

# READY! SET! GO!

YOUR PERSONAL WILDFIRE ACTION PLAN



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## Wildfire Action Plan

Saving Lives and Property  
through Advance Planning



Dear Resident,

San Bernardino 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 San Bernardino 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 San Bernardino 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 San Bernardino 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.

Stay safe,

Your San Bernardino County Fire Chief

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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 San Bernardino 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.

### A Zone

- 20-foot wide irrigated area of low growing plants with high moisture content immediately around structures.
- Helps prevent direct flame impingement on the structure and is free of fine receptive fuels where embers can ignite.

### B Zone

- Extends up to 100 feet from the home.
- Uses approved plantings, typically irrigated and spaced to minimize fire transmission.
- Designed to slow fire's progress, reduces intensity by eliminating continuous fuels and maintains higher fuel moisture levels in irrigated vegetation.

### C and D Zones

- Extends from the outer edge of Zone B up to 200 feet.
- Thinned to remove dead vegetation and prevent overgrowth
- Designed to slow the fire's progress and reduce its intensity by decreasing the availability of continuous fuels.
- Native vegetation thinned 50% in C zone and 30% in D zone



# What is Defensible Space ?

Defensible space is the required space between a structure and the wildland area that, under normal conditions, creates a sufficient buffer to slow or halt the spread of wildfire to a structure. It protects the home from igniting due to direct flame impingement and radiant heat. Compliance is essential for structure survivability during wildfire conditions.

## ZONE 1

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

- Remove all dead or dying vegetation
- Trim tree canopies regularly to keep their branches a minimum of 10 feet from structures and other trees
- Remove leaf litter (dry leaves / pine needles) from yard, roof, and rain gutters
- Relocate woodpiles or other combustible materials into Zone 2
- Remove combustible material and vegetation from around and under decks
- Remove or prune vegetation near windows
- Remove “ladder fuels” (low-level vegetation that allows the fire to spread from the ground to the tree canopy). Create a separation between low-level vegetation and tree branches. This can be done by reducing the height of low-level vegetation and/or trimming low tree branches.

## ZONE 2

Extends 30 - 100 feet out from buildings, structures, and decks. Reduce the continuity of fuels by removing dead material and removing and/or thinning vegetation. Minimum spacing between vegetation is 3 times the dimension of the plant.

- Remove “ladder fuels”
- Cut or mow annual grass down to a maximum height of 4 inches
- Trim tree canopies regularly to keep their branches a minimum of 10 feet from other trees



# 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.

## **ADDED PROTECTION**

Consider protecting your home 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.

