



SURVIVE THE UNTHINKABLE **if wildfire threatens your home**

Families in some areas of Wyoming can be safe and secure one day and have their lives turned upside down by wildfires the next.

To increase your safety and preparedness, we offer the following.

Ready – Preparing for the fire threat. Be ready, be firewise, and create defensible space. Prepare before the threat of a wildfire so you, other family members, and your house are ready. Assemble emergency supplies and belongings in a safe spot. Make sure everyone living within the home is familiar with the escape plan; set escape routes. Ask your local fire department if your county has a reverse 911 service and

how to join. This service will try to contact your phone number in the event of a major incident in your area.

Set – Situational awareness when a fire starts.

If a wildfire breaks out near your area, pack emergency items in your vehicle. Listen to the latest news from the media and local fire department either by AM/FM radio, local TV, or by talking with authorities on-scene. Prepare domestic animals and livestock for possible evacuation. Livestock trailers should be pre-positioned to capture and transport large animals before the fire arrives. Do not rely on phones or TV as the only means of obtaining information.

Power and phone lines can go down, and cell phone towers can quickly become overloaded in large incidents such as wildfires. Knowing when and how to go is your responsibility.

Go – Leave early! With a plan in place, you are prepared to leave at a moment's notice. Firefighters can take appropriate action without endangering you or your family. Evacuations take a lot of time and effort for authorities to accomplish. You can help by leaving as soon as possible in the event of an evacuation. Do not return home unless given permission by authorities.

STAY INFORMED! LEAVE EARLY!

Before a Wildfire

If you see a wildfire, call 911. Don't assume someone else already has. Have a disaster kit (see page 14) and emergency plan ready.

Well Before the Fire Approaches Your House

- Evacuate pets, the young, and anyone with medical or physical limitations.
- Wear protective clothing made of cotton that covers exposed skin. Do not wear nylon or similar fabrics.
- Clear flammable items from around the house, including woodpiles, lawn furniture, barbecue grills, tarp coverings, etc. Move them at least 30 feet from the area around your home.
- Close and protect openings. Close all doors inside the house to prevent drafts. Open the damper on a fireplace but close the fireplace screen. Close outside attic, eave and basement vents, windows, doors, pet doors, etc. Remove flammable drapes and curtains. Close all shutters, blinds, or heavy non-combustible window coverings to reduce radiant heat.
- Shut off any natural gas, propane, or fuel oil supplies at the source.
- Connect garden hoses and fill any pools, hot tubs, garbage cans, tubs, or other large containers with water. Firefighters may take advantage of these resources if near your home.

- Back your car into the driveway and roll up the windows.
- Disconnect any automatic garage door openers so doors can still be opened by hand if the power fails. Close all garage doors.
- Place valuable papers, mementos, and anything "you can't live without" inside the car, ready for quick departure. Any remaining pets should also be put in the car.

Preparing to Leave

- Turn on outside lights and leave a light on in every room to make the house more visible in heavy smoke.
- Leave doors and windows closed but unlocked. Firefighters may need quick entry into a home to fight fire. The entire area typically will be isolated and patrolled by sheriff's deputies or police after the fire moves on.

During a Wildfire

Survival in a Vehicle

This is dangerous and should only be done in an emergency, but surviving a firestorm is possible if you stay in a car. It is much less dangerous than trying to run from a fire on foot.

- Roll up windows and close air vents. Drive slowly with headlights on. Watch for other vehicles and pedestrians. Do not drive through heavy smoke.

FIREFIGHTING DEPENDENT ON ACCESS AND WATER

During a wildfire, firefighting resources are generally limited, and those fighting the fire have to decide how to best position those resources. Firefighters unable to safely enter and leave properties may not defend structures. Make sure firefighters have the room and water needed to best defend your home if able.

Some items to consider:

- Underground cisterns, aboveground water tanks, or draftable water sources that are accessible by emergency vehicles can help provide firefighters with water. Remember, your well may not pump water fast enough for firefighters to use, and the electricity that powers your water pump may go out. Make sure signs or other markings indicate any water sources firefighters can use.
- Reflectorized fire numbers and street name signs can help firefighters find your property, especially in smoky situations.
- Firefighters need a clearance of 12 feet wide and 14 feet high along any roads to and through the property.
- Firefighters need a 45-foot turnaround area and pullouts large enough for emergency vehicle use to safely enter and leave a property.
- Fire trucks can be very heavy. They may not be able to climb slopes steeper than 10 percent grade when fully loaded.
- Bridge weight limits should be posted. Bridges should be wide enough and strong enough to support a fire truck weighing 18 tons or more (check with your local fire department for their requirements) and built of non-combustible material.
- All roads more than 150 feet in length should have turnouts to allow two vehicles to pass.



Photo: NPS, Kelly Martin

DON'T GET INTO THESE SITUATIONS!

- If you have to stop, park away from the heaviest trees and brush. Turn headlights on and ignition off. Roll up windows and close air vents.
- Get on the floor and cover up with a blanket or coat.
- Stay in the vehicle until the main fire passes. Do not run. The engine may stall and not restart. Air currents may rock the car, and some smoke and sparks may enter the vehicle. Temperature inside will increase, but metal gas tanks and containers rarely explode.

