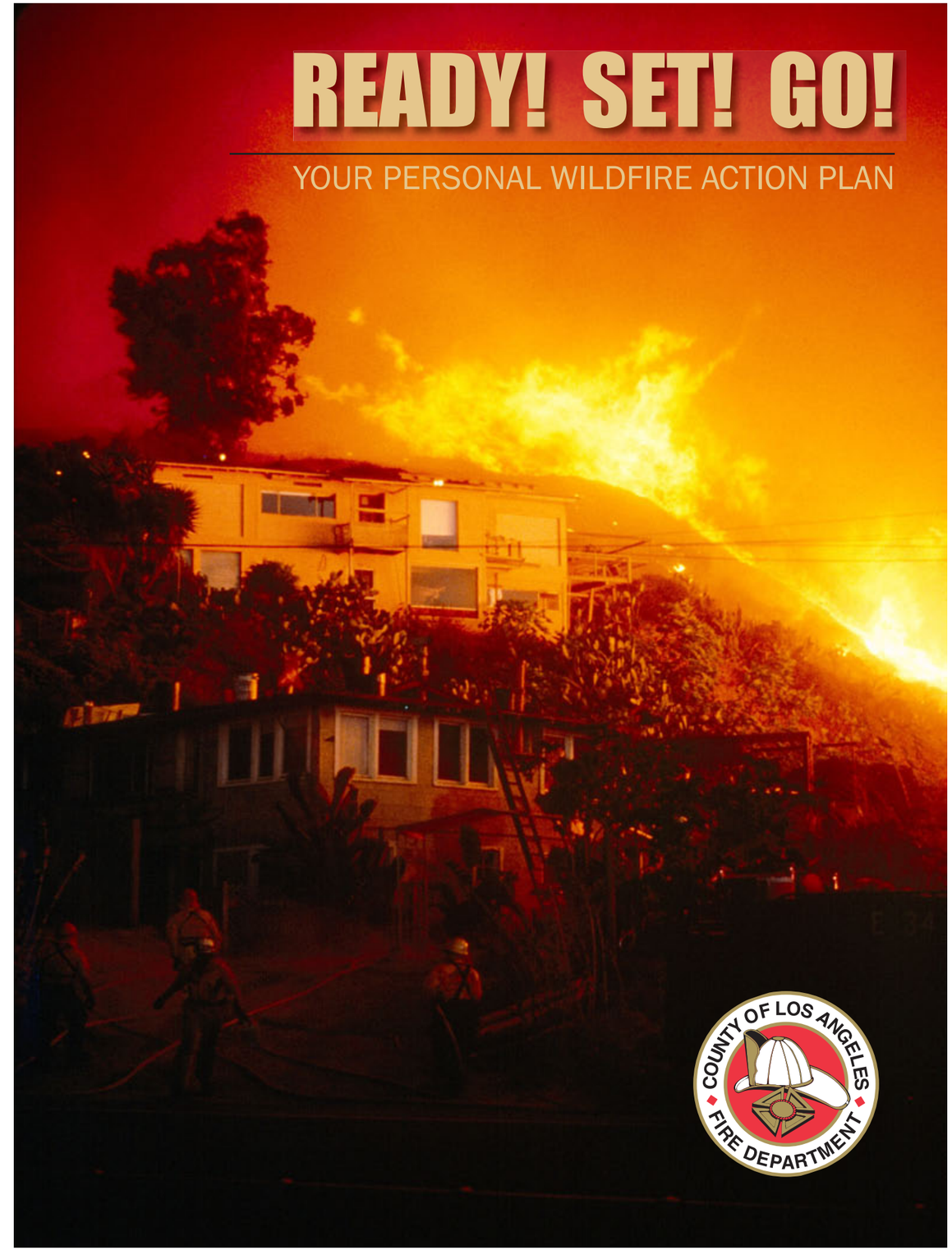
READY! SET! GO!

YOUR PERSONAL WILDFIRE ACTION PLAN



READY! SET! GO!

