirements
- Cover your chimney outlet and stovepipe with a nonflammable screen of  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch or smaller mesh

## **4 Landscape**

- Create a "defensible space" by removing all flammable vegetation at least 100 feet from all structures
- Never prune near power lines.
- Call your local utility company first!

## **5 Yard**

- Stack woodpiles at least 30 feet from all structures and remove vegetation within 10 feet of woodpiles
- Locate LPG tanks (butane and propane) at least 30 feet from any structure and maintain 10 feet of clearance
- Remove all stacks of construction materials, pine needles, leaves and other debris from your yard
- Contact your local fire department to see if open burning is allowed in your area; if so, obtain a burning permit
- Where burn barrels are allowed, clear flammable materials at least 10 feet around the barrel; cover the open top with a non-flammable screen with mesh no larger than one quarter (1/4) inch
- On slopes or in high fire hazard areas remove flammable vegetation out to 100 feet or more
- Space native trees and shrubs at least 10 feet apart
- For trees taller than 18 feet in height, remove lower branches within eight feet of the ground
- Maintain all plants by regularly watering and by removing dead branches, leaves and needles
- Before planting trees close to any power line contact your local utility company to confirm the maximum tree height allowable for that location
- Make sure that your street name and house number are not duplicated elsewhere in the county
- Post your house address at the beginning of your driveway, or on your house if it is easily visible from the road
- Landscape with fire resistant plants

## **6 Emergency Water Supply**

- Maintain an emergency water supply that meets fire department standards through one of the following: a community water/hydrant system or a cooperative emergency storage tank with neighbors
- Clearly mark all emergency water sources
- Make sure responding firefighters know you have an alternate water source on your property such as a swimming pool or water storage tank
- Create easy firefighter access to your closest emergency water source
- If your water comes from a well, consider an emergency generator to operate the pump during a power failure



# Fire Preparedness Inside your Home



## 1 Kitchen

- Keep a working fire extinguisher in the kitchen
- Maintain electric and gas stoves in good operating condition
- Keep baking soda on hand to extinguish stove-top grease fires
- Turn the handles of pots and pans containing hot liquids away from the front of the stove
- Install curtains and towel holders away from burners on the stove
- Store matches and lighters out of the reach of children
- Make sure that electrical outlets are designed to handle appliance loads

## 2 Living Room

- Install a screen in front of fireplace or wood stove
- Store the ashes from your fireplace (and barbecue) in a metal container and dispose of only when cold
- Clean fireplace chimneys and flues at least once a year

## 3 Hallway

- Install smoke detectors between living and sleeping areas
- Test smoke detectors monthly and replace batteries twice a year, when clocks are changed when going to daylight savings time and back
- Install child safety plugs (caps) on all electrical outlets
- Replace electrical cords that do not work properly, have loose connections, or are frayed

## 4 Bedroom

- If you sleep with the door closed, install a smoke detector in the bedroom
- Turn off electric blankets and other electrical appliances when not in use
- Do not smoke in bed
- If you have security bars on your windows or doors, be sure they have an approved quick-release mechanism so you and your family can get out in the event of a fire

## 5 Bathroom

- Disconnect appliances such as curling irons and hair dryers when done; store in a safe location until cool
- Keep items such as towels away from wall and floor heaters

## 6 Garage

- **Mount a working fire extinguisher in the garage**
- **Have tools such as a shovel, hoe, rake and bucket available for use in a wildfire emergency**
- **Install a solid door with self-closing hinges between living areas and the garage**
- **Dispose of oily rags in approved metal containers**
- **Store all combustibles away from ignition sources such as water heaters**
- **Disconnect electrical tools and appliances when not in use**
- **Allow hot tools such as glue guns and soldering irons to cool before storing**
- **Properly store flammable liquids in approved containers and away from ignition sources such as pilot lights**

## Fire Disaster Preparedness

- **Maintain at least a three-day supply of drinking water, and food that does not require refrigeration and generally does not need cooking.**
- **Maintain a portable radio, flashlight, emergency cooking equipment, portable lanterns and batteries.**
- **Maintain first aid supplies to treat the injured until help arrives.**
- **Keep a list of valuables to take with you in an emergency; if possible, store these valuables together.**
- **Make sure that all family members are ready to protect themselves with STOP, DROP AND ROLL.**
- **For safety, securely attach all water heaters and furniture such as cabinets and bookshelves to walls.**
- **Have a contingency plan to enable family members to contact each other.**
- **Establish a family/friend phone tree.**
- **Designate an emergency meeting place outside your home.**
- **Practice emergency Exit Drills In The House (EDITH) regularly.**
- **Outdoor cooking appliances such as barbecues should never be taken indoors for use as heaters.**



