

READY, SET, GO!

CREATING A PLAN TO PROTECT LIFE AND PROPERTY



Orange City Fire Department

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Preparing for Wildfires in Orange County: A Comprehensive Guide

Wildfires have become a year-round concern in Orange County, necessitating that both firefighters and residents always stay alert against the threat of brush fires. While firefighters undergo rigorous training and make numerous preparations to be ready for a wildfire, residents must also take personal responsibility for safeguarding themselves, their families, and their property against such blazes. As a homeowner, if your property borders a natural area, known as the Wildland Urban Interface, you are at direct risk from wildfire. Additionally, if you live within one mile of a natural area, you reside in the Ember Zone, which is vulnerable to wind driven embers from wildfire. Recent fires in California have resulted in entire neighborhoods being destroyed by embers, not the wildfire itself. This guide will take you through the process of retrofitting your home to make it resistant to wildfires, preparing to evacuate safely, and leaving early. We call this process, "Ready, Set, Go!" It will identify the Ember Zone and provide suggestions on how to protect your home from embers. You will also learn the significance of having defensible space around your home and the steps necessary to leave early, by evacuating before the fire reaches you. While fire is a natural part of the area, wildfires fueled by a buildup of dry vegetation and hot, dry winds can be extremely hazardous and difficult to control.

Many residents have constructed their homes and landscaped without fully comprehending the impact a fire could have on their property. The next wildfire is not a question of if, but when it will occur. Therefore, the most important person safeguarding your life and property is not a firefighter, but you. By planning and preparing in advance, you can greatly enhance your safety and the chances of your property surviving. We hope you find this information helpful as you prepare your home and family for a wildfire.

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WHAT IS WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE?

Wildland urban interface (WUI) is roughly defined as the zone where natural areas meet areas of development. The WUI has gained increased importance as more and more homes are built in rural settings neighboring public lands. Since the development and implementation of the National Fire Plan, there has been a marked increase in reduction of hazardous fuels in the WUI on the edge of federal lands.

FUEL MODIFICATION

The City of Orange enjoys a natural "wildland" environment on the eastern end of the city. This environment affords wonderful views, a feeling of getting away to the country, and plenty of opportunities for recreation. However, the City of Orange, as well as California as a whole, has experienced very real and sobering property losses due to wildland fires. Orange City Fire Department responded aggressively to the Canyon 2 Fire on October 9, 2017. Although two homes in Orange were lost during the firefight, the department contributed several thousand hours to the protection of life and property in the City of Orange during this event.

Fire behavior is dictated by three factors: 1) the lay of the land, 2) weather, and 3) fuel. Southern California experiences some of the fiercest wildland fires in the nation largely due to the chaparral native to the region, and due to the infamous Santa Ana winds. Fortunately, we can tame fire behavior by controlling the fuel in and around our structures. "Fuel modification" is a term used to describe the transition area beginning with natural vegetation types and amounts, and ending with irrigated, fire resistant vegetation.

WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY THREATS TO HOMES DURING A WILDFIRE?

Research around home destruction vs. home survival in wildfires point to embers and small flames as the main way that the majority of homes ignite in wildfires. Embers are burning pieces of airborne wood and/or vegetation that can be carried more than a mile through the wind, they can cause spot fires and ignite homes, debris and other objects.

There are methods for homeowners to prepare their homes to withstand ember attacks and minimize the likelihood of flames or surface fire touching the home or any attachments. Experiments, models and post-fire studies have shown homes ignite due to the condition of the home and everything around it, up to 200' from the foundation. This is called the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ).

WHAT IS DEFENSIBLE SPACE

To safeguard your property from wildfires, it is important to understand the concept of defensible space. This refers to the zone surrounding a structure that must be free of natural vegetation to enable firefighters to defend it efficiently. This clearance acts as a buffer to slow down the spread of a wildfire and reduces the intensity of direct flame and radiant heat from the firefront, providing firefighters with an advantage in protecting the structure.

ZONE 0 – EMBER-RESISTANT ZONE

Extends 5 feet from buildings, structures, decks, etc.

