

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Are you ready?

What to know about wildfires

In October 2017, deadly wildfires ravaged areas of Northern California, killing dozens and forcing thousands of others to flee their homes. Warm and dry conditions along with gusty winds helped fuel these fires. Hundreds of acres were consumed by fire, and statewide an estimated 6,000 structures were destroyed, according to California Governor Jerry Brown.

California is no stranger to wildfires, which can occur just about anywhere persistent dry conditions occur. Wildfires, also called wildland, forest or peat fires, can originate from many sources. Typically, a dropped match, cigarette embers, poorly extinguished campfires, exhaust sparks from trains, lightning, or even arson are to blame. AccuWeather says that wildfires can be destructive and catastrophic for natural habitats and the firefighters tasked with putting out the blazes. Easy Science for Kids states that wildfires can start in a second and move at about 14 miles per hour.

According to the National Interagency Fire Center, temperature, wind and humidity all influence wildfires. Strong winds can spread flames to new fuel sources. The wind also may transfer embers to other locations, creating "spot fires." Large fires can actually cause their own weather and wind, increasing the flow of oxygen to the blaze.

The U.S. National Park Service says wind can spread fires to the tops of trees, called "crown fires," which spread quickly. These fires can burn extremely hot and change direction rapidly, making them even more perilous for firefighters. While wildfires can be devastating, they also can provide some benefits and will not necessarily harm wildlife. Large mammals are able to use their instincts to depart affected habitats before they are threatened. Wildfires can clear out dense foliage and undergrowth, or diseased plants, allowing new greenery to flourish. A beetle species of the subgenus *Melanophils* benefits greatly from forest fires. According to AccuWeather, this



Wildfires can break out in an instant and affect thousands of acres of land.

species use infrared radiation sensors to detect burning forests. They then mate and lay eggs in scorched trees, increasing the likelihood that the beetle larvae will thrive.

Firefighters battle the blazes by cutting back brush and grass to remove some fuel sources. They frequently use planes or helicopters to drop water or flame-retardant chemicals on the wildfires to keep them from spreading. Western areas of the United States and Canada tend to experience more wildfires than other parts of these countries. British Columbia, which is located in western Canada, experienced 860 wildfires in the summer of 2017, according to Environment Canada.

Although not every wildfire can be prevented, people can do their part to heed dry conditions warnings and protocol. Also, when evacuation is advised, residents should get out promptly.

Wildfire Awareness

Fire season requires residents to be at a heightened awareness for the dangers of wildfire. Your local fire agency takes every precaution to help protect you and your property from fire. However, during a large wildfire, there may not be enough fire engines or firefighters to defend every home. Successful preparation requires you to take personal responsibility for protecting yourself, your family from the dangers of wildfire.

Ready- Be ready
Be Firewise. Take personal responsibility and prepare long before the threat of a wildland fire so your home is ready in case of a wildfire. Create defensible space by clearing

brush away from your home. Use fire-resistant landscaping and protect your home with fire-safe materials. Assemble emergency supplies and belongings in a safe place. Plan escape routes and make sure all those living in your home know your wildfire action plan. Set- Be prepared
Put together a "go kit" and pack your emergency items. Stay aware of the latest news and information on the fire from local media, your local fire and police agencies.

Go- Act early
Follow your personal wildland fire action plan. Get yourself and your family

to safety. Doing so will not only support your safety, but will allow firefighters to best maneuver resources to combat the fire.



Yard Debris Removal & Equipment Use Fire Safety

Escaped debris burns are the leading human cause of wildfires in Oregon, particularly during the early-and late-season periods when people think it is safe to burn. Many outside fires in Oregon are caused by improper debris burning or sparks from equipment use. Lawn mowers and chain saws are a few examples of equipment that can cause a wildfire when sparks ignite vegetation such as grass, weeds, or bark dust.

Fall and spring are ideal times to reduce the excess vegetation around your home that could pose an escaped fire threat. Please consider chipping, composting, or recycling your yard debris. If burning is the only option to dispose of woody material, please follow safe burning practices. For safety information, please check out the tips and resource information provided.

