

PERSONAL LINES

Wildfire Evacuation Preparation and Safety

An Action Checklist for Homeowners & Families



Wildfires can spread rapidly and change direction with little warning, leaving homeowners with limited time to act. Preparing in advance helps reduce confusion, supports faster evacuation, and improves safety for you, your family, and your pets.

This action checklist outlines practical steps homeowners can take to prepare for evacuation, protect their property when time allows, and return home safely after a wildfire. While no plan can eliminate risk, thoughtful preparation can make a meaningful difference during a stressful and fast-moving event.

Evacuation Preparedness Planning for Homeowners & Families

Advance planning is the foundation of wildfire safety. Understanding how alerts are issued in your community and knowing where to go helps reduce delays when evacuation orders are issued.

- Learn local emergency procedures and sign up for community alerts and notifications
- Designate both primary and secondary meeting locations for household members
- Practice evacuation routes and establish a family communication plan
- Assemble emergency supply kits for each household member and keep additional supplies in vehicles

Essential Items

When evacuation is necessary, time and space are limited. Keeping essential items organized in advance helps homeowners focus on safety rather than last-minute decisions. Identifying these items in advance helps prevent delays and reduce the risk of leaving critical belongings behind.

A helpful framework is the “Six P’s,” which prioritizes what to take when time is limited:

1. **People and pets**
2. **Prescriptions**, including medications, vitamins, and eyeglasses
3. **Papers**, such as important documents, phone numbers, and records
4. **Pictures** and irreplaceable personal items
5. **Personal electronics**, including computers, laptops, and external drives
6. **Plastic and cash**, including credit cards, ATM cards, and emergency funds

Emergency kits should be easy to access and ready to grab at a moment’s notice. Preparation reduces decision-making under pressure.

Actions to Take Inside the Home

If authorities have not yet ordered immediate evacuation and conditions permit, certain steps inside the home may help reduce damage and support firefighter visibility.

- Close all windows and doors and leave everything unlocked.
- Remove flammable window shades and curtains; close metal shutters.
- Leave interior and exterior lights on to improve visibility in smoky conditions
- Shut off gas at the meter and turn off pilot lights.
- Turn off air conditioning and heating systems.
- If time and safety permits, gather easily carried valuables to take with you as you leave.
- Grab your Emergency Supply Kit and your “Six P’s”.

Actions to Take Outside the Home

Outdoor preparation focuses on reducing nearby fuel sources and improving access for emergency responders. Small actions can help reduce fire spread, but evacuation should not be delayed to complete outdoor preparation.

If it is safe to do so, take these outdoor actions:

- Bring flammable outdoor items inside or place them in a pool or cleared area
- Turn off propane tanks and disconnect outdoor appliances
- Connect garden hoses and fill water buckets for firefighter use
- Turn off irrigation systems to help preserve water pressure
- Place a ladder where firefighters can quickly access the roof
- Seal attic and ground vents with metal or other noncombustible materials
- Monitor fire conditions closely and evacuate early if you feel threatened
- Back vehicles into the driveway - loaded and ready for departure



Evacuation Planning for Pets and Livestock

Wildfires often force fast evacuations, making early planning vital for your animals. Taking action now keeps your pets and livestock safe and greatly reduces stress during an emergency.

Pet Evacuation Planning

You might not be home when a fire starts, so your evacuation strategy must account for your absence. We recommend taking these crucial steps to protect your pets:

- Ask a trusted neighbor to check on or move your pets if you are away
- Make sure your pets always wear collars with clear identification tags
- Always keep pet carriers easily accessible
- Store your vaccination records, veterinary contacts, proof of ownership, and emergency supplies together in one place

Pack a dedicated pet bag with the following items:

- Carriers and sturdy leashes
- A two-week supply of food and fresh water
- Non-spill bowls, necessary medications, and a basic first aid kit
- Familiar blankets, toys, litter, and sanitation supplies



Livestock Evacuation Planning

Large animals require extra time and resources to move safely. You can protect your livestock by preparing well before conditions deteriorate by taking these steps:

- Clear a defensible space around your barns, pastures, and outbuildings
- Find safe places to take your animals, such as fairgrounds, stockyards, or equestrian centers
- Map out several escape routes and secure your transportation arrangements
- Keep all veterinary records, registration papers, contact information, and animal photos in a single, ready-to-grab folder
- Evacuate your animals as early as possible to avoid blocked roads and panic

Gather these essential items in advance:

- Several days' worth of hay, feed, and water
- Non-nylon halters and heavy-duty leads
- First aid supplies, wire cutters, and a sharp knife
- A battery-powered radio, flashlights, and medical records
- Hoof care tools, leg wraps, shovels, and extra water buckets

A conversation with your Brown & Brown personal insurance advisor can help you review wildfire considerations, assess preparedness, and better understand how your personal insurance program supports recovery after a loss.

Returning Home After a Wildfire

Reentry should only occur after authorities confirm it is safe. Wildfire damage can create hazards that are not immediately visible.

When returning home:

- Contact the local authorities or call 911 if you perceive any danger to your home or family
- Follow instructions from local officials regarding utilities and water use
- Before inspecting your home, first check for the smell of gas. Make sure the power is off until you have completed your inspection.
- Inspect the property carefully before resuming normal activities
- Inspect your roof, attic, interior, and exterior areas for burning sparks or embers.
- Confirm all appliances are off and make sure your meter is not damaged before turning on the main circuit breaker.

Wildfire recovery can take time, and conditions may continue to change even after flames are extinguished. Proceed cautiously when returning home and follow all official guidance to reduce the risk of injury or further damage.

Planning Ahead for Wildfires with Brown & Brown

Wildfire evacuation decisions are often made quickly and under challenging conditions. Homeowners who plan ahead are better positioned to act decisively and prioritize safety. Reviewing evacuation plans, maintaining emergency supplies, and understanding potential wildfire exposure are important steps in protecting what matters most.



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