Wildfire Action Plan

Saving Lives and Property through Advance Planning

Dear Resident,

Los Angeles County is one of the most beautiful places to live, but for those living in what are called "urban interface areas," it does not come without risks. Fire is, and always has been, a natural part of this landscape. Many of us have chosen to live in brush-covered canyons and on hillsides which have historically burned long before homes were built. The fire season is now year-round, requiring firefighters and residents to constantly be on heightened alert for the threat of wildfire.

The Los Angeles County Fire Department takes every precaution to help protect you and your property from wildfire. In the event of a major wildfire, however, firefighting resources will be stretched. This reality requires you to take personal responsibility for protecting yourself, your family, and your property.

We have published this Ready, Set, Go! Personal Wildfire Action Plan to give you the tips and tools to successfully prepare for a wildfire. It will give you guidance on retrofitting your home with fire-resistive features. It will help you create the necessary defensible space around your home. This publication will help you prepare your home, yourself, and your family so that you can leave early, well ahead of a fast-approaching wildfire.

In Los Angeles County, wildfires are often fueled by dry vegetation and driven by hot, dry "Santa Ana" winds, making them extremely dangerous and impossible to control. However, many residents have built their homes and landscaped without fully understanding the impact that a wildfire could have on them. Few have adequately prepared their families for a quick evacuation. Many don't fully know the potential consequences of choosing to ignore an evacuation order until it is too late. We always recommend that you comply with any evacuation orders resulting from wildfire.

It's not a question of "if" but "when" the next major wildfire will occur in Los Angeles County. That's why the most important person in protecting your life and property is not the firefighter, but yourself. Through advance planning and preparation, we can all be ready for the next wildfire. I hope that you find the tips included in this publication helpful in creating heightened situational awareness and a more fire-safe environment for you and your family. For more information, visit our website at www.fire.lacounty.gov, or call our Public Information Office at (323) 881-2411.

Stay safe,

Fire Chief, P. Michael Freeman

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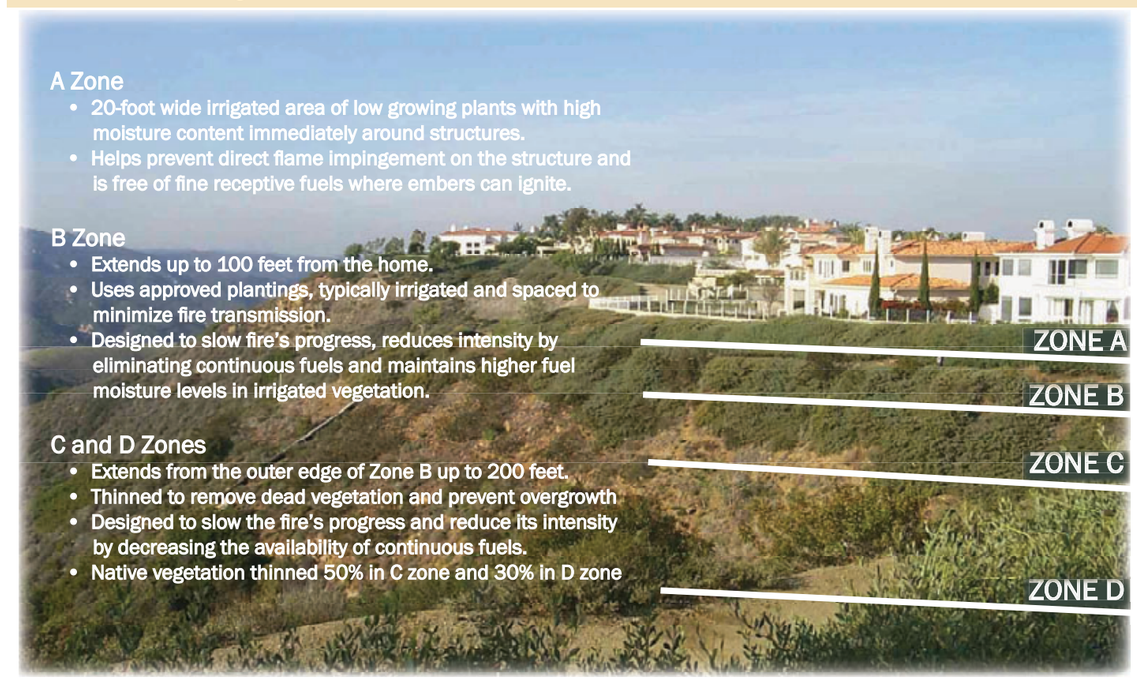
Get READY - Create a Defensible Home

A defensible home is a home that has the greatest potential for surviving a wildfire. Defensible homes are those homes that are in compliance with the County of Los Angeles Brush Clearance requirements or have been through the Fire Department's Fuel Modification Program and have been constructed in accordance with the latest building standards for the fire zones.

