

# Climate Action Toolkits

## Emergency Preparedness



# Wildfires



The Climate  
Initiative

# Wildfire Basics to Consider

This guide will help you assess what risks are most likely to impact you if you live in an area that is at risk for wildfires. You may be directly and/or indirectly impacted.

For the purposes of this toolkit, we will categorize Directly Impacted as “in the path of the wildfire and needing to evacuate” and categorize Indirectly Impacted as being “affected by a wildfire in the area, but not needing to evacuate.”

Indirectly Impacted (It's affecting the area I live in)	Directly Impacted (I need to evacuate)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Receiving a warning that evacuation may need to be necessary</li><li>• Orange skies</li><li>• Raining ash</li><li>• Smoke blocking out the sun</li><li>• Poor air quality</li><li>• Power outages if electrical infrastructure is impacted. (this is common in the summer)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Receiving a warning that evacuation may need to be necessary</li><li>• Receiving an evacuation notice</li><li>• Finding an evacuation path</li><li>• Finding an evacuation site</li><li>• Needing to pack up essentials to leave your home</li></ul>

You do not need to be in the direct path of a wildfire to feel some of the effects. However, if you are in the direct path of a wildfire, you will experience both the direct and indirect impacts.



# Compounding Issues

Wildfires create a host of other issues that you need to be aware of in the event you are impacted by one.

## Poor Air Quality

Smoke and ash will fill the air. People with respiratory issues will be more sensitive to the poor air quality and should invest in respirators when going outside.



## Power Outages

Even if you are not near a wildfire, wildfires can cause power outages by doing damage directly to power lines or forcing power companies to have to turn off the power for large areas.



## Biodiversity Loss

Did you know that in ecosystems where fire evolved with the land, some plants have evolved with low intensity fire? Pine cones are an example! Some need heat to “pop” open. With high intensity fires, we lose these species as it becomes too hot!



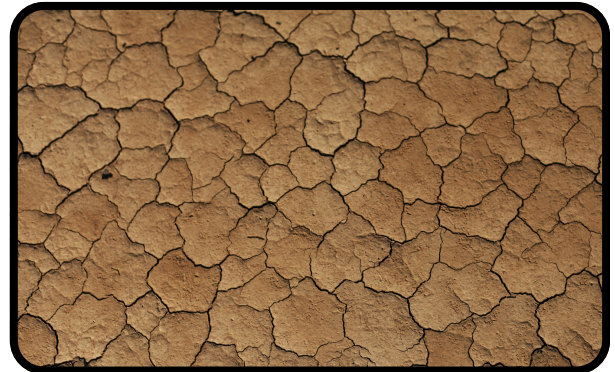


# Long Term Effects

Wildfires create a host of other issues that you need to be aware of in the event you are impacted by one.

## Poor Soil Quality

Wildfires make soil unhealthy. Soil that has been through an intense wildfire develops an almost waxy coating on it, which makes it harder to absorb water and allow plants to grow.



## Landslides

Why does poor soil quality matter? It can lead to landslides later! Fires make soil unhealthy. Unhealthy soil doesn't allow for plants to grow and utilize root stabilization, which then means landslides become a threat to people and animals!



## Ecosystem Damage

Intense wildfires ruin ecosystems, animal habitats and carbon sinks. Repetitive intense wildfires do not allow ecosystems the needed time to recover from such intense loss.





# Emergency Alert Systems

Be aware of the Emergency Alert Systems that are available to you. Emergency Alert Systems often send time sensitive information that update you about developing situations.

In the case of wildfires, Emergency Alert systems can provide information about evacuations, air quality alerts, road closures, and more.

