

WILDFIRE SURVIVAL GUIDE

Fire season is a year-long affair now. Here's how to prepare and protect yourself, your pets, your home, your belongings and your community.

Your House And Property

- Clear dead plants, grass, weeds and wood piles from at least 30 feet from your house.
- Trim tree branches at least 10 feet from other trees. Do it yourself or hire someone. Also, remove branches that are 6 feet or less from the ground.
- Trim back overhanging trees or shrubs to allow emergency vehicles access to your house.
- If you're living large with a deck attached to your house, clear out any flammable materials underneath, on top or near it. That means plants, wood, old shoes, whatever.
- If you have a garage, put a fire extinguisher, bucket, rake, shovel and hoe in there. If you don't have a garage, keep those items somewhere else easily accessible.
- Cover vents! They can allow embers to enter houses if they're not blocked. You can block them with a 1/8-inch to 1/4-inch metal mesh, which should be available at most hardware stores.
 - If vents are in hard to reach places, like part of the ceiling molding or eaves, you can also get ember-blocking baffles. For more information about fireproofing roofs, vents, etc., look [here](#).

The "Go Bag"

If you receive an [evacuation order](#), leave as early as you can (and if it's a warning you should be ready to leave at a moments notice.) [As LAFD puts it](#), "If you think it's time to leave, don't wait — get out." But what do you take with you?

Here are the basics you need to have, according to [Cal Fire](#). Make sure that each person in your household is prepared to leave in case of emergency and has their own go-bag, too.

- Three-day supply of non-perishable food and three gallons of water per person
- Map marked with at least two evacuation routes
- Prescriptions or special medications
- Change of clothing
- Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses
- An extra set of car keys, credit cards, cash or traveler's checks
- First aid kit
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered radio and extra batteries
- Sanitation supplies
- Copies of important documents (birth certificates, passports, etc.)
- Pet food and water

Put any non-essential items (think: valuables, heirlooms, your 4th grade diary) all together in an easy-to-carry box you can grab on the way out.

Pet Prep

They're part of the household. If you suspect you are going to get an evacuation notice, or know a fire is approaching your property, make sure your pets are in one room near an exit. That way, when you're leaving, you can grab them easily. If you have a pet carrier, you can also put them in it preemptively.

Plan Where To Go

Make sure everyone in your household is clear on a plan if disaster strikes. But it's not just your household you should be talking to. Communicate and plan with your neighbors, too.

- Know your neighbors (use fire season as an excuse to introduce yourself!)
- Help your neighbors put together go bags
- Share your disaster readiness plans, and make sure they also have a way out, especially if they don't have a car
 - Plan any carpooling that needs to take place
 - Keep your gas tank full
- If you can, coordinate to stay with a friend who lives in a far away neighborhood. That way, if you lose cell phone service, you'll still have somewhere to go.

Which brings us to cell phone service. What if you have none?

Make A Communication Plan

- If you know someone out-of-state, choose them to be your "check-in" person. This is someone you'll update with your location and plan, and they should be someone you feel comfortable communicating with
- Text (instead of calling) that out-of-state person with your location and the time. Send the text even if you don't have service. It should eventually get to them
 - Phone calls will fail when cell towers are down for either you or your contact
 - Text messages work on a relay system between emergency beacons on cell towers, so they are more likely to reach people
- When you can, update your social media profiles on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram to let friends and family know your status, including where you are, when you will update your status again, how much battery your phone has, and anyone else you're with

Remember To Drive Safely

Zooming away from a fire might make you feel safer but there are still precautions you should take while driving:

- Drive slowly. With your lights on. Watch out for fleeing livestock, animals and people. Watch for traffic signals that may be out. Approach those intersections as four-way stops.
- Avoid downed power lines or dangling wires. Even if it appears not to be live, don't touch it or even approach it. Call 911 immediately.
- Vehicles offer **no** protection from radiant heat. Stay in the car only as the absolute last resort with the engine running, the windows up and vents closed, and the air conditioner on with the air circulating.