



*Serving the communities of Castle Creek, Champagne Village, Deer Springs, Hidden Meadows,  
Jesmond Dene, Rimrock, The Welk Resort, and West Lilac Since 2004*

# Fire Safety News

August 11, 2019

## Getting Ready for Wildfire

In past publications, we have said that all residents within the Deer Springs Fire Protection District and much of California, for that matter, are linked by the constant threat of wildfire. CAL FIRE has developed an action program called *Ready, Set, Go!* that breaks down the actions residents of the wildland-urban interface (that's most of you reading this) should take to be ready for wildfire. In the May 2019 issue of *Fire Safety News* we discussed creating defensible space around your home to get *ready*. In this issue we continue to get *ready* by preparing a family evacuation plan and communication plan. We also look at getting *Set* by expanding our situational awareness when conditions heighten wildfire danger and offer some thoughts on being self-sufficient and self-reliant.

Many of the topics presented here are not limited to wildfire situations and can be applied to any emergency that could force you from your home for an extended period.

We conclude this edition with a brief report on the Moosa Canyon fuels reduction project that is underway. This project will provide an extended fuel break along the western rim of Moosa Canyon.

## PREPARING FOR EVACUATION

Who has not heard the maxim "By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail" or one of its variations. Whether penned originally by Benjamin Franklin 250 years ago as some claim, by basketball coaching great John Wooden in the 1970s, or by any of a list of motivational speakers today, it is timeless advice. As the recent tragic fires in northern California have demonstrated, it has never been more important for those of us living in or near the wildland-urban interface to have a plan for evacuation in the event of a wildfire.

There is no lack of evacuation preparation information and to-do lists on the internet. Here are three that we can recommend as appropriate for our area:

<https://www.readyforwildfire.org>

<https://www.readysandiego.org>

<https://www.sdge.com/more-information/safety/emergency-preparedness>

Rather than repeat readily available material, we would like to offer some observations and suggestions from people who have gone through a local evacuation as recently as the 2017 Lilac Fire. We also share some advice from our own DSFSC Vice President Carl Lofthouse on family communications. Carl is a retired career firefighter and Professor Emeritus of Fire Science at Palomar College who also taught emergency planning and is considered an expert in the field.

It must be remembered that guidelines and suggestions are just that. You must adopt and adapt them according to your family's needs and abilities when developing your plan. Wildfire is dynamic and capricious so consider having variations on that plan to deal with factors such as the direction from which the fire is coming and the direction you may be forced to evacuate.

**If you feel threatened or are fearful for the safety of your family do not wait for an evacuation order. Leave immediately! Things can mostly be replaced, lives cannot.**

## **DEVELOP THE PLAN**

A husband and wife who were evacuated during the 2017 Lilac Fire looked back on the chaotic event and came up with a list of tasks that could be accomplished if given various times to evacuate from as short as 5 minutes to more than an hour. Each had specific tasks to perform: utilities to secure, doors and windows to close, outside furnishings to move, and items to load in the car.

In practice, it is probably overly optimistic to attempt scripting such an event on a timeline but this sort of exercise can help us set priorities and reveal our weaknesses.

Use the links above as a starting point to develop a plan that will be specific to your home and family. The entire family can be involved in developing the plan and everyone should know the plan at a level that is appropriate for their age and ability. Think about the possibility that one or more members of the "team" could be away from home. Does that change the plan? How?

## **PRACTICE THE PLAN**

Once you have developed the plan run through it to discover anything you might have omitted. Once you are happy with it, practice it at least twice a year. As firefighters are quick to remind us: "when there is smoke in the air, it is too late."

## **REVIEW THE PLAN**

Life situations change. Review your plan regularly. Have there been any health changes to consider in an evacuation? Has a son or daughter moved away and can no longer assist with evacuation preparations? The list goes on and may dictate changes that need to be made to your plan.

## **BE SELF-SUFFICIENT AND SELF-RELIANT**

Assemble 72 hour survival kits or "go-bags" for each family member. There are suggestions offered in the links presented above. At minimum, the kit should contain at least one gallon of water per person per day, nutrient dense non-perishable foods, prescription meds and any other unique needs. Don't forget the dust masks as you may encounter smoke. Keep your vehicle fuel tank at least half full.

One theme that continually emerges from evacuation seminars is that help may not always be on the way to you, especially in the early stages of a major wildfire evacuation. First responders will not have enough personnel to immediately respond to every call for help. There will not be enough law enforcement units to direct traffic everywhere they are needed. You need to be prepared to take care of yourself and your family.