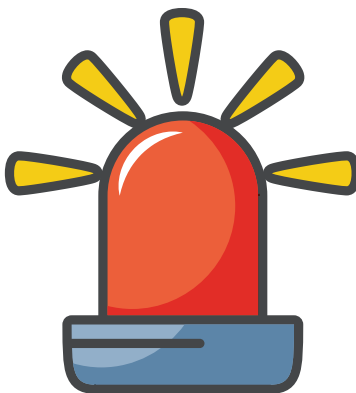
**If you are in the United States, download the American Red Cross "Emergency: Severe Weather App"**

The American Red Cross Emergency Severe Weather App is a free weather app that helps you prepare for winter weather, earthquakes, wildfires, and much more. With a dynamic to-do list, you'll know what actions to take to get ready. And if a disaster impacts your location, you can easily find open Red Cross shelters with their interactive map.

**Available in English + Spanish**



Apple



Android



# Emergency Basics to Consider

If you are evacuating, no matter where you go or what the cause, you should consider bringing the following with you:

- Personal care items like medications, prescriptions, personal hygiene, extra clothes, etc.
- Prepare personal documents like insurance, government documents, and methods of identification.
- Personal information like hand written phone numbers, physical addresses and email addresses in case you do not have access to technology.

## PERSONAL CARE INFORMATION DOCUMENTS

Having these items on hand and centralized will allow you to evacuate more quickly.

If you are evacuating, the location you are evacuating to may already have the following and you may or may not need to bring it with you.

### WATER

It is recommended to have a bare minimum of 1 gallon of water per day per person (and pet) for a minimum of 3 days. Keep in mind that the singular gallon accounts for drinking, cleaning and cooking, and is only the bare minimum recommendation. Additionally, consider having water filters and supplies to boil water on hand to help increase your access to clean water.

### FOOD

It is recommended to have a minimum of 3 days worth of food on hand. Dried goods, dehydrated foods, canned foods and non-perishables have a long shelf life. Consider allergies, special needs, and pets. Have a can opener in your emergency bag. Consider whether you will have access to a kitchen to cook and/or refrigerate food.

### POWER

Will you continue to have power at the location you are evacuating to? Critical infrastructure might be damaged and you could lose electrical power at that location. Back up power like batteries, wind-up electronics or solar powered batteries can help you maintain power when it is lost.

### FIRST AID

First aid supplies are vital to have on hand in the event that you are unable to quickly access medical attention. For your personal safety and those of your household, having an up-to-date first aid kit is highly recommended. The more comprehensive the first aid kit is, the better.

## ALSO CONSIDER: PETS

- Wherever you are going – are you able to bring your pets with you?
- Are pets allowed at all local evacuation shelters?
- If not, are there evacuation shelters that specifically allow pets to be brought?



# SO YOU NEED TO EVACUATE DUE TO A WILDFIRE...

## ASK YOURSELF

- How quickly can you prepare what you need to leave before the fire becomes a more prominent threat?
- Do you know where you can evacuate to? Will you be going to an evacuation center or can you go to a friend or family members house?
- What roads are closed because of the wildfire? Do you have alternative routes?
- Do you have your personal documents readily available?
- Do you have masks to stop yourself from breathing in ash and smoke?
- Do you have anyone in your household that will be particularly sensitive to respiratory issues?
- Do you have animals?

## AHEAD OF TIME

- Make sure you take photographs of everything in your home for insurance purposes.
  - Open cabinets and closets, photograph everything or insurance will not cover it
  - Photograph all technology you will not be taking with you
  - Photograph all valuables you can not take with you
- Create "go bags" for every member of the household (including pets)
- Have cash on hand
- Create a meeting point for everyone to meet at in case you are unable to communicate with one another
- Create digital copies of important documents
- Regularly clear out flammable debris from outside your home



# Preparing a Go Bag? Start by Centralizing What You Already Have

Sourcing items for your kit can feel like a financial burden and it is likely that there will be things that need to be purchased to build your kit up. Luckily, there are a lot of items that you may already own, and there are plenty of items that can be sourced from dollar stores or at affordable prices.

