# READY! SET! GO!

## YOUR PERSONAL WILDFIRE ACTION PLAN

fire.lacounty.gov

# MESSAGE FROM FIRE CHIEF ANTHONY C. MARRONE

Dear Residents,

Los Angeles County is one of the most beautiful places to live, but for those living in "wildland urban interface areas," it does not come without risks. With a year-round fire season and ever-growing number of wildfires, firefighters and residents alike are now constantly on heightened alert for the threat of wildfires.

The County of Los Angeles Fire Department, along with our partnering agencies, stand ready to quickly respond to contain wildfires, utilizing our firefighting resources from the air and ground to help protect you and your property from wildfire.

But, we can't do this without your cooperation. Preparation and prevention go hand-in-hand. This *Ready! Set! Go!* brochure was designed to provide you with critical information on creating defensible space around your home, retrofitting your home with fire-resistant materials, and preparing you to safely evacuate well ahead of a wildfire. Please protect yourself, your family, and your property from a devastating wildfire by taking the time to learn about *Ready! Set! Go!*

In Los Angeles County, wildfires will continue to be fueled by a build-up of seasonal dry vegetation and driven by dry conditions and locally strong winds, making them extremely dangerous and challenging for firefighters to control. Yet, many homeowners don't consider how a wildfire could affect them, and very few residents have properly prepared for evacuation until it is too late.

You play the most important role in protecting yourself, family, and property. Through planning and preparation, we can all be ready for the next wildfire. I hope you find the information in this brochure helpful as you prepare your home and family for a wildfire.

As always, if you need additional information about preparing for a wildfire or any other natural disaster, please contact your nearest fire station or visit us at fire.lacounty.gov.

**Anthony C. Marrone**
*Los Angeles County Fire Chief*

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**Preparing for a wildfire starts with three simple steps:**

READY! SET! GO!

Please keep this plan on hand as a quick reference for helping your family and property be safe in the event of a wildfire.

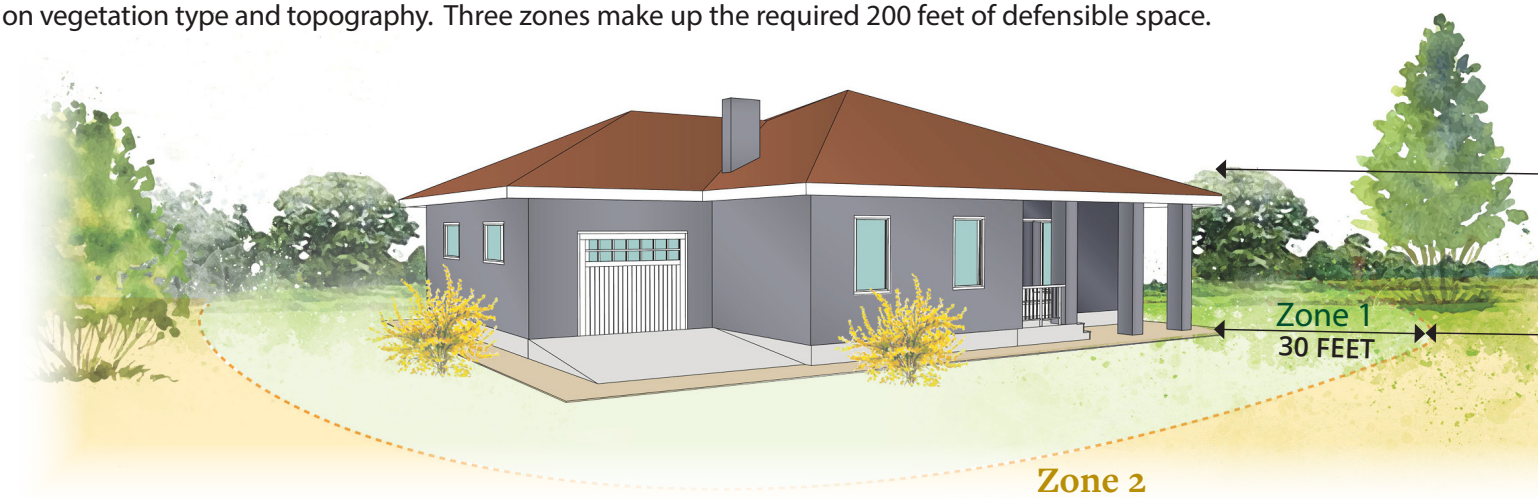
# READY!