- Use hardscape like gravel, pavers, concrete and other noncombustible mulch materials. No combustible bark or mulch
- Remove all dead and dying weeds, grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches and vegetative debris. Check your roofs, gutters, decks, porches, stairways, etc.
- Remove all branches within 10 feet of any chimney or stovepipe outlet
- Limit combustible items (outdoor furniture, planters, etc.) on top of decks
- Relocate firewood and lumber to Zone 2
- Replace combustible fencing, gates, and arbors attach to the home with noncombustible alternatives.
- Consider relocating garbage, recycling containers, boats, RVs, vehicles and other combustible items outside this zone.

ZONE 1 – LEAN, CLEAN AND GREEN ZONE

Extends from 5 feet to 30 feet from buildings, structures, decks, etc. or to your property line, whichever is closer.

- Remove all dead plants, grass, weeds (vegetation), dead or dry leaves and pine needles.
- Remove branches that hang over your roof and keep dead branches 10 feet away from your chimney.
- Trim trees regularly to keep branches a minimum of 10 feet from other trees.
- Relocate wood piles to Zone 2.
- Remove or prune flammable plants and shrubs near windows.
- Remove vegetation and items that could catch fire from around and under decks, balconies and stairs.
- Create a separation between trees, shrubs and items that could catch fire, such as patio furniture, wood piles, swing sets, etc.

ZONE 2 – REDUCE FUEL ZONE

Extends from 30 feet to 100 feet out from buildings, structures, decks, etc. or to your property line, whichever is closer.

- Cut or mow annual grass down to a maximum height of 4 inches.
- Create horizontal space between shrubs and trees.
- Remove fallen leaves, needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches.
- All exposed wood piles must have a minimum of 10 feet of clearance, down to bare mineral soil, in all directions.

READY, SET, GO!

To prepare your family for a wildfire, it's crucial to establish a Wildfire Action Plan. After securing your home, the following checklists can assist you in creating a personalized plan. As each family's circumstances differ, tailor your plan to suit your specific needs. Remember to practice your plan frequently with your loved ones and store it in a readily accessible location for swift execution.

GET READY.

1. Choose a common location to meet with your family during an emergency and be sure to communicate the plan with everyone.
2. Develop a communication strategy for emergencies, including a plan for large animal evacuation, and practice it regularly.
3. Keep fire extinguishers in a handy location, and make sure everyone knows how to use them.
4. Know the location of your gas, electric, and water shut-off controls, and ensure that everyone knows how to use them.
5. Determine multiple evacuation routes and establish a meeting place outside the fire hazard area.
6. Create an emergency supply kit that contains vital items and follow the American Red Cross's recommendations.
7. Assign an out-of-area friend or relative as a contact person so you can communicate with relocated family members.
8. Keep a list of emergency contact numbers near your phone and in your emergency supply kit.
9. Keep an extra emergency supply kit in your car in case you are unable to reach your home due to a fire.
10. Stay informed about the fire situation by having a portable radio.

Sign up for real-time emergency alerts on www.alertoc.org.



SCAN ME!

PLAN. PREPARE. STAY AWARE.



GET SET.

- 1.Alert your family and neighbors.
- 2.Dress in appropriate clothing (e.g., natural fiber clothing, work boots), and keep goggles and a dry bandana or particle mask nearby.
- 3.Have an emergency supply kit with all necessary items, including a battery-powered radio, spare batteries, emergency contact numbers, and ample drinking water.
- 4.Stay tuned to your TV or local radio station, City of Orange website, social media, or twitter for updates.
- 5.Stay close to your house, drink plenty of water, and keep an eye on your family and pets until you are ready to leave.

INSIDE CHECKLIST

- 1.Shut all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked.
- 2.Remove flammable window shades and lightweight curtains, and close metal shutters.
- 3.Move flammable furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- 4.Leave your lights on so firefighters can see your house under smoky conditions.
- 5.Shut off the air conditioning.

OUTSIDE CHECKLIST

- 1.Gather up flammable items from the exterior of the house and bring them inside (e.g., patio furniture, children's toys, doormats, etc.) or place them in your pool.
- 2.Do not leave sprinklers on or water running, as they can waste critical water pressure.
- 3.Leave exterior lights on.
- 4.Back your car into the driveway, shut doors and roll up windows.
- 5.Have a ladder available.
- 6.Patrol your property and extinguish all small fires until you leave.

GO!

During a wildfire, leaving early provides the best opportunity for your family's safety. Additionally, it helps firefighters by keeping the roads clear of traffic, allowing them to move around more freely and carry out their responsibilities.

