

Being prepared for fire evacuation

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

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>.

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.
- 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, because they are duty-bound to try to help you if you're in danger.

WILDFIRE: Access is key to safety in a wildfire

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where combustibles are kept cleared away, trees limbed back and landscaping crafted with plants that don't readily ignite and carry fire.

Steps to create defensible space and tips on fire-resistant landscaping may be found at www.firefree.org. Additionally, products are available to spray on your home that can enhance its resistance to fire. Those have to be applied well before any crisis develops and should be part of a program of defensibility and not a substitute for defensible space.

Another critical element in giving firefighters a fighting chance is making sure they can get into and out of your property safely.

Firefighters have to be able to drive in to a property and have to be able to turn an engine around so they can escape quickly. If a property doesn't allow for that, a fire chief won't send firefighters in — because they would be risking their lives.

That continues to be a problem in the Cloverdale Fire District.

Chief Olsen said that in his neighborhood alone, "I've got six driveways where I know we can't get a fire truck to their house."

Property owners are advised to limb trees back to make sure a fire truck can get in and turn around — and that work should be done before fire season gets underway. Also, it is important to make sure that fire-numbers



PHOTO BY THAD OLSEN

Overgrown driveways restrict access by fire trucks.



PHOTO BY THAD OLSEN

Clearing access means your home can be defended.

are readily visible so that emergency personnel can identify where homes are.

Sgt. Garibay says, "There

are places in this county where you could drive past a house and not know there was a house there."

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