## Living in the Wildland Urban Interface

Ready! Set! Go! begins with a house that firefighters can defend.

## Defensible Space

Creating and maintaining defensible space is essential for increasing your home's chance of surviving a wildfire. It's the buffer homeowners are required to create between their structure and the native landscape. This space slows the spread of wildfire and improves the safety of firefighters defending your home. Defensible space composition varies, depending on vegetation type and topography. Three zones make up the required 200 feet of defensible space.




### Zone 1

**Extends 30 feet out from the structure**

- Remove all dead or dying vegetation.
- Remove dead or dry leaves and pine needles from your yard, roof, and rain gutters.
- Trim trees regularly to keep branches a minimum of 10 feet from other trees.
- Remove dead branches hanging over your roof. And, keep branches 10 feet away from your chimney.
- Relocate exposed woodpiles outside of Zone 1 unless they are completely contained in a fire-resistant enclosure.
- Remove vines and climbing plants from combustible structures (e.g., bougainvillea, wisteria).
- Remove or prune vegetation near windows (you should be able to see out the windows).
- Remove vegetation and items around and under decks that could catch fire.
- Create separations between trees, shrubs, and items that could catch fire, such as patio furniture, swing sets, etc.
- Irrigation is recommended to maintain vegetation moisture content.

### Zone 2

**Extends from the outer edge of Zone 1 to 100 feet from the structure**

- Cut or mow annual grass down to a maximum height of three inches.
- Create vertical and horizontal spacing between trees and shrubs (the distance between trees should be three times the height).
- Remove fallen leaves, needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches. However, a mulch layer may be permitted to a depth of four inches, if erosion control is an issue.
- Irrigation is recommended to maintain vegetation moisture content.

Acacia (Shrub) Eucalyptus Juniper Palm

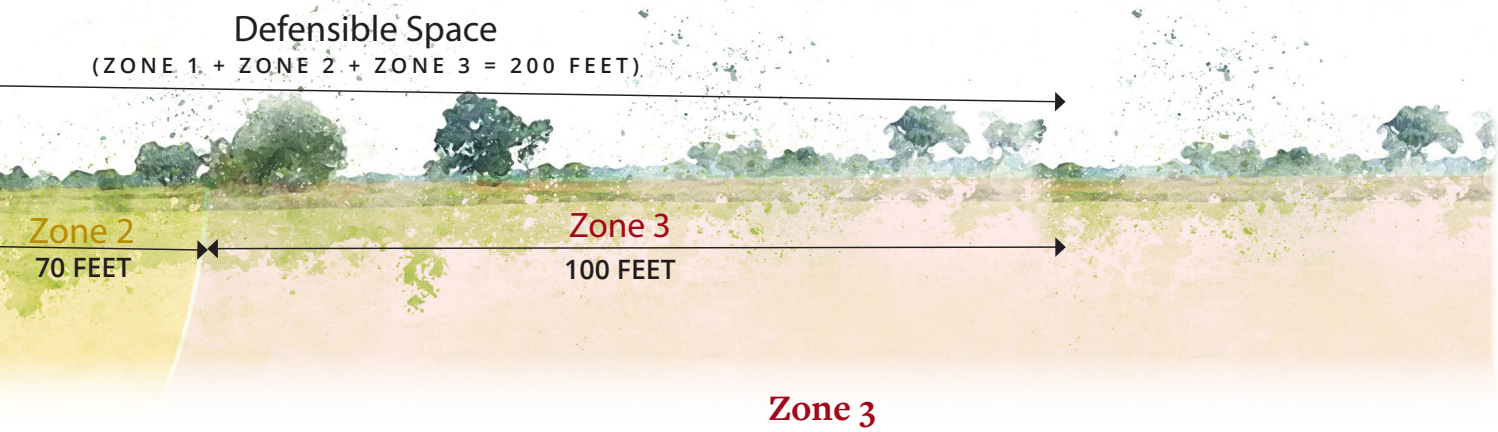
# READY!

