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WILDFIRES

In October of 2003, Southern California experienced the most devastating wildland fire disaster in California's history. The facts speak for themselves – 739,597 acres burned, 3,731 homes lost and 24 people killed, including one firefighter. At the peak of the fire siege 15,631 firefighters battled to save lives and property from more than a dozen major fires. People who were in the path of the fire were responsible for their own safe evacuation. Southern California is prime for another major fire disaster due to a persistent drought, urban sprawl of communities encroaching into areas of wildland, and millions of acres of vegetation that have not burned in many years. Preparedness is the key to surviving wildland fires.

Following these simple steps may save your life, those of your family, and protect your home from the devastating effects of wildfires.

Your Home

- Follow all local building, fire and hazard abatement codes.
- Install non-flammable screens with mesh 1/2 inch or less on chimneys.
- Keep roofs and rain gutters free of needles, leaves or other debris.
- Enclose the underside of balconies and decks with fire resistant material, such as aluminum decking.
- Enclose all roof eaves with fire resistant material such as aluminum or steel and place metal mesh over all attic or roof vents.
- Inspect and maintain chimneys and screens twice annually.
- Install a smoke detector on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms, and test them monthly.

Your Yard

- Clear the brush away from your home (a minimum of 30 feet - 200 feet).
- Trim all trees and tree branches away from electrical lines and chimneys. (Use a professional to trim near utilities and power lines)
- Remove weak, dead, and leaning trees and bark beetle infested trees.
- Stack firewood at least 30 feet away from your home or other structures.
- Store all combustible or flammable liquids in approved storage containers.
- Locate all propane tanks at least 30 feet from any structure.

Emergency Access

- Ensure your street is clearly marked and posted.
- Ensure your house numbers are clearly visible both day and night from the street.

- Know at least two exit routes from your neighborhood in case of emergency.
- Make sure large emergency vehicles can access your property.

Emergency Water Supply

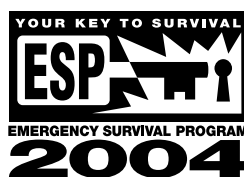
- Maintain an emergency water supply, that meets fire department standards, through one or more of the following:
 - A community water/hydrant system
 - A cooperative (with neighbors) emergency water storage tank
- Clearly mark all emergency water sources and maintain easy fire department access to them.
- If you are relying on water from a well, install an emergency generator to operate the pump in case the power fails during a fire or other emergency.

Plan for Evacuation

- Develop and practice a home evacuation plan. Your plan should include:
 - A floor plan with all escape routes
 - Easily accessible exits for young children, seniors and persons with disabilities. (Locate their rooms as close to exits as possible)
 - A list of valuables to take in an emergency. (Store them together in one location, if possible.)
 - Identify the most important papers to take if you have to leave, such as insurance policies, medical records, and driver's license
 - Take medications and eyeglasses
 - A place to reunite after evacuation
 - The location of animal shelters or other sites that house pets
 - Practice drills
- Work with neighbors to assist:
 - People with special needs
 - People who need transportation to other sites
- Work with local emergency officials to identify:
 - Several routes out of your neighborhood
 - Likely evacuation sites or safe refuge areas

When Wildfire Approaches

- Listen to the radio or watch television for instructions.
- Evacuate as soon as directed by public safety officials or when danger is perceived.
- Park your vehicles facing the direction of escape with windows rolled up.
- Place your disaster kit and evacuation kit along with valuables and other essentials in your vehicle.
- Secure pets and livestock and prepare them for evacuation.
- Leave your electricity on and leave inside lights on.
- If time permits, cover up by wearing long pants, a long sleeved shirt, goggles, cap, and bandanna. 100% cotton is preferable.
- Close doors behind you when evacuating to slow down the flames, smoke, and heat.
- Help young children, seniors, and persons with disabilities to evacuate safely.



This focus sheet is produced as part of the Emergency Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an awareness campaign designed to increase home, neighborhood, business and school emergency preparedness. ESP was developed by the County of Los Angeles. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and representatives from Contra Costa, Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Ventura counties, Southern California Edison, the Southern California Earthquake Center and the American Red Cross assist in the development of campaign materials and coordination of the campaign.