

Wildfire Home Defense Checklists

Preparing to Defend Your Home

What you should have on hand...

Have all the following items ready ahead of time. Store them in a safe place, and label them clearly with the word “FIRE” so everyone who might be sheltering in your home can find them.

- Hoses: enough garden hose to reach all corners of the home, including the roof.
- Shovels: to remove flammable vegetation from around the house before the fire arrives and to smother spot fires with dirt.
- At least 2 ladders: one (preferably metal) long enough to allow you to check the roof and eaves and another to gain access to the attic.
- Metal buckets or trash cans and mops, rags, old rugs, or burlap sacks: to extinguish burning embers.
- Precut covers for soffit and frieze-block vents. The best material to use is plywood that is at least ½ inch thick. To make things easier, pre-drill holes for nails or screws (screws would be better and faster to use). The frieze-block vent covers can be a long narrow piece that just fits over the blocking between the rafters—don’t try to cover the individual openings. Once these are cut, make sure that they can easily be attached and are interchangeable. Make extras so you do not run short for any reason.
- First floor windows and glass sliding doors should also have similar covers prepared and stored. These should be labeled with a magic marker so there is no confusion about where they go.
- Old socks filled with dirt or sand. These can be used to plug gutter downspouts so you can fill them with water.
- Towels: when wet, towels can be placed in vulnerable places to prevent spot fires starting on windowsills and can seal gaps under doors when sheltering in the home.
- Flashlight: to help you check eaves for burning embers. Include supply of batteries
- Several screwdrivers: for attaching covers. Don’t assume that you will have power or a fully charged portable screwdriver. Have enough so that others can help.
- Portable battery-powered radio: to listen for emergency warnings and information about the fire’s progress.
- First aid kit: to treat minor injuries/ burns.
- Drinking water: to prevent dehydration.
- Protective clothing: to protect you from radiant heat and smoke. Everyone who will be sheltering in your house should have these items, which include:
 - Wide brimmed hat or hardhat.
 - Coveralls or a long-sleeved shirt and long pants. These items should be made of 100% cotton, wool, or another non-synthetic material.
 - Goggles and leather work gloves.
 - Sturdy leather shoes or work boots and wool or cotton socks.
 - Mask, handkerchief, or towel to place over your nose and mouth.

- Wool blankets to protect skin from radiant heat.

What to expect as the fire front approaches...

There will be a shower of sparks and embers before the main fire front approaches. This shower of embers will continue for several hours after the fire has passed. You should also expect strong winds and heavy smoke, which will make it dark, reduce visibility, and make breathing unpleasant.

The main fire front will generally pass within 5 to 15 minutes. During this time the radiant heat will become unbearable even if you are wearing protective clothing. You will need to retreat indoors **before the heat becomes hard to tolerate**. Be sure to take inside with you any firefighting equipment that may melt if left outside.

What to do outside your home before the fire arrives...

- Evacuate any children, elderly, or disabled persons long before the fire arrives, preferably at the first indication that a fire is anywhere near your area.
- Place a ladder against the roof of the house opposite the side of the approaching fire.
- Remove any flammable outdoor furniture (especially umbrellas and seat cushions), doormats, woodpiles, etc. that could catch embers and ignite. Roll up or remove awnings and exterior blinds.
- Dampen all areas on the side of the house facing the direction of the fire. Turn on lawn sprinklers on that side of the house as well. If you have a portable generator-powered pump to take water from a swimming pool or tank, make sure it is operating and in place.
- If you have a combustible roof, place a lawn sprinkler on it.
- If you have pre-cut materials ready for windows and vents, get them nailed or screwed in place.
- Block the gutter downspouts with dirt-filled socks, and hose down the roof to fill the gutters.
- Fill metal buckets or trash cans with water. Keep mops and rags inside until after the fire passes so they don't burn.
- Shut off gas at the meter.
- Park your vehicle facing out in the garage, and leave the keys in the ignition switch.

What to do inside your home before the fire arrives...

- Fill the kitchen sink, laundry tub, and bathtub with water. Soak towels in water so they are ready to place in any crevices.
- Place fire extinguishers in an easily accessible place.
- Place a ladder at the attic crawl hole so you can periodically inspect the attic for fire.

As the Fire Front Passes

- Close (but don't lock) all windows and doors to block the circulation of air. Leave shades, blinds, and curtains open so you can see what's happening outside.
- Place damp cloths around gaps in exterior doors and windows.
- Make sure all family members and pets are accounted for. Keep everyone together in a part of the house where you can watch what the fire is doing.**
- Remain calm. If it gets hot in the house, remember that it is four or five times hotter outside.

- ❑ If windows break, extinguish any sparks or embers that enter the house with wet towels. If furniture catches fire, use a fire extinguisher to put out the flames.

Remain indoors until you are absolutely sure the fire front has passed.

After the Fire Front Has Passed

As soon as possible after the fire front has passed, go outside to inspect for spot fires. Be sure to wear your protective clothing.

- ❑ Hose down the house, paying special attention to the roof and eaves, window frames, stairs, decks, and latticework. Extinguish all flames and smoldering or burning embers.
- ❑ Soak mops, rags, old rugs, or burlap sacks in water-filled buckets or trash cans and use them to beat out burning embers and spot fires.
- ❑ The attic is a particularly vulnerable area that must be regularly checked for any embers that have entered. These embers might not be as obvious if they filter down through the insulation
- ❑ **Patrol your home for at least 3 to 4 hours after the fire has passed.** Watch for embers, and extinguish spot fires while they are still small. Be vigilant!
- ❑ It will be hot and very uncomfortable, so drink lots of water—every 10 minutes is a good rule of thumb.