**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.

**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).

**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.

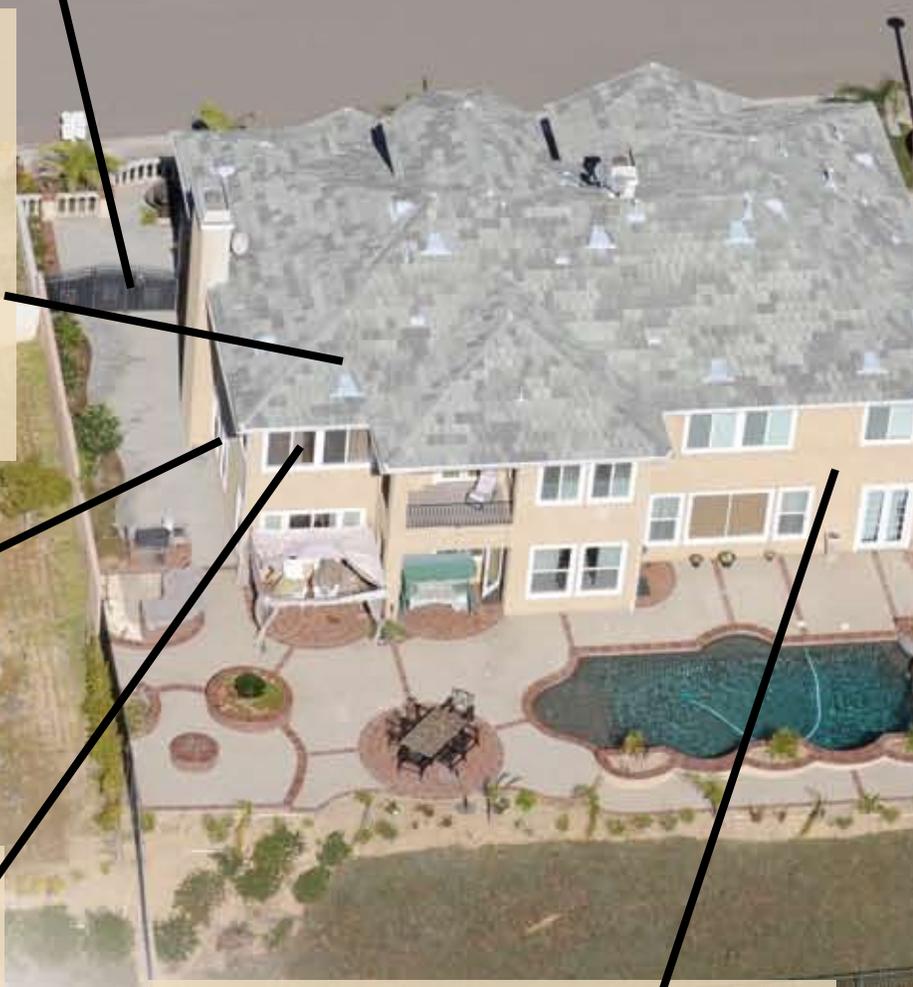
Install dual-paned with the exterior pane of tempered glass windows to reduce the chance of breakage in a fire.

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

**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.

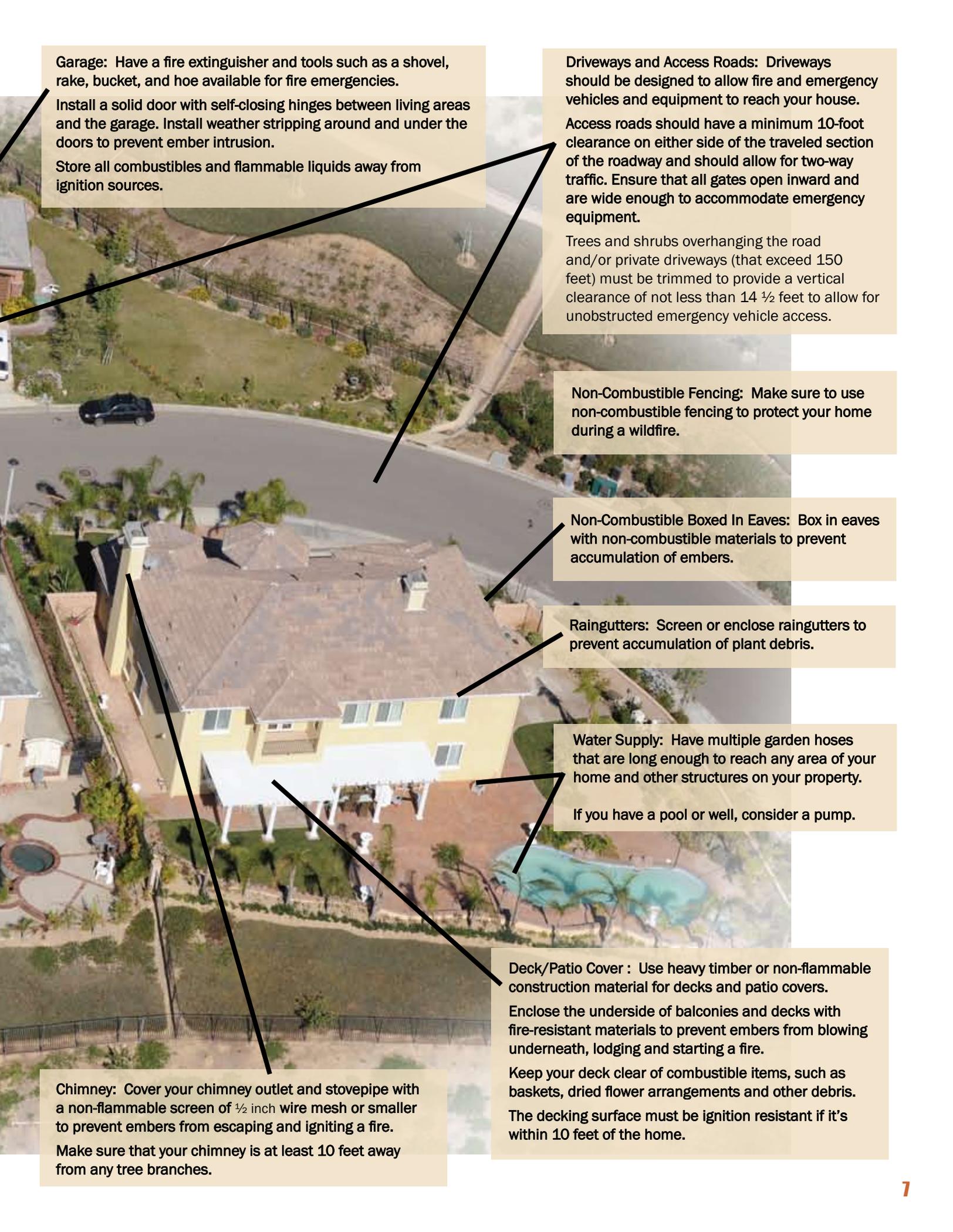
**Address:** Make sure your address is clearly visible from the road.



