

# How to get your ballot if your home is destroyed

**Connor Radnovich**  
Salem Statesman Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon elections officials say they are prepared to ensure that anyone who lost their home from wildfires this year will be able to get their ballots and vote by Nov. 3.

The processes in place to assist wildfire victims are the same as those used for people who are homeless or are continuous travelers, but are being scaled up in response to the destructive wildfires.

Ballots will be mailed out starting Oct. 14.

"We always have displaced people at any time, but this is, of course, a much larger group of displaced people," Bill Burgess, Marion County clerk and president of the Oregon Association of County Clerks, said.

If you have a temporary address, the easiest way to get your ballot is to update your mailing address online at [oregonvotes.gov](http://oregonvotes.gov) under the "My Vote" tab.

People can also update their mailing address by emailing or writing a letter to their county elections office, mailing a voter registration card (usually available at post offices) to the elections office or visiting the office in person.

A new mailing address can be a residence or some other location, such as the county elections office. People in chronic homelessness in Marion County have their ballots delivered to shelters, including the Union Gospel Mission.

The new address can even be out of state if a displaced person is now living with family or friends elsewhere. Oregon elections officials already mail ballots around the world.

Burgess also stressed that individuals who update their addresses with USPS should also specifically update it with their elections office.

"We'll send it to them wherever they want, they just need to update their mailing address, which is very simple to do," Burgess said.

Changing your mailing address does

not alter your ballot; the residential address determines which races voters can vote on.

As with other mail that is undeliverable to a home, mailed ballots will be held at the post office that services their area. Burgess said the post office has decided to hold ballots at local post offices for pickup until election day, rather than the standard 14 days.

## What if I don't receive a ballot?

Voters who do not receive a ballot by Oct. 21 should call their county elections office. This allows officials to mail out a ballot and ensures the voter receives it in time to vote.

State election officials do not recommend mailing ballots after Oct. 27 — one week before the election. Ballots must arrive at the elections office by 8 p.m. Nov. 3 to count.

Beyond Oct. 27, voters should turn in their ballot at a drop location. To find drop sites, visit your county elections website or the Secretary of State's website.

If a ballot has not been received by Oct. 27, Burgess said voters should go in person to their county elections office. Elections officials can create a ballot for them on the spot and digitally cancel any previously-issued ballots.

To accommodate last-minute voters, Burgess said, Marion County is expanding its in-person voting option at the elections office.

During the two weeks leading up to the election, a large room will be used as a voting area, he said. Typically, this is only an option for Election Day and the Monday before, but it is being expanded this year due to the wildfires.

This area will also abide by social distancing protocols and masks will be required, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

*Have questions about voting? Contact reporter Connor Radnovich at [cradnovich@statesmanjournal.com](mailto:cradnovich@statesmanjournal.com) or 503-399-6864, or follow him on Twitter at @CDRadnovich.*

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# Wildfires provide teachable moments



**Carrie Steele**  
Guest Columnist

Sometimes, teachable moments occur whether parents are ready or not. Families across Oregon have done their best to help children deal with the coronavirus pandemic and now the state is ravaged by wildfires and covered in smoke.

September is National Preparedness Month. As adults, we tend to protect our kids from scary things like natural disasters. However, it's important for children to understand what to do in an emergency and how they can prepare.

Many Americans (65%) think a major disaster will impact their family in the next five years, but half don't have an emergency plan, according to a recent national poll.

Just days before the catastrophic wildfires, the head of the state's Office of Emergency Management released a statement about National Preparedness Month calling it, "an opportunity for every Oregonian to learn how they can best prepare their family for all types of emergencies." Andrew Phelps warned. "Emergencies don't wait for you to be ready, so it's important to take steps to prepare today."

Disasters can strike anywhere at any time. In Oregon, these emergencies range from floods and winter storms to earthquakes and wildfires. Being prepared helps a family stay safe during an emergency.

Students should comprehend the basics of emergency preparation so they can take potentially life-saving actions during a disaster, even if their parents aren't around. Parents can teach kids about preparedness and reassure them by demonstrating how to get involved.

### Research the facts

Have children research the types of emergencies to prepare for in your region like landslides, ice, and wind storms. Talk with students about responding to these hazards, like making your home more resistant to winter storms.

Children should also learn the causes and consequences of disasters. For example, wildfires can have natural origins like lightning, but are often sparked by humans who didn't extinguish a campfire properly. Use this research to help teach your children how they prevent natural disasters, such as wildfires.

### Make a Family Emergency Plan

Including students in the planning keeps them informed and empowers them to help other family members. First, establish a meeting place to reunite that's safe and easy to locate in case the family gets separated.

Second, make a list of essential contacts that include relatives and doctors'

offices. Everyone in the family should carry a copy of this list in their purse or backpack and post one on the refrigerator or bulletin board.

Finally, talk to your children about aspects of the family disaster plan including smoke alarms, evacuation routes out of the house, and signing up for local emergency alerts on smartphones. To find these recommendations visit [Ready.gov/plan](http://Ready.gov/plan). This site is designed by the US Department of Homeland Security for the whole family.

### Build a kit

Explain to children that creating emergency kits is critical in disaster planning. If utilities fail the refrigerator won't keep food cold, the stove can't heat meals, and faucets won't have clean water. Involve children in making a checklist for the family's emergency kit and ask students to help assemble disaster supplies. Three days of supplies is a good start, but disaster experts recommend families stock up for two weeks to be self-sufficient.

Families building their emergency supply kit should remember five "P's" of evacuation: People, Prescriptions, Papers, Personal Needs, Priceless Items. Helpful lists for basic disaster supplies to pack are at [ready.gov/kit](http://ready.gov/kit) but here are a few suggestions:

- Water (one gallon per person per day for at least three days)
- Non-perishable food
- Battery-powered radio
- Cell phone with chargers and back-up battery
- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- Pet food
- Important documents (bank records and insurance policies)

Store items in airtight plastic bags, bins or duffel bags. Since emergencies come without warnings, make "go-bags" with supplies stored at work and in cars as well.

### Practice the plan

Similar to fire drills, it's helpful to have regular practice sessions to review the emergency plan, communications, and update the disaster kit with fresh items. Family's needs change over time so it's good to revise the disaster plan when necessary. Refresher courses help all family members remember their roles if an emergency does occur.

Emergency planning provides many benefits for students. Research shows children are less anxious and more confident during actual disasters when they've planned for emergencies. By teaching children disaster preparedness they develop a strong sense of civic responsibility and are likely to teach others, perhaps even their own children once they become an adult.

*Claire Steele is a biology teacher for Willamette Connections Academy. For more information, call 888-478-9474 or visit the [WillametteConnectionsAcademy.com](http://WillametteConnectionsAcademy.com)*

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# Santiam Canyon

Continued from Page 1A

come together, good things happen," Hudson said.

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