## HAZARDOUS

### ORNAMENTAL LANDSCAPE

Preventing conditions where fire can travel from adjacent fuels, through an ornamental landscape to your structure, is the key to creating defensible space. Fire spreads through convection, conduction, radiation, or embers. Proper maintenance of ornamental vegetation reduces ember production, fire propagation, intensity, and duration of the approaching flames.

This home provides a good example of defensible space.




## Zone 3

**Extends from the outer edge of Zone 2 to 200 feet from the structure**

Zone 3 consists of mostly native plants appropriately thinned and spaced by 30 to 50 percent. The objective is to reduce vegetation density and overall fuel load. This slows the rate of fire spread, reducing flame lengths and fire intensity before it reaches irrigated zones or structures.

- Irrigation systems are not required.
- Vegetation consists of modified existing native vegetation.
- Additional ornamental shrubs and trees are generally not recommended due to water conservation goals.
- Existing native vegetation is modified by thinning and removing plants constituting a high fire risk, including, but not limited to, laurel sumac, chamise, ceanothus, sage, sage brush, buckwheat, and California juniper.
- Remove the lower ⅓ of large shrubs and all dead wood to reduce fuel loads.
- Trees should be limbed up to at least six feet above grade and a minimum of three times the height of underlying plants.
- As the distance from structures increases, native plants may be removed in reduced amounts.
- Spacing for large native shrubs or groups of native shrubs is 15 feet between the edge of their canopies.
- Spacing for existing native trees or small groups of trees is 30 feet between the edge of canopies. This depends on the species, topography, and orientation on the site.

### HIGH-HAZARD PLANTS

Pine

Pampas Grass

**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, Italian cypress, juniper, palms (remove all dead fronds), pine (removal within 30 feet of structures), 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.