If Caught in the Open

- The best temporary shelter is in a sparse fuel area. Some examples would be a plowed field, large paved or gravel car parking area, or an irrigated lawn or field.
- If a road is nearby, lay face down along the road cut or in the ditch on the uphill side. Cover yourself with anything for protection from the fire's heat.
- If hiking in the back country, seek a depression with sparse fuel. Clear fuel away from the area while the fire is approaching and then lay face down in the depression and cover yourself. Stay down until the fire passes.

After a Wildfire

- When allowed to return, immediately check the roofs of all buildings. If any heat or fire still exists, contact 911 and emergency services first. If safe and possible, extinguish any roof fires, sparks, or embers. Check the attic for hidden burning embers. Keep checking for several days after the fire. See page 16 of this guide for tips on how to keep safe during the aftermath of a wildfire.
- The water in the pool or hot tub and other containers can come in handy now if you need to apply water to embers or heat on or around the house.
- After the fire, maintain a fire watch. Re-check for smoke and sparks throughout the house.

Nick Williams, *fire resource forester and fuels mitigation program manager with Wyoming State Forestry Division, can be reached at 307-777-7586 or at nick.williams@wyo.gov.*

To Learn More:

- <http://www.ready.gov/>
- Information from the International Association of Fire Chiefs program; "Ready, Set, GO!; Your personal Wildland Fire Action Guide." See <http://www.wildlandfirersg.org/>
- Firewise Wyoming at www.firewisewyoming.com/index.html



Creating an emergency plan

- Find out what disasters could occur in your community. Do you live in a flood zone or a wildfire-prone area? Learn what to do in different disasters.
- Your local government and local Red Cross chapter should have details on evacuation routes. Learn the emergency signals and discuss them with your family.
- Determine the best ways to leave your home and the best ways to escape disaster in your neighborhood or town.
- If you cannot meet loved ones at your home, determine a meeting place in the neighborhood. You may also consider looking at evacuation plans outside of the neighborhood or community in case meeting in the vicinity of your home isn't possible.
- Check disaster plans at schools, daycares, work, and places where you and your family tend to spend time in the community. Try to coordinate the evacuation procedures at each place to ensure everyone will be able to reach each other or end up on the same side of town.
- It's not a bad idea to have a Plan A, a Plan B, and a Plan C. Whatever the plans, make sure everyone in the family knows about them and what to do in different scenarios.
- Calling long distance during disasters may be easier since cell phone lines and local telephone networks may be down or overwhelmed. Be sure to have an out-of-town emergency contact.
- After a disaster, services or aid might not arrive for days. You might even have to flee your home or you might not be able to get to your house. In such cases, it will help to have a few things handy. Make a disaster kit for your home and car, along with a portable one.
- Don't forget to think about how to care for pets during an emergency. Many shelters may not allow them inside because of health laws. Make sure to prepare pets for the worst.
- This is a lot to remember. Write down your family's plans and emergency contact numbers and give everyone a copy.

PREPARE EMERGENCY NECESSITIES

If forced to evacuate, you will want to be ready. Have a plan and list of things needed ready well before fire season. Here is a list of commonly considered emergency necessities in wildfire season. Put these items in easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, duffel bags, or plastic crates for easy transport.

Water

Store a minimum of 1 gallon per person per day for drinking and sanitation purposes. You should store a three-day supply. Store water in plastic containers.

Food

Store at least a three-day supply of ready-to-eat, canned food. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation, or cooking, and little or no water. If food must be heated, pack a can of Sterno. Don't forget to store food and water for your pet if you have one!

Other Items

Sleeping bag or blankets for everyone	Computers	Flashlight
Extra car keys, cash, and checks	Portable radio	Extra batteries
Cell phones and chargers	Sanitation supplies	Keys to safety deposit boxes

First Aid Kits

You should have two: one for your home and one for the car. Both should include:

sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes	scissors
assorted sizes of safety pins	tweezers
soap	needles
latex gloves	moist towelettes
sterile gauze pads of various sizes	antiseptic
various sizes of bandages	thermometer

Special Items

- **For babies:** Formula, diapers, bottles, medications
- **For adults:** Medications, denture needs, contact lenses and supplies, extra eyeglasses
- **Entertainment:** Games and books
- **Important family documents:** Keep these in a waterproof, portable container:
 - ♦ Wills, insurance policies, contracts, deeds, stocks and bonds, titles
 - ♦ Passports, social security cards, immunization records, copy of driver's license, copies of health insurance cards
 - ♦ Bank account numbers, loan and investment info, first two pages of last year's tax records, computer usernames and passwords
 - ♦ Credit card account numbers and companies
 - ♦ Inventory (written, photo, video) of household goods, important telephone numbers
 - ♦ Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)

A Few Things To Remember

- ♦ Keep items in airtight plastic bags.
- ♦ Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh.
- ♦ Replace your stored food every six months.
- ♦ Rethink your kit and family needs at least once a year.
- ♦ Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications.
- ♦ It is a good idea to have a safety deposit box in which copies of all valuable items are kept.