When needing to evacuate, time is of the essence and having these items already centralized can help you evacuate the area sooner and avoid long lines or shortages of supplies.

## Do you have old or extra:

- Large storage bins
- Backpacks
- Notebooks
- Pens/permanent markers/chalk
- Hairbands
- Chapstick
- Personal hygiene products
- Phone chargers
- Batteries
- Matches/lighters
- Umbrellas
- Ponchos
- Duct tape
- Superglue
- Deck of cards
- Can openers
- Whistles
- Baby Wipes
- Menstrual products
- Masks
- Camping gear
- Towels/blankets
- Hand Sanitizer
- Gloves- latex, gardening, dish
- Pet supplies

## Personal Information to Gather/Centralize:

- Keep a notebook and write down:
  - Names, numbers, addresses of anyone you might need to keep in contact with in the event of an emergency
  - Any pertinent medical information including allergies, medical procedures, and lifesaving medications that are relevant to household members
- Physical photographs of household members or other people that you are likely to look for in the event that you get separated in an emergency
- Photograph or scan copies of important personal documents, government documents, and insurance information and put them in a USB, email them to yourself and store physical copies in a special folder so they are readily available.
  - Have multiple ways to access these forms in case you lose access to one.

# Evacuation Routes

It is important to have and know as many ways as possible to evacuate. Depending on the cause of evacuation – wildfires, floods, storms etc. – your “normal routes” might not be available.

## Considerations When Evacuating

- Are you going to a family or friend’s house or an evacuation site?
- How many people are you leaving with?
- Do you have pets or animals?
- Traffic. The longer you wait to leave the worse it will be
- Gassing up/Charging for your car. Will you be possibly waiting in long lines for gas?
- Is there anyone you will need to pick up because they don’t have a car/can not drive?

## Before you leave, check the 5 P’s

- People
  - Who are all the people you need with you, to check in with and meet up with?
- Prescriptions
  - What prescriptions do people in your party need access to?
- Papers
  - What forms of government ID and insurance papers do you need?
- Personal Needs
  - What items do you need to make sure your basic needs are met?
- Precious Items
  - What items do you not want lost? What personal items are important to YOU?

## You should:

- Have a network of people you can check-in with and will check-in with you if you need to evacuate
- Establish meeting locations
- Have as many routes to get to where you are going as possible-traffic will be high, it will be beneficial to avoid as much of it as you can.
- If you know ahead of time that evacuation is possible (you know a wildfire is in the area) you should make sure your car has fuel or is charged up.
- Not wait longer than you have to in order to begin leaving.
- Have everything you need to take prepared once evacuation becomes a possibility.



# Personal Care Networks

According to the CDC, over 61 million Americans have disabilities. For the millions of Americans that have cognitive, physical, medical and sensory disabilities, emergencies are particularly difficult. Luckily, there are resources out there to help individuals with disabilities get the help that they need to prepare beforehand and get help during a disaster. HOWEVER, Personal Care Networks are beneficial to people of all abilities and can be utilized by anyone.

The following tips are per Red Cross, FEMA and the CDC:

- Think about the places where you spend the most time (Home, school, work etc), and make a network of friends, family, co workers neighbors etc that you have spoken to ahead of time, and are people that you can trust to check on you to see if you need assistance.
- The more people in your network, the better in case one person is not there in a time of need, you have others to rely on.
- Make plans for children and adults who have difficulties in chaotic or unfamiliar environments.
- Members of your network should be knowledgeable of your capabilities, needs and be able to provide help in a timely matter.
- If you use adaptive or assistive technologies, create a back up plan with your personal support network in the event that they are lost or destroyed.
- Make sure you are wearing all medical alert tags and bracelets.
- If you have a communication disability, consider 1) carrying a lanyard with a card 2) printed cards 3) storing information on your device to inform first responders any important information they may need right away as well as the best way to communicate with you
- Inform your support network where you have emergency supplies in your home, workspace or car. This may be medical supplies or adaptive tools. Consider giving a trusted person a key to your home
- Contact local emergency management offices to find out if your city or country has a registry for people with disabilities to sign up for in order to receive specialized targeted assistance during a disaster.
- If you are on life sustaining medical treatment, keep notes of more than one facility that would be able to help you
- With trusted members of your network, make sure they have either a physical or electronic copy of any medical information that is important to let medical professionals be aware of
- If you rely on accessible transportation in the event of an evacuation, check with local transit providers + your emergency management agency to ID accessible options
- Keep a physical list of nearest medical facilities, local hospitals and transport, if necessary.
- If you rely on medical equipment in your home that needs electricity, call your power provider ahead of time to put you a list for priority power restoration