# READY!

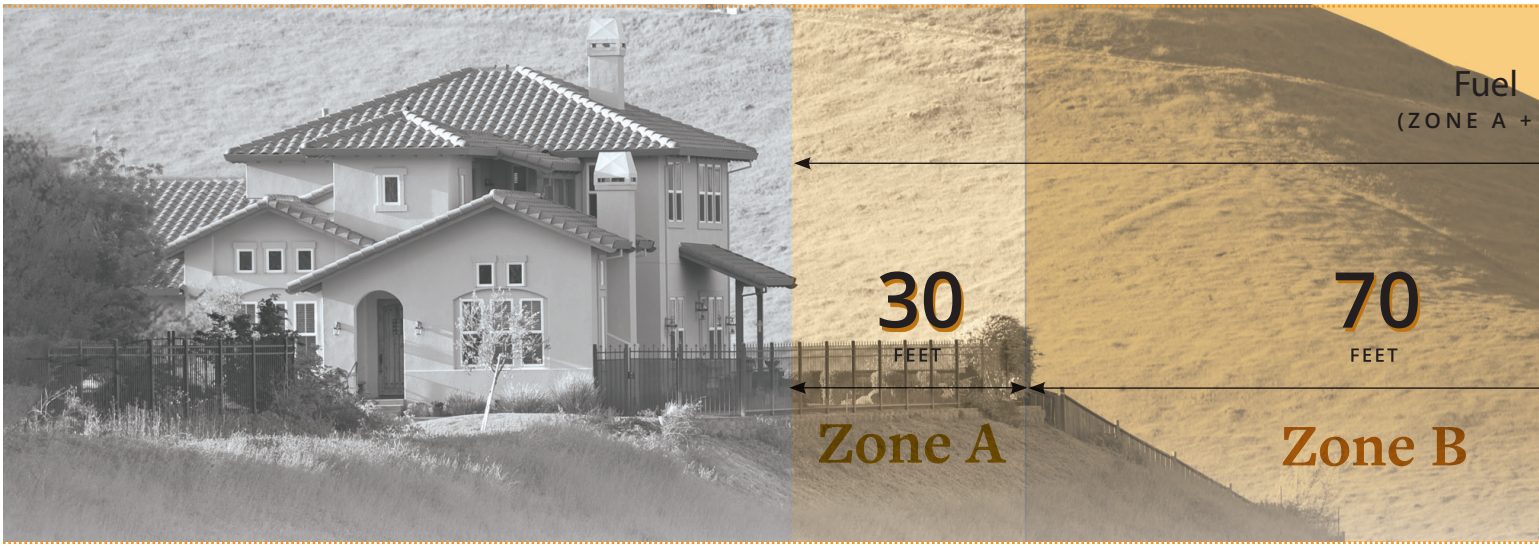
## Fuel Modification

## What Is Fuel Modification?

The Fuel Modification Plan Review Program affects new structures and developments built in fire hazard severity zones. A Fuel Modification Plan (or landscape plan) identifies defensible space zones and restricts or limits planting around structures.

**For further information, please visit** bit.ly/fuelmod or call (626) 969-5205.

## *Fuel Modification Zones*




### Zone A

**EXTENDS 30 FEET FROM THE STRUCTURE**

*Ideal Fuel Modification Landscape:*

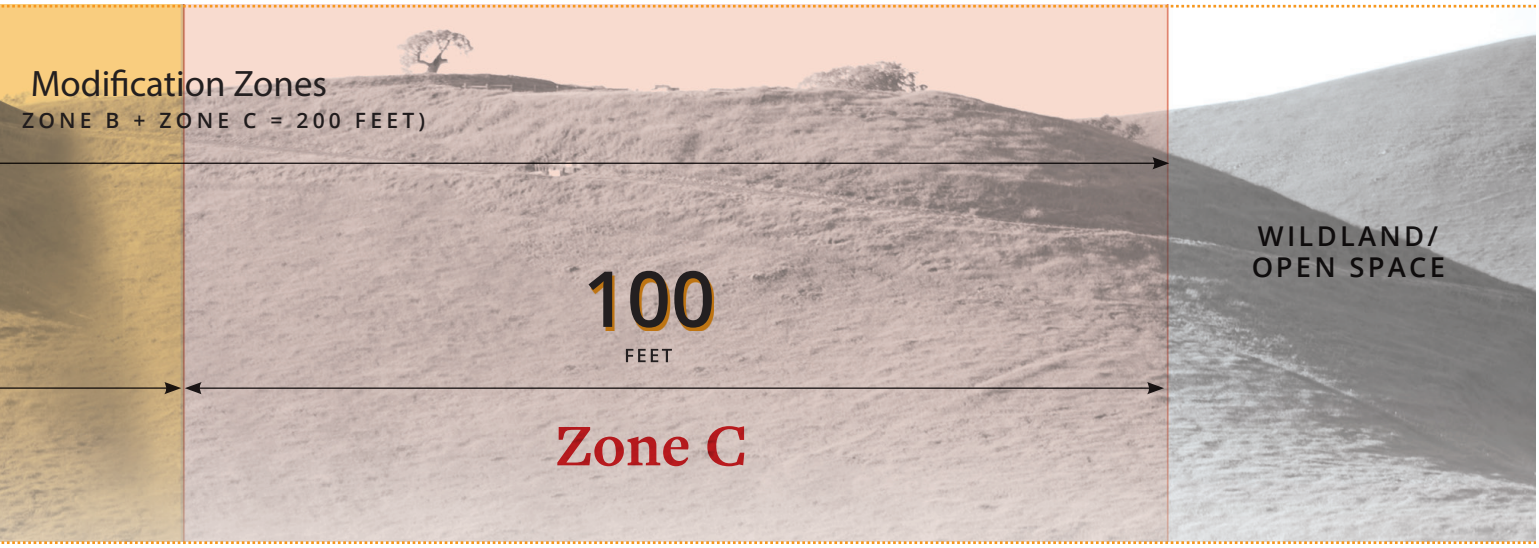
Limited woody plant material, high moisture content, adequate spacing, and inorganic mulch throughout Zone A.

