

# If You Get Trapped

Wildfires are notoriously unpredictable and even the best laid plans can sometimes go amiss. This is why it is crucial to be prepared and evacuate as early as possible. If you do find yourself trapped by a wildfire, there are a few things you can do to decrease risk and injury and increase your chances of survival. It is very important to remain calm and keep everyone together. The roar of a wildfire can be extremely loud and the house will get very hot and smoky as the fire front passes, so emotionally you must be prepared to deal with the horrific sound and the strong natural urge to flee the house.

The most important thing to do is to choose the place from those available to you that is best able to withstand the flaming front of the fire. This may not be your home, but an outbuilding, shop, or even your car. The structure should have:

- A "Class-A," non-combustible roof
- Non-combustible siding or 30 feet or more clearing of vegetation from the siding
- Eave areas and areas under decks boxed in or totally enclosed or cleaned of flammable debris.
- ¼ inch screened attic, foundation, and eave vents.
- Dual pane or tempered glass windows.

## Inside the home

- To survive, **you must stay inside the house until the fire front passes!** Although it will be very hot in the house, it can be four to five times hotter outside.
- Plan for the loss of power and have water stored by filling the sinks and tubs along with buckets inside your house to put out burning embers or small fires.
- Have your fire extinguishers out and accessible.
- Take shelter in a room at the opposite end of your home from where the fire is approaching; making sure you have two possible exit routes.
- Close all windows and doors. If your garage door operates on electricity, disconnect the unit and operate the door manually.
- Close metal Venetian blinds.
- Remove light curtains and other easily combustible materials from windows or draw them well past the perimeter of the window. This will prevent radiant heat from catching the window coverings on fire.
- Move furniture away from windows and sliding glass doors to prevent radiant heat from catching the furniture on fire.
- Shut off all attic fans, whole house fans, swamp coolers and interior fans to keep smoke and ash from being drawn into house.
- Wet, or remove swamp cooler pads to prevent them from catching on fire.
- Bring pets inside and consider placing in pet carriers to control their movement in the house as the roar of the fire comes.
- Put livestock and horses in an area where fuels have been removed or in an irrigated pasture.
- Leave exterior and interior lights on for as long as you have power. This helps fire fighters to find your house in the dense smoke during a fire.

## Outside the home

- Close all exterior doors and windows and leave them unlocked.
- Close or cover outside attic, eave, and basement vents to prevent ember from entering your house.
- Move wheeled vehicles or equipment away from structures.
- Shut off natural gas and propane unless needed for running a generator.

- Connect water hoses and lay them out for best use where they will not get burned during the fire front passing.
- If you have a wooden fence that connects to the exterior of your home, prevent flames from spreading from the fence to your house by propping open the gate.
- Move anything that can easily ignite at least 30 feet away from the exterior of your home, including patio furniture and cushions, cloth awnings, barbecues, portable propane tanks, trash cans without lids, and firewood.
- Strategically place garden sprinklers on your home where it is most vulnerable to ignition, such as wooden stairs & decking, and turn them on.

#### **If you are trapped in your vehicle**

- A structure offers more protection than a car, so if there is a building nearby get inside it.
- If there is no building, park and stay in your car, where it is safer than being out in the open directly exposed to flames and radiant heat.
- Find a safe place to park that has little or no vegetation.
- Turn on headlights and emergency flashers to make your car more visible in heavy smoke.
- Close all windows and doors, shut off all air vents, and turn off the air conditioner.
- Get below the windows under blankets, preferably wool, and lie on the floor to shelter yourself from the intense radiant heat.
- Wait until the fire front passes and temperature has dropped outside, then get out and stay in a safe area that has already burned.

#### **After the fire front passes**

- If it is safe to leave, do so. Seek immediate medical attention if necessary.
- Check the roof and extinguish any sparks or embers.
- Check inside the attic for hidden burning embers. Extinguish any fires with remaining water from your pool, sinks, toilet tanks, garbage cans or fire extinguisher.
- Keep doors and windows closed.
- Check the yard for burning woodpiles, trees, fences posts, and other material.
- Continue monitoring your home for signs of smoke or embers for the next 24 to 48 hours.