**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.



**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.

Trees and shrubs overhanging the road and/or private driveways (that exceed 150 feet) must be trimmed to provide a vertical clearance of not less than 14 ½ feet to allow for unobstructed emergency vehicle access.

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

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

**Raingutters:** Screen or enclose rain gutters to prevent accumulation of plant debris.

**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.

**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.

**Chimney:** Cover your chimney outlet and stovepipe with a non-flammable screen of ½ 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.



# 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.sbcfire.org](http://www.sbcfire.org)
- Until you evacuate, remain close to your house, drink plenty of water and keep an eye on your family and pets.

## 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.



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:
  - **P**eople and pets
  - **P**apers, phone numbers, and important documents
  - **P**rescriptions, vitamins, and eyeglasses
  - **P**ictures and irreplaceable memorabilia
  - **P**ersonal computers (information on hard drive and disks)
  - “**P**lastic” (credit cards, ATM cards) and cash

## WHEN TO LEAVE

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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

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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

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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

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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): \_\_\_\_\_



**San Bernardino County Fire Department**  
If you have an emergency, call **911**  
Public Information Office **(909) 387-5950**  
Web site: **www.sbcfire.org**

# Ready! Set! Go!

TO REPORT AN EMERGENCY, CALL

**9-1-1**

San Bernardino County  
Fire Incident Information Line

**(909) 355-8800**

During an emergency tune to your local  
EAS radio broadcast stations listed below  
or a station in your area.

<b>93.3 FM</b>	<b>KBHR</b>	<b>Big Bear Valley</b>
<b>95.1 FM</b>	<b>KFRG</b>	<b>High Desert/Valley</b>
<b>98.9 FM</b>	<b>KHWY</b>	<b>High Desert</b>
<b>102.3 FM</b>	<b>KZXY</b>	<b>Victor Valley</b>
<b>107.7 FM</b>	<b>KCDZ</b>	<b>Yucca Valley/Joshua Tree</b>
<b>1620 AM</b>		<b>CalTrans Information Station</b>



*Photo by Troy Whitman - Southern California Edison*