- Irrigated area consisting of low-growing, small herbaceous plants with high-moisture content immediately around structures.
- Hedges shall not be within five feet of any structures.
- Occasional accents of woody shrubs or small patio trees 10 feet from structures. Single plants and/or groups of plants are widely spaced (the distance between plants is three times the height).
- Cut annual grasses to three inches and remove leaf litter.
- Vines and climbing plants are not allowed on combustible structures.
- Use rock or non-combustible mulch within five feet of structures.

# READY!

## Create a Defensible Home

A home with defensible space has the greatest potential of surviving a wildfire. Defensible homes are compliant with the Los Angeles County Fire Department's brush clearance requirements. Homes built after January 1, 1996, have been through the Fire Department's Fuel Modification Program, where strict planting requirements and construction standards improve fire safety in the high and very high fire hazard severity zones.




### Zone B

**EXTENDS FROM THE OUTER EDGE OF ZONE A TO 100 FEET FROM THE STRUCTURE**

- Irrigated with slightly denser planting than Zone A. Avoid woody plants larger than three feet in height at maturity under tree canopies.
- Has zone-appropriate shade trees with adequate spacing.
- Minimize continuous canopy coverage to reduce fire transmission.
- Screening plants may be used; however, continuous hedges are discouraged as this promotes accumulation of dead litter inside the live hedge and creates a continuous fuel ladder to the structure.

### Zone C

**EXTENDS FROM THE OUTER EDGE OF ZONE B TO 200 FEET FROM THE STRUCTURE**

- Thin to remove dead vegetation and prevent overgrowth.
- Thin native species to slow the fire's progress and reduce its intensity by decreasing availability of continuous fuels.
- Native vegetation is thinned 30 to 50 percent in Zone C.

# READY!

## Safeguard or "Harden" Your Home

The ability of your home to survive a wildfire depends on the materials your home is constructed of and the quality of the "defensible space" surrounding it. Windblown 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.

## *Tour a Wildfire-Ready Home*

### Address 1

- Make sure your address is clearly visible from the road. The address needs to be a contrasting color to the surface that it is mounted on, so it can be seen.

### Chimney 2

- Cover your chimney and stovepipe outlets with a non-flammable screen of ⅛-inch wire mesh or smaller to prevent embers from escaping and igniting a fire.
- Tree branches must be removed within 10 feet of any chimney (exception: oak trees).

### Deck/Patio Cover 3

- Use heavy timber or non-flammable construction material for decks and patio covers, especially within the first 10 feet of the home.
- Enclose the underside of balconies and decks with fire-resistant materials to prevent embers from blowing underneath.
- Keep your deck clear of combustible items, such as baskets, dried flower arrangements, and other debris.

### Driveways and Access Roads 4

- Driveways should be designed to allow fire and emergency vehicles and equipment to reach your home (current fire code requirement is 15 feet wide).
- 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.
- Locked or electric gates should have a disconnect or a lock box.
- Ensure that all gates open inward and are wide enough to accommodate emergency equipment.
- Trim trees and shrubs above all roads clear to the sky, with the exception of Oak trees which only need to be cleared to a height of 13½ (or 13.5) feet.

### Garage 5

- 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.
- Keep the garage closed whenever possible.