What is Fuel Modification ?

The Fuel Modification Program affects new structures and developments built in the high fire hazard areas. A plan is approved by the Fire Department that helps protect homes and neighborhoods by requiring vegetation planted in zones around structures to be selected from an approved list and identifies areas that require brush clearance or thinning.



What is Defensible Space ?

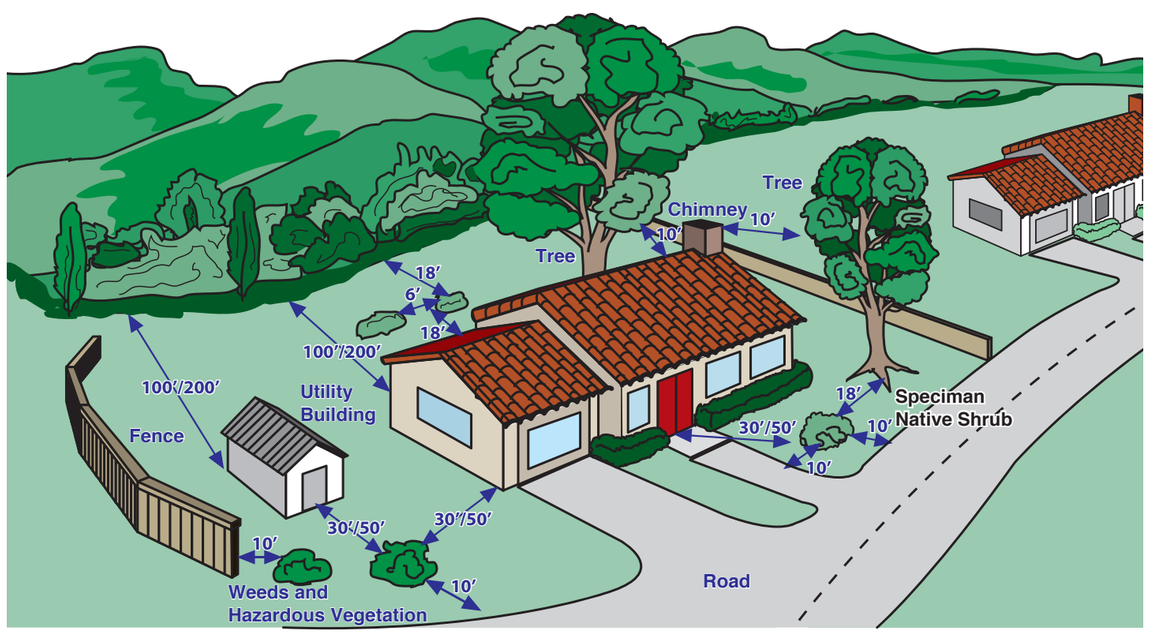
Defensible space is the area around a structure free of flammable plants and objects that creates a zone in which firefighters can operate safely in order to help protect a home during a wildfire. This space is wide enough to prevent direct flame impingement and reduce the amount of radiant heat reaching the structure. The defensible space for each structure varies, depending on the type of vegetation and topography.

ZONE 1
Extends 30 feet out from buildings, structures, decks, etc.

Remove all flammable vegetation or other combustible growth within 30 feet of any structure or within 50 feet of any structure in areas determined to be high hazard. Single trees, ornamental shrubbery or cultivated ground covers may be permitted provided they are maintained in such a manner that they do not readily transmit fire from native vegetation to the structure.

ZONE 2
Thin out and remove additional vegetation an additional 70 feet from the structure, for a total of 100 feet. The inspecting officer may require an additional 100 feet of thinning or removal, for a total of 200 feet due to high fire hazard.

