

READY! SET! GO!

Your Personal Wildfire Action Plan



READY! SET! GO!

Wildfire Action Plan

Saving Lives and Property
Through Advance Planning



Dear Resident,

The Big Bear Valley Fire Agencies recognize that we live in one of the most beautiful places in the world. Living in an “urban interface area” does not come without risks. Fire is, and always has been a natural part of the landscape. The fire season is now year-round, requiring fire fighters and residents to constantly be on heightened alert for the threat of wildfire.

Each agency has taken significant precautions to help protect you and your property from wildfire. In the event of a major wildfire, however, fire fighting 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 so that you can leave early, well ahead of a fast-approaching wildfire.

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 is 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 YOU. Through advance planning and preparation, we can all be ready for the next wildfire. We 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.

Be Fire Safe,

Jeff Willis,
Fire Chief
Big Bear City Fire

Rodney S. Ballard,
Fire Chief
Big Bear Lake Fire

Pat A. Dennen,
Fire Chief/Fire Warden
San Bernardino
County Fire

INSIDE

Get Ready—Create a Defensible Home	3
What is Defensible Space?	4
What is a Hardened Home?	5
Tour a Wildfire-Ready Home	6-7
Get Set—Prepare Your Family	8
As the Fire Approaches: Checklists	9
Go Early Checklist	10
Your Own Wildfire Action Plan	11

READY! SET! GO! IS ALSO SUPPORTED BY:



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 Programs and have been constructed in accordance with the latest building standards.



Chipping Services Can Help!

The "ON DEMAND" Big Bear valley-wide chipping program is ready to meet you at the curb whenever and how often you need us. Just call the CHIPPER HOTLINE at 1-877-771-CHIP (2447) to let us know you need a pick up.

Please NO root balls, construction debris, or pine needles.

Please log your hours creating defensible space; go to:

www.thisisin.org



Call Forest Care

We've helped thousands of landowners reduce hazardous fuels and maintain a healthy forested property.

Call today to meet with a CAL FIRE forester and see if you qualify for grant funding to keep your piece of the mountain forest healthy and more fire safe.

1-888-883-THIN



San Bernardino and Riverside Units

FUNDED BY
USDA FOREST SERVICE

FOREST CARE IS A PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL FOREST ASSOCIATION
VISIT US ON THE WEB AT NATIONALFORESTASSOCIATION.ORG

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 to promote structure survivability during wildfire conditions.

Below is a sample of a home that is defensible. All items apply:

- Remove flammable vegetation within 15 feet of a structure, patio, or deck.
- Remove foliage and dead growth on flammable shrubs within 18 to 24 inches of the ground.
- Increase spacing between flammable shrubs to a minimum of two times the height of the shrub.
- Trees greater than 12 feet in height should be limbed up a minimum of 6 feet off the ground. Trees less than 12 feet should be limbed up a minimum of one-third the height of the tree.
- Remove trees 4 to 6 inches in diameter within 8 to 10 feet of another tree.
- Increase spacing between trees to a minimum width of 10 feet separation trunk-to-trunk.
- On a sloped property, the spacing between trees should be 20 to 30 feet apart.
- Remove pine needles and leaves from the roof.
- Remove pine needles and leaves within 5 feet of a structure and underneath wooden decks.
- Remove accumulation of pine needles and leaves greater than 2 inches in depth throughout your property.
- Cut weeds and grasses taller than 4 inches in height.
- Stack firewood a minimum of 20 to 30 feet from a structure or place in a fire safe storage shed.



Flammable vegetation consists of:



Manzanita



Mountain Whitethorn



Spanish Broom



Sage Brush



Serviceberry



Junipers



Mountain Mahogany

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 insignificant 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.

Removing your wood shake/shingle roof reduces your home ignition risk by 51%. All wood shake/shingle roofs are to be removed by July 1, 2012 in the City of Big Bear Lake. In unincorporated areas of the mountain communities, wood shake/shingle roofs are to be replaced by December 31, 2014.

EAVES

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

VENTS

Embers enter the attic or other concealed spaces 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.



Photo: Courtesy of the Living with Fire Program and the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.



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. It helps to protect you and your family 24/7, year-round, from a fire that may start in your home, not just wildfire.

See pages 6 and 7 to learn how to make your home defensible and hardened from wildfire.

Tour a Wildfire Ready Home

Home Site and Yard: Ensure that you have removed flammable vegetation within 15 feet of each structure. The remaining vegetation on the property, within 100 feet of each structure or to property line, needs to be modified by removing the dead branches and other branches within 18 inches to two feet of the ground. Distance separation between shrubs shall be two times the height of the shrub. The maximum diameter of any shrub shall be 10 to 15 feet.