### Home Site and Yard 6

- Ensure you have up to a 200-foot radius of defensible space (cleared vegetation) around your home. If the 200-foot distance is on adjacent property, contact your local fire station for assistance in obtaining adequate clearance.
- Cut dry weeds and grass before noon when temperatures are cooler to reduce the chance of sparking a fire when using metal tools.
- Landscape with fire-resistant plants that are low-growing with high-moisture content.
- Keep woodpiles, propane tanks, and combustible materials away from your home and other structures, such as garages, barns, and sheds (recommended 30 feet).
- Ensure trees and branches are at least four feet away from power lines. Notify your power company if this condition exists; they will complete required work.

# READY!

## Inside

- Keep a working fire extinguisher on hand and train your family how to use it. Store in an easily accessible location (check expiration date regularly).

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

## Non-Combustible Boxed-In (Soffit) Eaves

- Box-in eaves with non-combustible materials to prevent accumulation of embers.

## Non-Combustible Fencing 7

- Make sure to use non-combustible fencing to protect your home during a wildfire.

## Rain Gutters

- Screen or enclose rain gutters to prevent accumulation of plant debris.

## Roof 8

- Your roof is the most vulnerable part of your home because it can easily catch fire from windblown embers.
- Homes with wood shake or shingle roofs are at a higher risk of being destroyed during a wildfire.
- 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 10 feet of your roof.

## Vents

- Vents on homes are particularly vulnerable to flying embers.
- All vent openings should be covered with ⅛-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 to prevent ember intrusion (mesh is not enough).

## Walls 9

- 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.

## Water Supply 10

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

## Windows 11

- 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 windows with an exterior pane of tempered glass 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.

## Utilities

- Ensure that your family knows where your gas, electric, and water main shut-off controls are and how to safely shut them down in an emergency.

# ☑ SET!

## Create Your Own Wildfire Action Plan

Now that you have done everything you can to protect your home, it's time to prepare your family. **Your Wildfire Action Plan must be prepared with all members of your household well in advance of a wildfire.** Each family's plan will be different, depending on their situation. Once you finish your plan, practice it regularly with your family, and post it in a safe and accessible place for quick implementation.

### 1 Important Phone Numbers

- ☐ A family communication plan that designates an out-of-area friend or relative as a point-of-contact to act as a single source of communication among family members in case of separation.
- ☐ Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers posted near your phone and in your Emergency Supply Kit (see page 12 in this guide).

### 2 What to Take

- ☐ Assemble an Emergency Supply Kit (see page 12 in this guide).
- ☐ 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.

### 3 Prepare to Evacuate

- ☐ Designate an emergency meeting location, outside the fire or hazard area. It is critical to determine who has safely evacuated from the affected area.
- ☐ Have several different travel routes from your home and community identified. Practice these often, so everyone in your family is familiar in case of emergency.
- ☐ Have all of the necessary supplies and/or boarding options for your pets and large animals identified and/or packed. If trailers are necessary for larger animals, have a plan that is tested and ready to implement.

# *Your Personal* WILDFIRE ACTION PLAN

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

## 1 IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

### EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Name

( )

Phone

Name

( )

Phone

### SCHOOLS

Name

( )

Phone

Name

( )

Phone

### FAMILY & FRIENDS

Name

( )

Phone

Name

( )

Phone

## 2 WHAT TO TAKE

- ◯ Insurance Papers
- ◯ Photos
- ◯ Emergency Supply Kit
- ◯ Prescriptions
- ◯ Important Documents
- ◯ _____

## 3 EVACUATION

### WHEN TO GO

### WHERE TO GO

### HOW TO GET THERE

### DESTINATION

### WHO TO TELL (BEFORE AND AFTER)

### ANIMAL SHELTER

Name

( )

Phone

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**IF YOU HAVE AN EMERGENCY, CALL 9-1-1**

**Public Information Office:** (323) 881-2411
**fire.lacounty.gov**

# ☑ SET!

## Assemble Your Emergency Supply Kit

Put together your emergency supply kit long before a wildfire or other disaster occurs, and keep it easily accessible, so you can take it with you when you have to evacuate. Plan to be away from your home for an extended period of time. Each person should have a readily accessible emergency supply kit. Backpacks work great for storing these items (except for food and water) and are easy to grab. Storing food and water in a tub or chest on wheels will make it easier to transport. Keep it light to be able to easily lift it into your vehicle.

