

Being prepared for evacuation

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

When an overheated electrical cord to a travel trailer started a fire in the area of Rabbitbrush Lane east of Sisters on August 11, the situation got dire very, very quickly. The neighborhood had to be evacuated immediately.

That kind of instant evacuation isn't what we're used to in Sisters County. In last year's Milli Fire, evacuations were planned, with trigger points pre-determined and notices sent out, along with door-to-door notification. Resident's had time.

In the August 11 fire, there was very little time at all.

Part of living in wildfire country involves being ready — having a plan and preparations in place to evacuate.

"My personal opinion is that if you live in Deschutes County, you should be at Level One (Be Ready) on June 1," says Ben Duda of Oregon Department of Forestry.

Emergency officials strongly advise locals to sign up for Deschutes Emergency Alerts. The Deschutes Alert System (DAS) can be used to notify the public with important information during an emergency. Alerts can be sent to cell phones — but only if your number is registered. Sign up at <https://www.deschutes.org/911/page/sign-deschutes-emergency-alerts>.

Sgt. Nathan Garibay of the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office, who serves as emergency service coordinator in Central Oregon, said that DAS was a vital tool in the August 11 fire.

"There was *no way* we could have done door-to-door notifications," he said.

Many homeowners during the August 11 fire had to evacuate horses and other

livestock. Garibay notes that it is important to have a plan for such a contingency, including pre-arranged places to take your large animals. There are "official" resources available for large animal evacuations, but "sometimes those resources are three hours away — and you need them in 45 minutes," Garibay said.

Make arrangements with friends who have trailers and space for animals.

Extra advance planning may also be necessary if you are dealing with people who have mobility issues or special medical needs.

Planning for evacuation doesn't have to be on the scale of a military operation — it just requires some thought and effort when things are calm.

"It doesn't take all day to at least think it through and come up with a plan," Sgt. Garibay said.

The website www.readyforwildfire.org offers extensive tips for evacuation:

Emergency Supply Kit Checklist

- 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
- Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses
- An extra set of car keys, credit cards, cash or traveler's

checks

- First aid kit
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered radio and extra batteries
- Sanitation supplies
- Copies of important documents (birth certificates, passports, etc.)
- Don't forget pet food and water! (The website also offers extensive tips on preparing for pet evacuation.)

Items to take if time allows:

- Easily carried valuables
- Family photos and other irreplaceable items
- Personal computer information on hard drives and disks
- Chargers for cell phones, laptops, etc.

Always keep a sturdy pair of shoes and a flashlight near your bed and handy in case of a sudden evacuation at night.

Sometimes residents feel compelled to stay to try to defend their home. Firefighters and other emergency personnel strongly advise against this impulse. Not only does it put the homeowner in danger, it endangers firefighters and law enforcement personnel at grave risk, because they are duty-bound to try to help you if you're in danger.

"We don't want to have homeowners staying and trying to defend their homes," said Sisters-Camp Sherman Deputy Fire Chief Tim Craig. "Because that's when we lose lives."

Honoring law enforcement...



PHOTO PROVIDED

Sisters veterans put up flags Friday, August 17, along Cascade Avenue in support of law enforcement personnel. Deschutes County Sheriff's Office was represented by Deputy C. Jones and Sgt. Grant Johnstone. Black Butte Police was represented by Officer Kelvin Lettenmaier and Sgt. Rob Schulz. Sisters veterans thank all law enforcement personnel for their service.

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