Note: Special attention should be given to the use and maintenance of ornamental plants known or thought to be high hazard plants when used in close proximity to structures. Examples include Acacia, Cedar, Cypress, Eucalyptus, Juniper, Pine, and Pampas grass. These plantings should be properly maintained and not allowed to be in mass plantings that could transmit fire from the native growth to any structure.



What is a “Hardened” Home ?

The ability of your home to survive wildfire depends on its construction materials and the quality of the “defensible space” surrounding it. Embers from a wildfire will find the weak link in your home’s fire protection scheme and gain the upper hand because of a small, overlooked or seemingly inconsequential factor. However, there are measures you can take to safeguard your home from wildfire. While you may not be able to accomplish all of the measures listed below, each will increase your home’s, and possibly your family’s, safety and survival during a wildfire.

ROOFS
A roof is the most vulnerable surface for embers to land, lodge and start a fire; this includes roof valleys, open ends of barrel tiles, and rain gutters.

EAVES
Embers gather under open eaves and ignite exposed wood or other combustible material.

VENTS
Embers enter the attic or other concealed space and ignite combustible materials. Vents in eaves and cornices are particularly vulnerable, as are any unscreened vents.

WALLS
Combustible siding or other combustible or overlapping materials provide a surface and crevice for embers to nestle and ignite.

WINDOWS & DOORS
Embers can enter gaps in doors, including garage doors. Plants or combustible storage near windows can be ignited from embers and generate heat that can break windows and/or melt combustible frames.

BALCONIES & DECKS
Embers collect in or on combustible surfaces or undersides of decks and balconies, ignite the material, and enter the home through walls or windows.

To harden your home even further, consider protecting it homes with a residential fire sprinkler system. In addition to extinguishing a fire started by an ember that enters your home, it also protects you and your family 24/7, year-round, from any fire that may start in your home, not just wildfire.

Tour a Wildfire Ready Home

Home Site and Yard: Ensure that you have at least a 100-foot radius of defensible space (cleared vegetation) around your home. Note that even more clearance may be needed for homes in severe hazard areas. This means looking past what you own to determine the impact a common slope or neighbor's yard will have on your property during a wildfire.

Cut dry weeds and grass before noon when temperatures are cooler to reduce the chance of sparking a fire.

Landscape with fire-resistant plants with high moisture content and are low-growing.

Keep woodpiles, propane tanks and combustible materials away from your home and other structures, such as garages, barns, and sheds.

Ensure that trees are far away from power lines.

See our website for a list of plants and planting criteria.

Inside: Keep working fire extinguishers on hand.

Install smoke alarms on each level of your home and near bedrooms. Test them monthly and change the batteries twice a year.

Address: Make sure your address is clearly visible from the road.

Garage: Have a fire extinguisher and tools such as a shovel, rake, bucket, and hoe available for fire emergencies.

Install a solid door with self-closing hinges between living areas and the garage. Install weather stripping around and under the doors to prevent ember intrusion.

Store all combustibles and flammable liquids away from ignition sources.

Driveways and Access Roads: Driveways should be designed to allow fire and emergency vehicles and equipment to reach your house.

Access roads should have a minimum 10-foot clearance on either side of the traveled section of the roadway and should allow for two-way traffic.

Ensure that all gates open inward and are wide enough to accommodate emergency equipment.

Trim trees and shrubs overhanging the road to a minimum of 13 1/2 feet to allow emergency vehicles to pass.

Non-Combustible Fencing: Make sure to use non-combustible fencing to protect your home during a wildfire.

Roof: Your roof is the most vulnerable part of your home because it can easily catch fire from wind-blown embers. Homes with wood-shake or shingle roofs are at a higher risk of being destroyed during a wildfire than homes with fire-resistant roofs.

Build your roof or re-roof with fire-resistant materials that include composition, metal or tile. Block any spaces between roof decking and covering to prevent ember intrusion.

Clear pine needles, leaves and other debris from your roof and gutters.

Cut any tree branches within ten feet of your roof.

Non-Combustible Boxed In Eaves: Box in eaves with non-combustible materials to prevent accumulation of embers.

Raingutters: Screen or enclose raingutters to prevent accumulation of plant debris.

Vents: Vents on homes are particularly vulnerable to flying embers.

All vent openings should be covered with 1/8-inch or smaller metal mesh. Do not use fiberglass or plastic mesh because they can melt and burn.