### Essential Supplies

- ☐ Three-day supply of non-perishable food and three gallons of water per person
- ☐ Map marked with at least two evacuation routes
- ☐ Prescriptions or special medications
- ☐ Change of clothing and closed-toe shoes
- ☐ Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses
- ☐ An extra set of car keys, credit cards, and cash

- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Flashlight
- ☐ Battery-powered radio and extra batteries
- ☐ Sanitation supplies
- ☐ Copies of important documents (e.g., birth certificates, passports, etc.)
- ☐ Don't forget food and water for your pets!

### If Time Allows

- ☐ Easy-to-carry valuables
- ☐ Family photos and other irreplaceable items
- ☐ Personal computer data on hard drives/flash drives
- ☐ Chargers for cell phones, laptops, etc.

## Pre-Evacuation Preparation Steps

When an evacuation is anticipated and if time permits, follow these checklists to give your home the best chance of surviving a wildfire:

### Animals

- ☐ Locate your pets and keep them nearby.
- ☐ Prepare large animals for transport and think about moving them to a safe location early.

### Inside

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

### Outside

- ☐ Gather 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. Move propane BBQ appliances away from structures.
- ☐ Connect garden hoses to outside water valves or spigots for use by firefighters.
- ☐ Don't leave sprinklers on or water running. They can affect critical water pressure.
- ☐ Leave exterior lights on.
- ☐ Put your emergency supply kit in your vehicle.
- ☐ Back your loaded vehicle into the driveway with all doors and windows closed. Carry your car keys with you.
- ☐ Have a ladder available in a conspicuous location for firefighter use.
- ☐ Seal attic and ground vents with a non-combustible material or commercial seals, if time permits.
- ☐ Monitor your property and your wildfire situation. Don't wait for an evacuation order, if you feel threatened and need to, leave.
- ☐ Check on neighbors and make sure they are preparing to leave.

# GO!

## TAKE ACTION IMMEDIATELY WHEN WILDFIRE STRIKES

### 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 throughout the neighborhood and do their job.

### When to Go

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!

The terms "Voluntary" and "Mandatory" are used to describe evacuation orders. However, local jurisdictions may use other terminology such as "Precautionary" and "Immediate Threat." These terms are used to alert you to the significance of the danger. All evacuation instructions provided by emergency personnel should be followed immediately for your safety.

### Where to Go

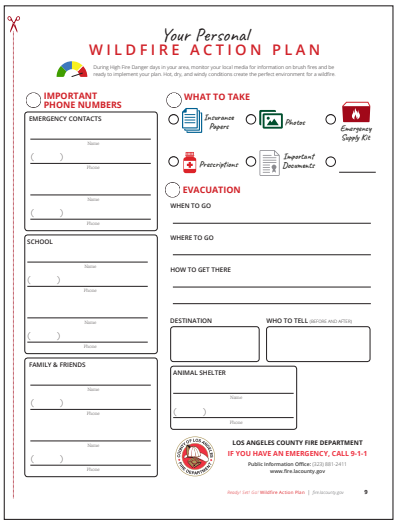
Leave for a pre-determined location. It should be a low-risk area, such as a well-prepared neighbor or relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, motel, etc.

### How to Get There

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

*Follow these steps as soon as possible to get ready to* GO!

