



Wildfire Safety Tips

The threat of wildland fires here in Western Washington is very real. Dry conditions at various times of the year greatly increase the potential for fires. Please read on for precautions you can take to reduce the risk of fire losses and to protect you and your family from this threat.

If you see a large plume of smoke or fire, call 9-1-1.

Don't assume that someone else has already called. Describe the location, speak slowly and clearly, and answer any questions asked by the dispatcher.

BEFORE a wildfire threatens your area...

Create Safety Zones around Your Home and Structures

- Clear leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches and decks. This prevents embers from igniting your home.
- Remove dead vegetation and other items from under your deck or porch, and within 10 feet of the house.
- Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- Remove flammable materials (firewood stacks, propane tanks) within 30 feet of your home's foundation and outbuildings, including garages and sheds. If it can catch fire, don't let it touch your house, deck or porch.
- Wildfire can spread to tree tops. Prune trees so the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet from the ground.
- Keep your lawn hydrated and maintained. If it is brown, cut it down to reduce fire intensity. Dry grass and shrubs are fuel for fire.
- Don't let debris and lawn cuttings linger. Dispose of these items quickly to reduce fuel for fire.
- Inspect shingles or roof tiles. Replace or repair those that are loose or missing to prevent ember penetration.
- Cover exterior attic vents with metal wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch to prevent sparks from entering the home.
- Enclose under-eave and soffit vents or screens with metal mesh to prevent ember entry.

Create an Emergency Plan

- Sign up for your community's warning system.
- Purchase a NOAA Weather radio to get additional emergency alerts.
- Assemble an emergency supply kit and place it in a safe spot. Remember to include important documents, medications and personal identification.
- Develop an emergency evacuation plan and practice it with everyone in your home.
- Plan two ways out of your neighborhood and designate a meeting place.

In Your Community

- Contact your local planning/zoning office to find out if there are specific local or county ordinances you should be following.
- If you are part of a homeowner association, work with them to identify regulations that incorporate proven preparedness landscaping, home design and building material use.
- Talk to your local fire department about how to prepare, when to evacuate, and the response you and your neighbors can expect in the event of a wildfire.
- Learn how you can make a positive difference in your community.

Know what to do if a wildfire is in the area or DURING a wildfire...

If a Wildfire is in the Area

- Stay aware of the latest news and updates from your local media and fire department.
- Get your family, home and pets prepared to evacuate.
- Consider early evacuation of anyone in your family with medical or physical limitations, consider evacuating them early OR if you have pets or livestock that cannot easily be moved.
- Place your emergency supply kit and other valuables in your vehicle.
- Move patio or deck furniture, cushions, door mats and potted plants in wooden containers either indoors or as far away from the home, shed and garage as possible.
- Close and protect your home's openings, including attic and basement doors and vents, windows, garage doors and pet doors to prevent embers from penetrating your home.
- Connect garden hoses and fill any pools, hot tubs, garbage cans, tubs, or other large containers with water. Firefighters have been known to use the hoses to put out fires on rooftops.
- Leave as early as possible, before you're told to evacuate. Promptly leaving your home and neighborhood clears roads for firefighters to get equipment in place to fight the fire, and helps ensure residents' safety.

If You Are Under a Wildfire Warning

- Evacuate immediately if authorities tell you to do so. Better yet, evacuate early so that you don't add to the congestion.
- If trapped, call 9-1-1 and give you location.
- Listen to local alerting systems or your NOAA Weather Radio for current information and instructions.
- Use an N95 masks to keep harmful particles out of the air you breathe.
- If you are not ordered to evacuate but smoky conditions exist, stay inside in a safe location or go to a community building where smoke levels are lower.

Be Safe AFTER

- Continue to listen to news updates for information about the fire. Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
- Avoid hot ash, charred trees, smoldering debris, and live embers. The ground may contain heat pockets that can burn you or spark another fire. Consider the danger to pets and livestock.
- 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.
- Wear a NIOSH certified-respirator dust mask and wet debris down to minimize breathing dust particles.
- Document property damage with photographs. Conduct an inventory and contact your insurance company for assistance.
- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Wildfires dramatically change landscape and ground conditions, which can lead to increased risk of flooding due to heavy rains, flash flooding and mudflows. Flood risk remains significantly higher until vegetation is restored—up to 5 years after a wildfire. Consider purchasing flood insurance to protect the life you've built and to assure financial protection from future flooding.