

FireWise Evacuation Planning



Planning for an evacuation should occur well before an emergency happens. Because a wildfire is a dynamic event, there will potentially not be much time for homeowners to respond to an evacuation order. It will be important for people to think clearly and act decisively when they are told to evacuate.

Have A Plan

The first step in preparing for an emergency is to have a plan. Determine how you will respond to an evacuation order and make sure everyone in the home is familiar with the plan.

- Establish Escape Routes based on fire behavior
- Have a back-up plan - Know two ways out
- Identify Safety Zones
- Pre-determined family meeting place
- Plan and practice

When To Evacuate

There are a number of ways that citizens will be informed about an emergency in your area. If you receive notice to evacuate, it is important to respond immediately. Waiting, or choosing not to evacuate, when told to leave can put you and your family in danger. Some of the ways that information will be communicated to the public include:

- Local TV and Radio
- Emergency Alert System (EAS)
- Emergency Notification System (ENS)
 - Archuleta
 - <http://www.archuletacounty.org/569/Citizens-Alert>
 - La Plata County
 - http://co.laplata.co.us/government/news/what_s_new/sign_up_for_emergency_notifications_with_code_red/
 - Montezuma
 - <http://www.nixle.com/register/.com>
 - Text your zip code to 888777

- Emergency Personnel

Preparing For Immediate Evacuation

As soon as you are alerted to an emergency in your area, follow these steps and be prepared to leave immediately:

- Back the car into the garage, roll the windows up, and leave the keys in the ignition
- Close garage door and set it for manual operation
- Load important documents, pets, valuables, evacuation kit, prescriptions into the car
- Take only one vehicle - stay together
- No boats or RV's
- Wear long pants, long sleeves, and sturdy shoes made out of natural fibers

During Evacuation

Conditions during an evacuation can be very disconcerting. It is important to stay calm, think clearly, and to avoid panic. Evacuating early and away from the emergency is recommended, however if you can not safely evacuate, follow these guidelines:

- If you become trapped by fire, seek refuge in structure
- If you are trapped in your vehicle, park in clear area, close windows and vents, cover up with a blanket on the floor
- If on foot, find clear area, lay down on the ground, protect airway

Evacuation > Structure > Vehicle > Foot

If You Have Time

If you become aware of a developing emergency, but your area is not yet directly affected, you may have time to take some action to increase your home's survivability.

- Put emergency kit in vehicle
- Back vehicle into driveway fully loaded
- Keep keys on you at all times
- Attach garden hoses to reach around the entire house
- Fill sinks, tubs, buckets, etc.
- Place a ladder against house away from the fire
- Close windows and doors
- Turn lights on
- Move outside furniture to the interior
- Move propane BBQ away from home
- Seal attic and ground vents with pre cut cover

- Check with neighbors to make sure they are preparing to leave

Pets and Livestock

In planning for an evacuation, don't forget to plan for your pets and livestock.

- Plan ahead
- Make sure pets have ID tags or a microchip
- Make arrangements in case you are not at home
- Don't turn animals loose
- Take pet supplies to last at least 72 hours

Emergency Kit - Plan For At Least 72 Hours

Following a disaster, emergency workers may not be able to respond to your needs right away. Officials recommend that families stock enough supplies to last at least three days.

The 72-Hour Emergency Kit should be individually tailored to meet the basic survival needs of your family for three days to a week. Take into consideration any special needs such as infants and elderly, persons with disabilities and pets. It is recommended that you store your emergency supplies in one location that is relatively safe, yet easily accessible and portable if evacuation is required. Rethink your kit and family needs at least once a year and replace items as needed.

For more information on preparing an Emergency Kit, see "FireWise Emergency Preparedness Tips"

For More Information: FireWise – <http://www.southwestcoloradofires.org>
Department of Homeland Security: <http://www.ready.gov/>
American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/>
Colorado Division of Emergency Services: <http://www.dola.state.co.us>
Humane Society of the United States: <http://www.hsus.org>