# I DO NOT NEED TO EVACUATE, HOW CAN A WILDFIRE IMPACT ME?

There are scenarios in which your home is not in the direct path of a fire but you are still impacted.

- A wildfire can be happening many miles away but the wind is blowing smoke and ash in your direction and create hazardous air quality. Smoke exposure can disproportionately impact:
  - People with respiratory issues
  - People with lung and heart conditions
  - People who work outside such as agricultural workers
  - Outside animals
- A wildfire can destroy critical electrical or internet infrastructure and can cause you to have an outage even if the fire is not near you.
- Electrical companies sometimes turn off access preemptively during wildfire season if they believe that it might start a fire.
- Water quality can be negatively impacted as a result of toxic chemicals falling down after having been blown up into the air
- Flooding and landslides are more likely to happen because wildfires negatively impact the soil and it does not absorb as much water as it previously could.



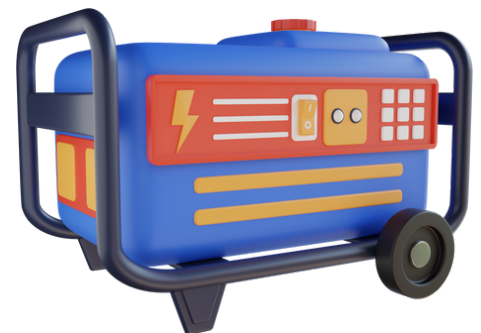
# WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE NOT IN THE PATH OF A WILDFIRE BUT STILL IMPACTED BY IT.

- Wear a mask to protect your lungs from ash, smoke, and other toxins in the air.



- Download an emergency alert system to receive any alerts in case the situation changes

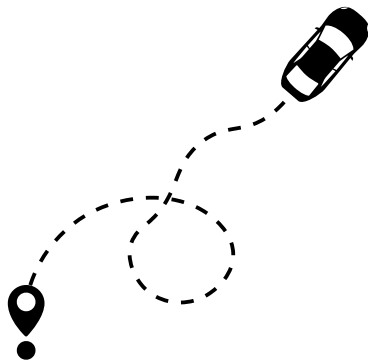
- Similar to folks who invest in generators for hurricane related outages, as wildfires and power outages due to wildfires become more common, look into solar powered generators, and battery packs to keep power in your home



- If you know wild fire season is coming, prepare an emergency go bag and have it on hand and ready to leave. Wildfires can change direction quickly due to wind, and can grow quickly. Be prepared to leave right away

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE NOT IN THE PATH OF A WILDFIRE BUT STILL IMPACTED BY IT.

- Cover your car with a tarp, put it in a garage, or park under a canopy. Ash sitting on a car can become corrosive and ruin your cars paint. If you wash it off with a hose, get all ash off and dry it off as soon as possible because wet ash is particularly harmful to car paint.



- Make sure you have alternative routes to get to where you need to go in the event that a wildfire jumps a freeway that you normally use in your day to day. Wildfires can damage freeways.

- Close all the windows to your home so you do not worsen the indoor air quality of your home. This can be particularly damaging to folks with respiratory issues, those who are pregnant, infants, and animals.