Trim/cut weeds and grasses within 100 feet of structure or to property line at a maximum height of 4 inches.

Keep wood piles at least 20 to 30 feet away from your home or in a fire safe storage shed.

Go to: www.thisisin.org to learn about the Firewise Planting Guide for Big Bear Valley.

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/shingle roofs are at a higher risk of being destroyed during a wildfire than homes with a more fire-resistant roof.

Construct or re-roof your home with a minimum Class A fire-resistant roofing material. If any openings exist between roof deck and roof covering, provide a fire block to prevent fire ember intrusion.

Remove tree branches that overhang a home or that are within 10 feet of the roof.

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

All vent openings should be covered with a minimum 1/8 inch or smaller wire mesh or provided with vents that prevent intrusion. This is particularly important for roof, eave, and cornice vents.

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.

Installing dual-paned windows with the exterior pane being tempered glass reduces the chance of breakage in a fire.

Inside: Keep working fire extinguishers on hand.

Install smoke alarms on each level of your home and in each sleeping area. Test them monthly and change batteries twice a year.



Walls: Wood products such as boards, panels or shingles are common siding materials. However, they are combustible and are susceptible to ignition during a wildfire. The next time you stain or paint your home's exterior wood siding, consider painting with an intumescent paint or use a fire-retardant additive to your paint or stain.

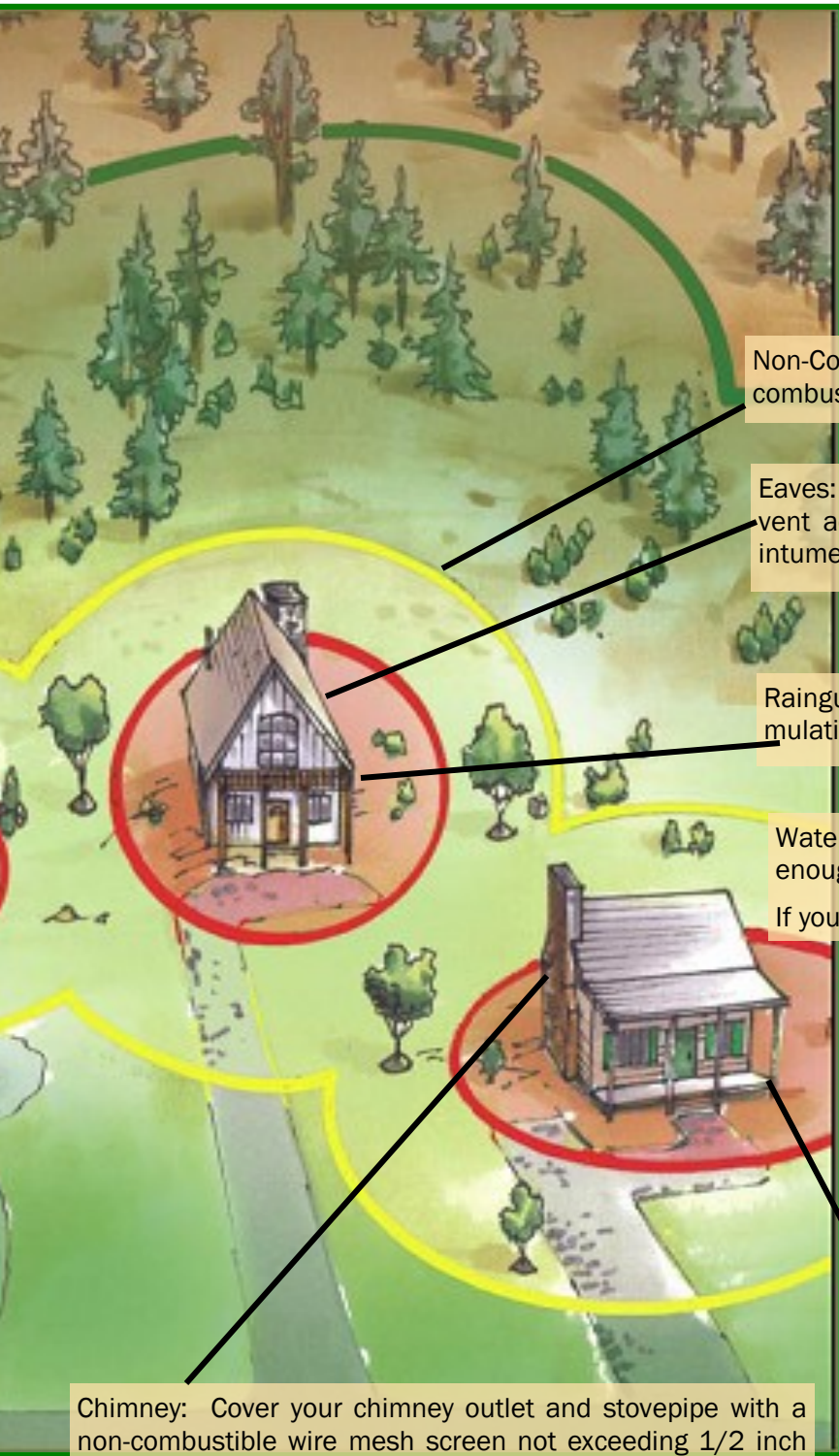
Garage: Have a fire extinguisher and tools such as a shovel, rake, bucket, and hoe available for fire emergencies.