## Creating a DEFENSIBLE SPACE

**Following these simple steps can dramatically increase the chance of your home surviving a wildfire!**



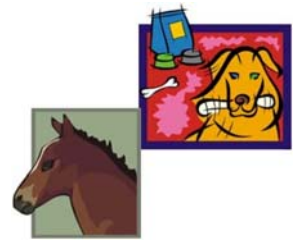
- Trees spread 10 feet to 15 feet apart, lower tree limbs removed.
- Space plants and shrubs to prevent fire from spreading.
- Create a DEFENSIBLE SPACE of 100 feet around your home and all other structures.
- The area closest to your home is the most important. Try to get 10 to 15 feet of spacing, both vertically and horizontally between shrubs, large plants, and trees. If you have 4 foot high brush underneath larger trees with limbs, prune limbs from the base of the tree up the tree at least 14 feet.
- Breaks in the vegetation help to slow down an advancing fire and gives firefighters a fighting chance.
- Plan your landscape to eliminate a continuous path of vegetation.
- Do not have any combustible fuel within three feet of your home.
- For landscaping purposes, use of irrigated fire resistant plants is encouraged. Green lawn, rock, stone, and other materials can be used to create an attractive and fire safe landscape.
- Clear all vegetation and other flammable materials from beneath your deck. Enclose undersides of elevated decks with fire resistant building materials, or with screen mesh with openings no greater than 1/4 inch.
- Keep trees trimmed at least 10 feet from your chimney and trim all dead limbs hanging over your house or garage.
- Clean all needles and leaves from the roof, eaves, and rain gutters.
- Maintain your landscaping with regular watering and weeding to keep it fire safe.

## Be Fire Safe, California!



# WILDLAND FIRE SAFETY

## for Your LIVESTOCK and PETS



Clear defensible space around your barns, put buildings and pastures, just as you do your home.

**PRC**  
**4291 requires clearance around ALL structures on your property.**

- Plan ahead - if your livestock have to be evacuated know where you would take the animals. Contact your local fairgrounds, stockyards, equestrian centers, friends etc. about their policies and ability to take livestock temporarily in an emergency. Have several evacuation routes in mind. If you don't have your own truck and trailer make arrangements with local companies or neighbors before disaster strikes. Make sure your neighbors have your contact numbers and you know their phone numbers for cell phone, work, home, etc.
- Have vaccination and medical records, registration papers and photographs of your animals (proof of ownership is easier to prove if YOU are in the photograph with your animal), and your Disaster Preparedness Kit.



### Disaster Preparedness Kit

- Hay, feed and water for three days
  - Non-nylon leads and halters
  - First Aid items including leg wraps
  - Wire cutters and a sharp knife, hoof pick
  - Shovel
  - Water buckets
  - Plastic trash barrel with a lid
  - Portable radio and extra batteries Flash lights
- If you must leave your animals, leave them in a pre-selected, cleared area. Leave enough hay for 48 to 72 hours. Do not rely on automatic watering systems. Power may be lost. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO START EVACUATING!**
  - During a wildland fire, local animal rescue organizations work with law enforcement and fire departments to rescue as many animals as they can. In battling a wildfire, firefighters will do what they can but they are not responsible for evacuating your livestock. Firefighters may cut fences or open gates to free trapped animals. Your local animal control department may be able to provide additional information regarding local policies and preparedness planning.



## PETS



- Plan ahead. Know where you will take or leave your pets. In case you are not home when disaster strikes, arrange in advance for a neighbor to check on or transport your pets. Make sure your neighbors have your contact numbers (cell phone, work, home, etc.) In the event of evacuation pets may not be allowed inside human emergency shelters. Have a prearranged alternate location to take your animals. Your local animal control may be able to provide additional preparedness information.
- Make sure your pets are always wearing properly fitted collars with personal identification, rabies and license tags.



- Each animal should have their own pet carrier. Birds, rodents and reptiles should be transported in cages. Cover cages with a light sheet or cloth to minimize their fear.
- Store vaccination/medical records, veterinary contact information, proof of ownership, a current photo, and a Disaster Preparedness Kit in one location.

### Disaster Preparedness Kit

Pet carrier for each pet  
Two week supply of food and water  
Non-spill food and water bowls  
Pet First-Aid kit  
Medications and dosing instructions  
Cat litter box and litter  
Plastic bags for waste disposal  
Paper towels  
Disinfectants  
Leashes/collars/harnesses  
Blankets  
Toys and treats  
Newspaper



- If you must leave your pets, bring them indoors **NEVER LEAVE PETS CHAINED OUTDOORS!**
- Use a room with no windows and adequate ventilation, such as a utility room, garage, bathroom, or other area that can be easily cleaned. **DO NOT TIE THEM UP!**
- Leave only dry foods and fresh water in non-spill containers. If possible open a faucet to let water drip into a large container or partially fill a bathtub with water.



**Special Thanks to**



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*In preparing this section of the Family Guide to Disaster  
Response and Preparedness*