

Be Prepared For Wildfires

Each year, homes are destroyed by wildfires. If you live in or are planning to move to an area where homes are intermixed with woodlands, your home may be in jeopardy, and your life and the lives of your family may be at risk.

Conditions must be just right for a wildfire to start and spread. Firefighters recognize three factors that can influence fire behavior: weather, topography, and fuels. These components affect the likelihood of a wildfire starting, the speed and direction of its spread, the intensity at which it burns, and the ability to control and extinguish it.



Dry, hot, and windy weather increases the likelihood of a major wildfire. These conditions make ignition easier, allow fuels to burn more rapidly, and increase fire intensity.

Topography, or the lay of the land, plays a major part in how fast a wildfire spreads. Steep slopes are the greatest topographical influence on fire behavior. As the steepness of slope increases, fire spreads more quickly. A home at the top of a fuel-covered slope is in greater jeopardy than one on flat ground or at the base of the slope in a wildfire. South and southwest facing slopes usually have more intense fires.

Fuel is required for any fire to burn. Fuels can consist of living vegetation (trees, shrubs, grasses, wildflowers) and dead plant material (dead trees, dried grasses, fallen branches, pine needles). The amount, size, moisture content, arrangement, and other fuel characteristics influence ease of ignition, rate of fire spread, length of flames, and other fire behaviors.

You will give yourself and your family a better chance of escaping harm during a wildfire by following as many of the following precautions as possible.

Before a wildfire strikes:

- Know where your gas, electric, and water main shut-off controls are located.
- Become familiar with your community's disaster-preparedness plans.
- Put together an emergency kit that includes at least a three-day supply of food and water.
- Plan how the neighborhood could work together before, during, and after a wildfire.
- Periodically review your homeowner's insurance policy to ensure that you can rebuild your home.

During a wildfire:

- Park your car in an open space facing the direction of escape.
- Close garage windows and doors.
- Disconnect automatic garage door openers.
- Confine all pets to one room.
- Arrange temporary housing outside the threatened area.
- When advised to do so, evacuate immediately.
- 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 emergency kit. Lock your home.
- Notify family that you have left your home.
- Follow the evacuation route that your local officials identified.