WHEN TO LEAVE

Leave early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke, or road congestion. Do not wait for authorities to tell you to leave. In an intense wildfire, they may not have time to knock on every door. If you are told to leave, leave, do not hesitate!

WHERE TO GO

Leave to a predetermined location (it should be a low-risk area, such as a well-prepared neighbor or relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, motel, etc.)

WHAT TO TAKE

Take your emergency supply kit containing your families and pet's necessary items.

EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

- Three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day).
- Non-perishable food for all family members and pets (three-day supply).
- First aid kit.
- Flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys, credit cards, cash, or traveler's check.
- Important family documents and contact numbers.
- Map marked with evacuation routes.
- Prescriptions or special medications
- Family photos and other irreplaceable items
- Easily carried valuables.
- Personal computers (information on hard drives and disks).
- Chargers for cell phones, laptops, etc.
- A recommendation to store a flashlight and shoes in a readily accessible area in case of unforeseen nighttime evacuations.

To prioritize safety during emergencies, identify multiple travel routes ahead of time. This will provide alternatives in case of blocked paths. Choose a route away from the emergency to increase your chances of a safe escape. Know your way out with the fire evacuation plan area map.



SCAN ME!

SAFETY MEASURES FOR PETS AND LIVESTOCK

It is crucial to protect not just humans but also pets and livestock during a wildfire. To increase their chances of survival in emergency situations, identify safe locations and temporary policies of local centers or friends who can provide shelter for them.

LIVESTOCK EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- Identify several evacuation routes in case of an emergency. If you don't have a truck and trailer, make arrangements with local companies or neighbors in advance.
- Keep vaccination/medical records, registration papers, photographs of your animals (proof of ownership), and your Disaster Preparedness Kit ready. Tag your animals with your own ID (e.g. phone number).
- If you must leave your animals behind, choose a pre-selected, cleared area. Leave enough hay for 48 to 72 hours, and don't rely on automatic watering systems, as power may be lost.

PET EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- Make sure your pets are always wearing properly fitted collars with personal identification, rabies and license tags.
- Each animal should have it's 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 owner-ship, a current photo, and a Disaster Preparedness Kit in one location.

Evacuation checklists for household pets and horses.



SCAN ME!



STAYING SAFE DURING A WILDFIRE THREAT

Wildfires are uncontrollable fires that often occur in rural and wildland areas. Human activities and lightning strikes are the leading causes of wildfires. They can cause extensive destruction, including flooding, transportation disruptions, and damage to gas, power, and communication infrastructure. Furthermore, wildfires pose a significant danger to people and their belongings. These fires can happen anytime, anywhere, but the risk of a wildfire increases during periods of drought, low rainfall, and strong winds.

PREPARE NOW

- Know your community's evacuation routes
- Gather emergency supplies
- Keep important documents in a fireproof safe.
- Find an outdoor water source with a hose that can reach any area of your property
- Review insurance coverage to make sure it is enough to replace your property

SURVIVE DURING

- Evacuate. Leave immediately if the authorities tell you to do so.
- If trapped, call 911 and give your location,
- Turn on lights to help people find you.
- Listen to Radio, or local alerting systems for current emergency information.

BE SAFE AFTER

- Listen to the authorities.
- Avoid hot ash, charred trees, smoldering debris, and live embers.
- Send text messages or use social media to reach out to family and friends. Phone systems are often busy following a disaster. Make calls only in emergencies.
- Document property damage with photographs.

Take an active role in your safety.
Visit [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) or scan the code for more information.



SCAN ME!

PLAN AHEAD. PREVENT A DISASTER.

At Orange City Fire, we are committed to ensuring the safety of our residents and visitors. We offer a range of resources and programs to help you stay informed and ready for any situation. Visit our website to learn more about Evacuation Route Information, Ready, Set, GO!, AlertOC, Paramedic Membership program Subscription, and much more.



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Know Your Way 

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STATION LOCATIONS

Headquarters • Station 1

1176 East Chapman Avenue, Orange, California 92866

Station 2

2900 East Collins Avenue, Orange, California 92867

Station 3

1910 North Shaffer Street, Orange, California 92865

Station 4

201 South Esplanade Street, Orange, California 92869

Station 5

1345 West Maple Avenue, Orange, California 92868

Station 6

345 City Drive South, Orange, California 92868

Station 7

8501 East Fort Road, Orange, California 92869

Station 8

5725 East Carver Lane, Orange, California 92867