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 of flammable vegetation on either side of the traveled section of the roadway and should allow for two-way traffic.

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 material within 5 feet of any structure.

Eaves: Box in eaves with non-combustible materials to prevent accumulation of embers, or protect the eaves with an intumescent paint or fire retardant paint/stain type coating.

Raingutters: Screen or enclose rain gutters to prevent accumulation of embers.

Water Supply: Have multiple garden hoses that are long enough to reach your home and other structures.

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

Address: Make sure your address is clearly visible and legible from the road and illuminated during the hours of darkness.

Deck/Patio Cover: Use heavy timber or non-combustible construction materials 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 ash cans, wood, and other debris.

Chimney: Cover your chimney outlet and stovepipe with a non-combustible wire mesh screen not exceeding 1/2 inch to prevent embers from escaping and igniting a fire.

Make sure any tree branches are least 10 feet away from your chimney.

Create Your Own Wildfire Action Plan

Prepare your Wildfire Action Plan 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. (www.americanredcross.org)
- 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 battery-powered portable radio 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 emergency supply kit on hand. It should include necessary items, such as a battery-powered radio, spare batteries, emergency contact numbers, and ample food and drinking water.
- Stay tuned to your TV or local radio stations for updates or check the Fire Department websites:
www.bigbearcityfire.org
www.bbldfd.com
www.sbcfire.org
- If you have not yet voluntarily evacuated and are waiting for mandatory evacuation orders, 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 (i.e., patio furniture, children's toys, doormats, etc.).
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Connect garden hoses to outside taps.
- Don't leave sprinklers on or water running—they can waste critical 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 small fires.
- Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.

INDOOR CHECKLIST

- Shut all windows and doors.
- Remove flammable window shades and curtains and close metal shutters.
- Move flammable furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- Leave your lights on so fire fighters can see your house under smoky conditions.
- Shut off the air conditioning.

IF YOU ARE TRAPPED: SURVIVAL TIPS

- Shelter away from the 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 much hotter outside.)
- After the fire has passed, check your roof and extinguish any fires, sparks, or embers.
- Check inside the attic and sub-floor 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 fire fighters 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

Go to a predetermined location (it should be a low-risk area such as a well-prepared friend 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 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): _____

If you have an emergency, call 9-1-1



Big Bear City Fire
(909) 585-2362
www.bigbearcityfire.org



Big Bear Lake Fire
(909) 866-7566
www.bbffd.com



San Bernardino County Fire
(909) 387-5950
www.sbcfire.org

READY! SET! GO!



To Report An Emergency, Call 9-1-1

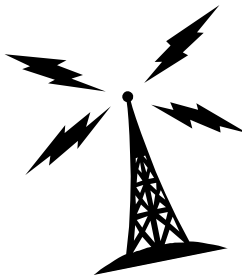
U.S. Forest Service Fire Information Line
(909) 383-5688

Phone Bank Staffed During Large Fires within the San Bernardino National Forest

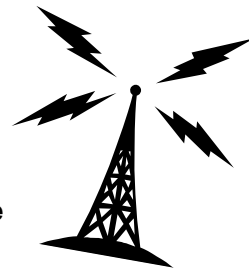


San Bernardino County Fire
Incident Information Line
(909) 355-8800

During an emergency, tune to your local Emergency Alert System (EAS) radio broadcast stations listed below or a station in your area.



- 93.3 FM KBHR Big Bear Valley
- 95.1 FM KFRG High Desert/Valley
- 98.9 FM KHWY High Desert
- 102.3 FM KZXY Victor Valley
- 101.7 FM KXSB Big Bear Valley (Spanish)
- 107.7 FM KCDZ Yucca Valley/Joshua Tree
- 1620 AM CalTrans Information Station



Funding in part provided by the generosity of the Big Bear Valley Fire Safe Council

Big Bear Valley Fire Safe Council, PO Box 3142 Big Bear City, CA 92314

"Protecting Homes, Communities, Environment"