

WILDFIRES

This page explains what actions to take if you receive a fire weather watch alert from the National Weather Service for your local area and what to do before, during, and after a wildfire.

Know Your Risk

Wildfires can occur anywhere and can destroy homes, businesses, infrastructure, natural resources, and agriculture. For more information, download the [How to Prepare for a Wildfire](#) guide, which provides the basics of wildfires, explains how to protect yourself and your property, and details the steps to take now so that you can act quickly when you, your home, or your business is in danger.

What

A wildfire is an unplanned, unwanted fire burning in a natural area, such as a forest, grassland, or prairie. As building development expands into these areas, homes and businesses may be situated in or near areas susceptible to wildfires. This is called the wildland urban interface.

Wildfires can cause death or injury to people and animals, damage or destroy structures, and disrupt community services including transportation, gas, power, communications, and other services. The impact may cover large areas with extensive burning, embers traveling more than a mile away from the wildfire itself, and smoke causing health issues for people far away from the fire. Wildfires damage watersheds leave areas prone to flooding and mudslides for many years.

Where

Wildfires can occur anywhere in the country. They can start in remote wilderness areas, in national parks, or even in your back yard. Wildfires can start from natural causes, such as lightning, but most are caused by humans, either accidentally—from cigarettes, campfires, or outdoor burning—or intentionally.

When

Wildfires can occur at any time throughout the year, but the potential is always higher during periods with little or no rainfall, which make brush, grass, and trees dry and burn more easily. High winds can also contribute to spreading the fire. Your community may have a designated wildfire season when the risk is particularly high.

Fire Weather Watch

Fire weather watch = dangerous fire weather conditions are possible over the next 12 to 72 hours

Steps to Take:

- Turn on your TV/radio. You'll get the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.
- Know where to go. If you are ordered to evacuate, know the route to take and have plan of where you will go. Check-in with your friends and family.
- Keep your car fueled, in good condition, and stocked with emergency supplies and a change of clothes.

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Before Wildfire Season

Make a Wildfire plan

Know your wildfire risk.

- Familiarize yourself with local emergency plans. Know where to go and how to get there should you need to evacuate.
- Make a wildfire emergency plan (<http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan>) **including an evacuation plan and a communication plan.**
- Many communities have text or email alerting systems for emergency notifications. To find out what alerts are available in your area, search the Internet with your town, city, or county name and the word "alerts."
- Build or restock your emergency preparedness kit (<http://www.ready.gov/kit>), including a flashlight, batteries, cash, and first aid supplies.
- Stay tuned to your phone alerts (<http://www.ready.gov/alerts>), TV, or radio, for weather updates, emergency instructions or evacuation orders.

Prepare Your Home

- Create and maintain an area approximately 30' away from your home that is free of anything that will burn, such as wood piles, dried leaves, newspapers, brush, and other landscaping that can burn. From 30 feet to 100 feet reduce or replace as much of the most flammable vegetation as possible and prune vegetation, create "fuel breaks," such as driveways, gravel walkways, and lawns. Work with neighbors to create spaces up to 200 feet around your homes where vegetation is thinned to remove underbrush and tall trees do not touch each other for continuous canopies.
- Regularly clean the roof and gutters.
- Connect garden hoses long enough to reach any area of the home and fill garbage cans, tubs, or other large containers with water.
- Review your homeowner's insurance policy and also prepare/update a list of your home's contents.

During a Wildfire

- If there is a wildfire in the area, be ready to evacuate on short notice.
- If you see a wildfire and haven't received evacuation orders yet, call 9-1-1. Don't assume that someone else has already called.
- If ordered to evacuate during a wildfire, do it immediately- make sure and tell someone where you are going and when you have arrived.
- If you or someone you are with has been burned, call 9-1-1 or seek help immediately; cool and cover burns to reduce chance of further injury or infection.

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After a Wildfire

Returning Home

- Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
- For several hours after the fire, maintain a "fire watch." Check and re-check for smoke, sparks or hidden embers throughout the house, including the roof and the attic.
- Use caution when entering burned areas as hazards may still exist, including hot spots, which can flare up without warning. Evacuate immediately if you smell smoke

