



# Wildfire

**A** wildfire is an unplanned fire in an area of combustible vegetation that can occur in a rural or countryside setting. Wildfires cost state and federal governments billions of dollars each year. Wildfires can cause damage to humans, animals, plant life, and personal property.

## How it Might Impact Your Utility Service

Wildfires can also create many cascading and secondary impacts that may include, but are not limited to:

- Loss of power and communication infrastructure.
- Disruption of transportation and potential flooding.
- Damage to gas pipelines that can lead to explosions.
- Restricted access to facilities due to debris and damage to roadways can cause service restoration delays.
- Damage to utility lines leading to one's home.



## ALERTS

The National Weather Service (NWS) within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issues fire weather watch notices.

**Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA):** WEAs, made available through the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) infrastructure, are just one of the ways public safety officials can quickly and effectively alert and warn the public about serious emergencies. To ensure that your device is WEA-capable, check with your service provider.

**Integrated Public Alert and Warning Systems (IPAWS):** Created by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, IPAWS leverages national emergency communication channels to provide area-specific alerts in times of emergency.

**Automated Weather Alerts:** With CivicReady Automated Weather Alerts, notifications are automatically dispersed as soon as an alert is activated by the National Weather Service.

**Nixle:** Almost every city sends out Nixle alerts. They range from simple alerts about crimes and community notices to major alerts regarding disasters. It is a good idea to sign up for all applicable alerts in your area.

**Outage Alerts:** Stay informed by signing up for outage alerts with your utility service providers. The utility company will contact you when there is an outage in your area and let you know when service is expected to be restored. Choose to be notified by text, phone, or email.

## BEFORE A WILDFIRE

- Create an evacuation plan that includes a meeting location outside the fire area. Understand your community evacuation routes and ensure you have multiple escape routes to the meeting location. Make sure to have your car fueled or extra fuel available.
- Create a Family Communication Plan. The communication plan should address aid for someone with disability, care of children, seniors, and pets, and where to meet if you get separated. Include emergency contacts for work, daycare, school, and your utility service providers.
- Download the Red Cross Emergency! App. It is free and allows people to receive alerts for their local city but also alerts for cities of where you family/contacts live and a built-in "Are you okay?" feature for easy and quick check-ins.
- Know how to shut off electricity, gas, and water. You may need to turn them off after a fire because of charred or exposed electrical wiring, a gas leak, or flooding from leaking pipes or sprinklers. Locate the gas and water shut-off valves and master electrical switch. Make sure you have a crescent or pipe wrench near the gas and water valves and in your emergency supplies.
- Conduct fire drills frequently. Install and maintain fire alarms in your home. Have an up-to-date, non-expired fire extinguisher available and practice how to use it.
- Build and maintain an emergency kit that includes important items like non-perishable food, water, a battery-operated or hand-crank radio, extra flashlights, and batteries. Keep one handy in your vehicle.
- Secure copies of important documents such as insurance cards, immunization records, and paperwork in a safe fireproof box.
- Review your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy to ensure that you have coverage for your personal belongings and property.

## DURING A WILDFIRE

- Gather your evacuation and family communication plan. Make sure your emergency supply kit is in your car.
- Prepare your home before you leave by shutting all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked, remove flammable materials including curtains, tablecloths, shades, furniture, and anything stored underneath your deck or porch.
- Turn all the lights on in your home so firefighters can see inside the house at night or in heavy smoke.
- Connect your garden hose and fill up garbage cans, tubs, or other large containers with water around your home. This will help firefighters who may arrive at your residence. Shut off your natural gas and move propane or fuel tanks away from your home.
- **Evacuate as soon as recommended** by fire officials. Don't wait to be ordered to leave by authorities. Listen to your local radio or TV for announcements regarding evacuation.

- If you become trapped near a wildfire in your vehicle:
  - Call 9-1-1.
  - Park your vehicle away from trees, vegetation, light poles, and utility lines.
  - Close all vents and windows.
  - Cover yourself with a wool blanket or jacket and lie on the floor of the vehicle.
- If you become trapped in your home:
  - Call 9-1-1.
  - Fill sinks and tubs with cold water.
  - Close windows and doors but keep them unlocked
  - Move all flammable furniture and goods away from windows.
  - Stay away from outside walls and windows.
  - Unplug your garage door so if you lose power, you can manually access your garage.
- If you will need to evacuate to a shelter, the American Red Cross can provide a map that displays all of the open shelters in your area and the current capacity at each shelter.

## **AFTER A WILDFIRE**

- Do not return to your home until the fire officials determine it is safe to do so.
- Check propane tanks, gas lines, and regulators. Inspect all gas appliances for damage. If you smell any gas, evacuate immediately. If you can, turn off the gas at the main then contact the gas company.
- Call 9-1-1 if there is a fire or medical emergency. Try to save phone calls for emergencies. If the phone doesn't work, send someone for help.
- Once safe, monitor local news reports via battery-operated radio, TV, social, media, and cellphone text alerts for emergency information and instructions.
- Use extreme caution during post-disaster cleanup of buildings and around debris. Do not attempt to remove heavy debris by yourself. Wear protective clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, work gloves, and sturdy, thick-soled shoes during cleanup.
- If you signed up for outage alerts, you should receive notification and updates from the utilities when services will be restored. If not, contact your utility service provider.
- Search for water leaks both inside and outside the house. Test drains and toilets as well as faucets to make sure the water flows correctly and is clear. Contact a plumber if there's any issue. For household using wells, take the time to inspect the yard for soil movement, cracks or sink holes. Before using the plumbing, ensure that water and sewer lines are intact. Plug drains to prevent sewage backup.
- Check all electrical lines throughout the house and especially in the attic. Stored objects in the attic can fall over onto exposes electrical lines and damage them. DO NOT touch exposed wiring, downed power lines, or broken electrical appliances. If there is a damage to wiring, turn off the electricity and contact a licensed professional.

- Dial 2-1-1 to get information on disaster relief services in your area. The 211 United Way Helpline is your one-stop resource for connecting with a variety of resources in your community including emergency food and shelter, disability services, senior services, healthcare, and much more. You can also review for federal or state emergency/disaster relief grant assistance through your local Emergency Management Center or through FEMA.
- If you travel by road, dial 5-1-1 to get information on traffic and road closure information in your area.