- Review your Wildfire Action Plan evacuation checklist.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EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Name

( ) Phone

Name

( ) Phone

SCHOOL

Name

( ) Phone

Name

( ) Phone

FAMILY & FRIENDS

Name

( ) Phone

Name

( ) Phone

WHAT TO TAKE

Insurance Papers

Photos

Emergency Supply Kit

Prescriptions

Important Documents

EVACUATION

WHEN TO GO

WHERE TO GO

HOW TO GET THERE

DESTINATION

WHO TO TELL (BEFORE AND AFTER)

ANIMAL SHELTER

Name

( ) Phone

LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

IF YOU HAVE AN EMERGENCY, CALL 9-1-1

Public Information Office: (323) 881-2411

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- Ensure your Emergency Supply Kit is in your vehicle.

- Cover up to protect against heat and flying embers. Wear long pants, a long-sleeve shirt, heavy shoes/boots, a cap, dry bandana (for face cover), goggles, or glasses. 100% cotton is preferable.

- Locate your pets and take them with you.

# GO!

## Survival Tips if You Become Trapped

### In Your Home

- ☐ Stay calm and keep your family together.
- ☐ Call 9-1-1 and inform authorities of your location.
- ☐ Fill sinks and tubs for an emergency water supply.
- ☐ Keep doors and windows closed, but unlocked.
- ☐ Remove curtains from the windows.
- ☐ Turn your interior and exterior lights on.
- ☐ Stay inside your home.
- ☐ Shelter away from outside walls.

### In Your Vehicle

- ☐ Stay calm.
- ☐ Park your vehicle in an area clear of vegetation.
- ☐ Close all vehicle windows and vents.
- ☐ Cover yourself with a wool or cotton blanket or jacket.
- ☐ Lie on the vehicle floor.
- ☐ Use your cell phone and call 9-1-1 to inform authorities of your location.

### On Foot

- ☐ Stay calm.
- ☐ Go to an area clear of vegetation, a ditch or depression on level ground, if possible.
- ☐ Lie face down and cover up your body.
- ☐ Use your cell phone and call 9-1-1 to inform authorities of your location.

## Returning Home After a Wildfire

Do not return home until emergency officials determine it is safe. You will receive proper notification to do so as soon as it is possible, considering safety and accessibility.

### When You Return Home

- ☐ Be alert for downed power lines and other hazards.
- ☐ Check propane tanks, regulators, and lines before turning gas on.
- ☐ Check your residence carefully for hidden embers or smoldering fires.

# Remember the Six P's

People and Pets

Papers, *phone numbers, and important documents*

Prescriptions, *vitamins, and eyeglasses*

Pictures *and irreplaceable memorabilia*

Plastic *(e.g., credit cards, ATM cards) and cash*

Personal computer *hard drives and flash drives*

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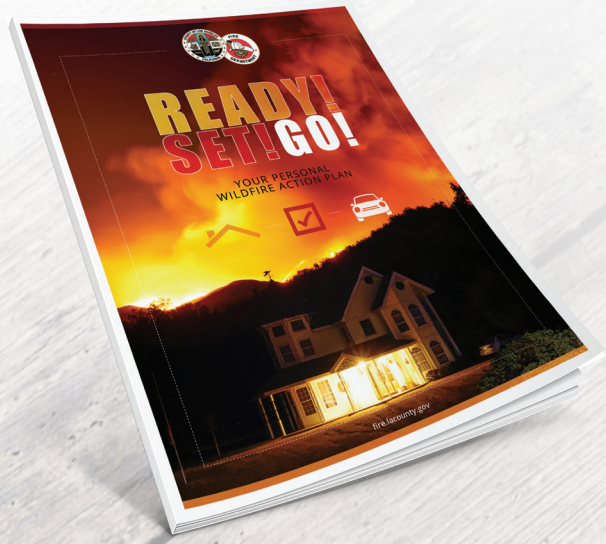


Download the *Ready! Set! Go!* Wildfire Action Plan at fire.lacounty.gov/rsg or by scanning this QR code with your smart phone.

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT**
*Public Information Office*

1320 N. Eastern Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90063
323-881-2411
fire.lacounty.gov

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**LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION**

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Los Angeles, CA 90063
323-793-FIRE
supportlacountyfire.org

*The Los Angeles County Fire Department Foundation is a charitable 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.*

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