Attic vents in eaves or cornices should be baffled or otherwise prevent ember intrusion (mesh is not enough).

Water Supply: Have multiple garden hoses that are long enough to reach any area of your home and other structures on your property.

If you have a pool or well, consider a pump.

Windows: Heat from a wildfire can cause windows to break even before the home ignites. This allows burning embers to enter and start internal fires. Single-paned and large windows are particularly vulnerable.

Install dual-paned with the exterior pane of tempered glass windows to reduce the chance of breakage in a fire.

Limit the size and number of windows in your home that face large areas of vegetation.

Walls: Wood products, such as boards, panels, or shingles are common siding materials. However, they are combustible and not good choices for fire-prone areas.

Build or remodel with fire-resistant building materials, such as brick, cement, masonry, or stucco.

Be sure to extend materials from foundation to roof.

Chimney: Cover your chimney outlet and stovepipe with a non-flammable screen of 1/4-inch wire mesh or smaller to prevent embers from escaping and igniting a fire.

Make sure that your chimney is at least 10 feet away from any tree branches.

Deck/Patio Cover : Use heavy timber or non-flammable construction material for decks and patio covers.

Enclose the underside of balconies and decks with fire-resistant materials to prevent embers from blowing underneath, lodging and starting a fire.

Keep your deck clear of combustible items, such as baskets, dried flower arrangements and other debris.

The decking surface must be ignition resistant if it's within 10 feet of the home.

Create Your Own Wildfire Action Plan

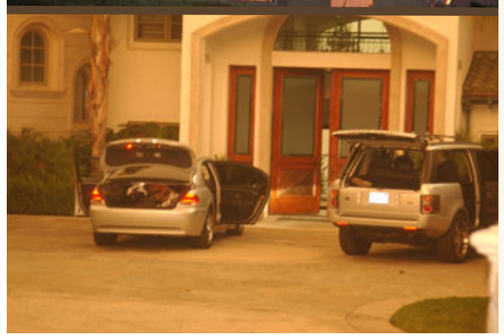
Your Wildfire Action Plan must be prepared with all members of your household well in advance of a fire.

Use these checklists to help you prepare your Wildfire Action Plan.

Each family's plan will be different, depending on their situation.

Once you finish your plan, rehearse it regularly with your family and keep it in a safe and accessible place for quick implementation.

Get SET - Prepare Your Family



- ☐ **Create a Family Disaster Plan that includes** meeting locations and communication plans, and rehearse it regularly. Include in your plan the evacuation of large animals, such as horses.
- ☐ Have fire extinguishers on hand and train your family how to use them.
- ☐ Ensure that your family knows where your gas, electric and water main shut-off controls are and how to use them.
- ☐ Plan several different escape routes.
- ☐ Designate an emergency meeting location outside of the fire hazard area.
- ☐ Assemble an emergency supply kit as recommended by the American Red Cross.
- ☐ Appoint an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact so that you can communicate with family members who have relocated.
- ☐ Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers posted near your phone and in your emergency supply kit.
- ☐ Keep an extra emergency supply kit in your car in case you can't get to your home because of fire.
- ☐ Have a portable radio or scanner so that you can stay updated on the fire.

As the Fire Approaches

- ☐ Alert family and neighbors.
- ☐ Dress in appropriate clothing (i.e., clothing made from natural fibers, such as cotton, and work boots). Have goggles and a dry bandana or particle mask handy.
- ☐ Ensure that you have your brush fire survival kit on hand that includes necessary items, such as a battery-powered radio, spare batteries, emergency contact numbers, and ample drinking water.
- ☐ Stay tuned to your TV or local radio stations for updates, or check the Fire Department website at www.fire.lacounty.gov.
- ☐ Remain close to your house, drink plenty of water and keep an eye on your family and pets if you did not evacuate.

OUTDOOR CHECKLIST

- ☐ Gather up flammable items from the exterior of the house and bring them inside (e.g., patio furniture, children's toys, doormats, etc.) or place them in your pool.
- ☐ Turn off propane tanks.
- ☐ Connect garden hoses to outside taps.
- ☐ Don't leave sprinklers on or water running - they can waste critical water pressure.
- ☐ Leave exterior lights on.
- ☐ Back your car into the garage. Shut doors and roll up windows.
- ☐ Have a ladder available.
- ☐ Patrol your property and extinguish all small fires.
- ☐ Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.