## **BROADEN YOUR SITUATIONAL AWARENESS**

Situational awareness is knowing what is going on around you at a given moment. Those of us living in wildfire country need our immediate situational awareness. We also need to expand beyond the moment to include such things as the current and near-term weather forecast, fires in the region, and other factors that could affect the path and severity of a wildfire. This is especially true during Red Flag conditions when fire danger can become critical very quickly. Check frequently updated information sources such as our Information Hotline (949-472-1407) or various apps that you are comfortable using.

## **DEVELOP A FAMILY COMMUNICATION PLAN**

If family members become separated during an evacuation, communication becomes an urgent priority. Sometimes it becomes difficult or impossible to call or text someone. Carl Lofthouse offers the following advice to increase the chances of getting that call or text through.

## **WHO YA GONNA CALL?**

Do you have an out of “area code” contact during San Diego County Emergencies/Disasters?

“Who ya gonna call?” That is the question! No, we are not thinking about *Ghost Busters* right now but if we were playing a trivia game, that would be the right answer!

We are talking about a contact person out of the San Diego county area codes. Perhaps you have already experienced calling/texting family, or a friend during a local emergency like a wildfire or earthquake. You get might get a busy tone on your land line and cell phone or the text message won't send on a cell.

This usually happens when the local area codes are overwhelmed or cell towers and telephone poles have been damaged. Everyone is calling or texting to find out who knows what about the emergency. The phone systems can get so busy they just stop receiving or sending voice, and/or text messages.

Most of us have family or friends that live outside Southern California and the four San Diego area codes. If you have Auntie Linda or Grandma in Sacramento, for example, their 916 area code (or any other Northern California or out of state area code) will usually not be affected by the San Diego and/or Southern California emergency or disaster. Those area codes are not as busy as ours during the disaster. Unless there is total failure of California's communications system, you will likely have a higher probability of success calling out of your local area code to a less busy one.

**A Family Communication Plan worksheet can be downloaded from**

**<https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-set/>**

If local area code telephone systems are overwhelmed during emergencies or disasters, your entire family and close friends should call Auntie Linda or Grandma relating that they are safe and are following the family evacuation plan. You want to know that everyone is safe and making their way to a pre-designated meeting spot, or any other information you would like to pass on to others. Just convey that information to Auntie Linda or Grandma so she can pass on the information to everyone who calls her!

It's difficult, at any time, to not hear from someone you have attempted to contact! It is especially so during an emergency or disaster. We all want to know that everyone is safe!

Make a plan that everyone knows ahead of time, including Auntie Linda or Grandma and exercise that Plan twice a year! Be prepared and not surprised! Not being prepared creates fear and, perhaps worse, can lead us to make poor decisions based on lack of information.

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## MOOSA CANYON FUELS REDUCTION PROJECT CONTINUES

CAL FIRE and the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council are continuing the fuels reduction project along the west rim of Moosa Canyon. This wildland-urban interface has not burned since 1969 and is a vulnerable "back door" to this portion of the fire district. The goal is to have a 75' - 150' wide fuel break (where possible) along the canyon rim. The project is described in detail in the July 2018 Fire Safety News: [https://www.deerspringsfiresafecouncil.com/linked/july\\_2018\\_fire\\_safety\\_news.pdf](https://www.deerspringsfiresafecouncil.com/linked/july_2018_fire_safety_news.pdf)

The current phase is funded by a CAL FIRE California Climate Investments Fire Prevention Grant and is scheduled to run through March of 2022. The value of the grant is nearly \$190,00 with approximately half coming from the grants program and the remainder from in-kind matching by the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council and other local stakeholders.



*Creating defensible space along the rim of Moosa Canyon. Photo is looking west. The fuel break will extend another mile to the east in this phase of the project and connect with previous treatment in the Turner Heights area.*

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## Helpful phone numbers

Immediate Emergency Assistance: 911

Alert San Diego (cell phone alerts):

<http://www.readysandiego.org/alertsandiego/>

Emergency & Non-Emergency County Information Hotline (road closures, shelter locations, evacuation sites, fire related information, recovery assistance and more):  
211

San Diego County Sheriff, San Marcos  
Station: 760-510-5200

San Diego Animal Services Emergency  
Dispatch: 619-236-2341

Deer Springs Fire Safe Council Informational  
Hot Line: 949-472-1401

## Deer Springs Fire Stations

Station 11  
8709 Circle R Drive  
Escondido, CA 92026  
760-749-8001

Station 12  
1321 Deer Springs Road  
San Marcos, CA 92069  
760-741-5512

Station 13  
10308 Meadow Glen Way East  
Escondido, CA 92026  
760-751-0820

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### **We gratefully acknowledge ...**

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<http://www.DeerSpringsFireSafeCouncil.com>

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**DEER SPRINGS FIRE SAFE COUNCIL**  
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*DISCLAIMER: This information will provide a high level of protection to structures built in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area. However, there is no guarantee or assurance that compliance with these guidelines will prevent damage or destruction of structures by fires in all cases.*

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