Yard Debris Removal Safety Tips

- Recycle yard debris. Chip, compost, or haul debris to a recycling center.
- Call before you burn yard debris. Check with your local fire agency or air protection authority to learn if there are any burning restrictions and

if a permit is required.

- Know the weather forecast. Never burn on dry or windy days because it is easy for burning to spread out of control.
- Burn only yard debris. State regulations prohibit the open burning of any material that creates dense smoke or noxious odors.
- Keep your burn pile small or use a burn barrel. Clear at least a 15-foot radius around a barrel and at least a 25-foot radius around your burn pile, and make sure there are no tree branches or power lines above. Wet down the surrounding area before and during the burn.
- Always have water and fire tools on site. Keep a water-charged hose, a bucket of water, a shovel, and dirt or sand nearby to extinguish the fire.
- Stay with the fire. Oregon law requires that you monitor a debris burn continually from start to finish until completely out.
- Extinguish the fire. Drown the burn pile with water, stir the coals, and drown again. Repeat until the fire is completely out.
- Recheck the fire. Go back and recheck old burn piles, as they can retain heat for several weeks and rekindle when the weather warms and the wind begins to blow.

SAVE THE DATE:
Cottage Grove's 4th Annual
Emergency Preparedness Fair
August 11th, 11am-2pm - Coiner Park

Firewise Landscaping Checklist

When designing and installing a firewise landscape, consider the following:

- Local area fire history.
- Site location and overall terrain.
- Prevailing winds and seasonal weather.
- Property contours and boundaries.
- Native vegetation.
- Plant characteristics and placement (duffage, water and salt retention ability, aromatic oils, fuel load per area, and size).
- Irrigation requirements.

To create a firewise landscape, remember that the primary goal is fuel reduction. To this end, initiate the zone concept. Zone 1 is closest to the structure; Zones 2-4 move progressively further away.

- Zone 1.** This well-irrigated area encircles the structure for at least 30' on all sides, providing space for fire suppression equipment in the event of an emergency. Plantings should be limited to carefully spaced low flammability species.
- Zone 2.** Low flammability plant materials should be used here. Plants should be low-growing, and the irrigation system should extend into this section.
- Zone 3.** Place low-growing plants and well-spaced trees in this area, remembering to keep the volume of vegetation (fuel) low.
- Zone 4.** This furthest zone from the structure is a natural area. Selectively prune and thin all plants and remove highly flammable vegetation.

Also remember to:

- Be sure to leave a minimum of 30' around the house to accommodate fire equipment, if necessary.
- Widely space and carefully situate the trees you plant.
- Take out the "ladder fuels" — vegetation that serves as a link between grass and tree tops. This arrangement can carry fire to a structure or from a structure to vegetation.
- Give yourself added protection with "fuel breaks" like driveways, gravel walkways, and lawns.

When maintaining a landscape:

- Keep trees and shrubs properly pruned. Prune all trees so the lowest limbs are 6' to 10' from the ground.
- Remove leaf clutter and dead and overhanging branches.
- Mow the lawn regularly.
- Dispose of cuttings and debris promptly, according to local regulations.
- Store firewood away from the house.
- Be sure the irrigation system is well maintained.
- Use care when refueling garden equipment and maintain it regularly.
- Store and use flammable liquids properly.
- Dispose of smoking materials carefully.
- Become familiar with local regulations regarding vegetation clearances, disposal of debris, and fire safety requirements for equipment.
- Follow manufacturers' instructions when using fertilizers and pesticides.

Access additional information on the Firewise home page: www.firewise.org

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PUT TOGETHER A PLAN

Make sure all the pieces are in place to render you and your family prepared in the event of a natural disaster.

- Listen to radio or television newscasts for the latest weather information, and follow all evacuation directions and suggestions.
- Keep a stock of non-perishable food items as well as bottled water on hand inside your home.
- Keep a 72 Hour Kit on hand inside your home that is easy to get to in the event of a disaster.

For more information and tips on disaster response and preparedness, contact your local emergency services center.
South Lane Fire & Rescue • 233 Harrison Ave, Cottage Grove 541-942-4493 • 55 South 1st Street, Creswell 541-895-2506

Twitter: @southlanefire
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