INDOOR CHECKLIST

- ☐ Shut all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked.
- ☐ Remove flammable window shades and curtains and close metal shutters.
- ☐ Remove lightweight curtains.
- ☐ Move flammable furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- ☐ Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights.
- ☐ Leave your lights on so firefighters can see your house under smoky conditions.
- ☐ Shut off the air conditioning.

IF YOU ARE TRAPPED: SURVIVAL TIPS

- ☐ Shelter away from outside walls.
- ☐ Patrol inside your home for spot fires and extinguish them.
- ☐ Wear long sleeves and long pants made of natural fibers such as cotton.
- ☐ Stay hydrated.
- ☐ Ensure you can exit the home if it catches fire (remember if it's hot inside the house it is four to five times hotter outside).
- ☐ After the fire has passed, check your roof and extinguish any fires, sparks or embers.
- ☐ Check inside the attic for hidden embers.
- ☐ Patrol your property and extinguish small fires.
- ☐ If there are fires that you cannot extinguish with a small amount of water or in a short period of time, call 9-1-1.

GO Early

By leaving early, you will give your family the best chance of surviving a wildfire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job.

Make a Kit

- Keep a pair of old shoes and a flashlight handy for a night evacuation.
- Keep the six "P's" ready, in case an immediate evacuation is required:
  - People and pets
  - Papers, phone numbers, and important documents
  - Prescriptions, vitamins, and eyeglasses
  - Pictures and irreplaceable memorabilia
  - Personal computers (information on hard drive and disks)
  - "Plastic" (credit cards, ATM cards) and cash

WHEN TO LEAVE

Leave early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke, or road congestion. Don't wait to be told by authorities to leave. In an intense wildfire, they may not have time to knock on every door. If you are advised to leave, don't hesitate!

WHERE TO GO

Leave to a predetermined location (it should be a low-risk area, such as a well-prepared neighbor or relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, motel, etc.)

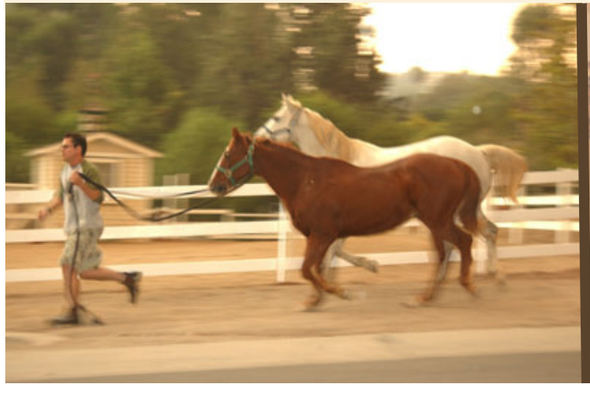
HOW TO GET THERE

Have several travel routes in case one route is blocked by the fire or by emergency vehicles and equipment. Choose an escape route away from the fire.

WHAT TO TAKE

Take your emergency supply kit containing your family and pet's necessary items, such as cash, water, clothing, food, first aid kits, medications, and toys. Also, don't forget valuables, such as your computer, photos, and important documents.

Organize your family members and make arrangements for your pets.



Write up your Wildfire Action Plan and post it in a location where every member of your family can see it. Rehearse it with your family.

My Personal Wildfire Action Plan

During High Fire Danger days in your area, monitor your local media for information on brush fires and be ready to implement your plan. Hot, dry, and windy conditions create the perfect environment for a wildfire.

Important Phone Numbers

Emergency: _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

School: _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

Family: _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

Friends: _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

Animal Shelter: _____
_____

When to go: _____
_____

Where to go: _____
_____

How to get there: _____
_____ Destination: _____

What to take: ☐ Insurance Papers ☐ Photos ☐ Prescriptions ☐ Important Documents
_____

Who to tell (before and after): _____

Los Angeles County Fire Department
If you have an emergency, call **911**
Public Information Office **(323) 881-2411**
Web site: **www.fire.lacounty.gov**