



# OREGON WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

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# WILDFIRES EXPLAINED

People move near forests or remote natural areas for the beautiful scenery and the peace and quiet, but with this serenity comes the danger of wildfires.

Wildfires spread quickly – at speeds of up to 14 miles per hour – igniting brush, trees, homes and anything else in their paths. Wildfires can last for days and even weeks, and destroy thousands of acres of land. Reduce your risk of becoming a victim by preparing now, before a wildfire strikes.

## IN THIS GUIDE

This guide will help you prevent wildfires and, in the event of a fire, prepare your home and your family. Flip through the tabs to get the most up-to-date information on what to do before, during and after a wildfire strikes.

## QUICKNOTE



Whether at home, at work or at play, we must consider spark and ember emitting activities that could lead to destructive wildfires. People can be held liable for any or all fire suppression costs if they are negligent, willful or malicious in the start and spread of a fire.



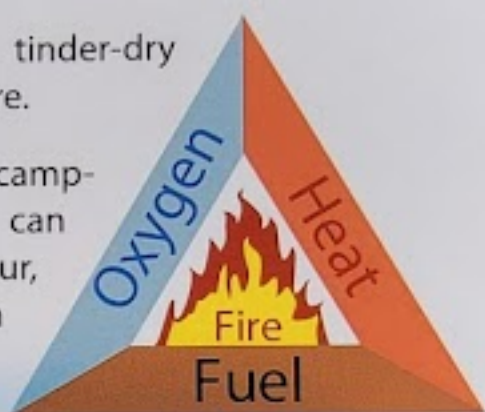


## SETTING THE STAGE

Hot, dry weather combined with tinder-dry vegetation sets the stage for wildfire.

Sparks – from cars, lawn mowers, campfires, downed power lines, etc. – can ignite a fire. In order for a fire to occur, heat (high temperatures), oxygen (wind) and fuel (grass, sticks, logs) must all be present at the same time. Without all three working

together, the fire will go out. Firefighters work to remove one of these “legs” of the **fire triangle** when suppressing a wildfire. Water cools the fire by removing the heat. Shovels and dozers remove fuel.



**The Fire Triangle**



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FIRE  
DANGER  
PREVENT  
WILDFIRE

DEFEN-  
SIBLE  
SPACE

HARDEN  
YOUR  
HOME

FIREWISE  
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DURING  
WILDFIRE

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# FIRE DANGER

**Low:** Fires are possible but not easily started.

Color code is green. Grasses and leaves don't ignite easily. Fires may creep and burn slowly or smolder in grass. A more intense heat source such as lightning may start fires.



**Moderate:** Fires start easily and spread at a moderate rate.

Color code is blue. Fires can start from escaped sparks or embers, but they often need the right combination of winds and dry fuel to greatly increase the rate of fire spread. Fires are not likely to become serious, and control is relatively easy.

**High:** Fires start easily and spread at a fast rate.

Color code is yellow. Grasses, leaves and twigs ignite easily and fire can spread rapidly into heavier fuels, such as branches and logs. Fires may become serious and difficult to control unless they are hit hard and fast while small. Campfires and the use of power driven machinery may be restricted. Consult your local fire agency regarding rules and regulations.

**Extreme:** Fires start very easily, can spread at a very fast rate and intensify quickly.

Color code is red. All fires are potentially serious because fires burn extremely hot, can become explosive and may result in extensive property damage. Campfires may be entirely banned at this level.



# LEADING CAUSES OF WILDFIRES

About 70% of the wildfires in Oregon are started by people. The other 30% of wildfires are started by lightning.

## Debris Burning

The leading cause of wildfires on state-protected lands is backyard debris burning. Burning allows property owners to clean up branches and brush around their property and dispose of it without making a trip to the landfill. However, these fires can spread when left unattended or when lit under windy conditions.



Do not burn plastic or petroleum-based products.

## Campfires

Campfires can escape when they are unattended or not fully extinguished before campers call it a night or leave the campsite. The simple act of **DROWN, STIR, DROWN** with water and a shovel can prevent careless wildfires.

## Equipment Use

Motor vehicles (including ATVs), lawn mowers and power saws are a few examples of equipment that can cause a wildfire. A vehicle driving or idling over dry grass, a lawn mower blade striking a rock or a power saw casting sparks into dry vegetation creates the ignition. Pay attention to local fire restrictions that may be in place during fire season.

FIRE  
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## WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT WILDFIRES?

Wildfire safety begins with you. Since people start most wildfires, do your part to prevent them.

Contact your local fire agency or forestry office for information on current fire restrictions.

- Avoid burning debris, particularly in the afternoon when temperatures are high and humidity is low. If you choose to burn your yard debris, follow all open air burning regulations.
- Avoid using any power equipment near dry vegetation.
- Dispose of woodstove and BBQ ashes properly by soaking them in water, in a metal container, for three days prior to discarding them in an area free of fuel.
- Never leave a campfire unattended. Extinguish your campfire completely before calling it a night or leaving the campsite.
- Keep vehicles on established roads and trails.
- Teach children about fire safety.
- Be on the lookout for suspicious activity and report arsonists.
- From target shooting to smoking, always have the proper tools on hand, such as a fire extinguisher, shovel, garden hose or a bucket of water, to extinguish any ignitions or escaped embers.

**QUICKCLICK** 

Learn more about wildfire prevention at:  
[www.keeporegongreen.org](http://www.keeporegongreen.org)





# HOW DO HOMES IGNITE?

Homes and their surroundings are vulnerable to three potential ignition sources:

- 1. Embers** carried by the wind can blow into attic vents, open windows, underneath decks and into the nooks and crannies of the roof.
- 2. Surface fires** burn through grass, trees and shrubs that can lead a fire to the home.
- 3. Crown fires** burn through treetops, creating large flames that radiate enough heat to ignite wood walls from up to 30 feet away.

DEFEN-  
SIBLE  
SPACE

## HOME IGNITION ZONE

The Home Ignition Zone includes the home itself and its surroundings up to 200 feet from the foundation. Create “defensible space” in this area by using fire-safe building materials and landscaping techniques that protect your home and firefighters. If your Home Ignition Zone is properly maintained, your home can survive a wildfire!





## 1. STRUCTURE IGNITION ZONE: 0 FEET - 30 FEET

### Lean, Clean and Green Landscaping

- Make sure your address is easily visible on the home.
- Maintain a 5-foot fire-free area closest to the home using nonflammable landscaping material and fire-resistant plants.
- Remove debris from the roof and gutters and trim back trees that hang over the house.
- Keep burnable materials, such as wooden outdoor furniture or play structures, away from the house.
- Remove dead plants, branches, needles, leaves and other materials that can burn.
- Keep your plants and lawn watered and mow the grass regularly.
- Move woodpiles 30 feet away from all structures during fire season.

## 2. FIRE BREAK ZONE: 30 FEET - 100 FEET

### Starve a Fire of Fuel

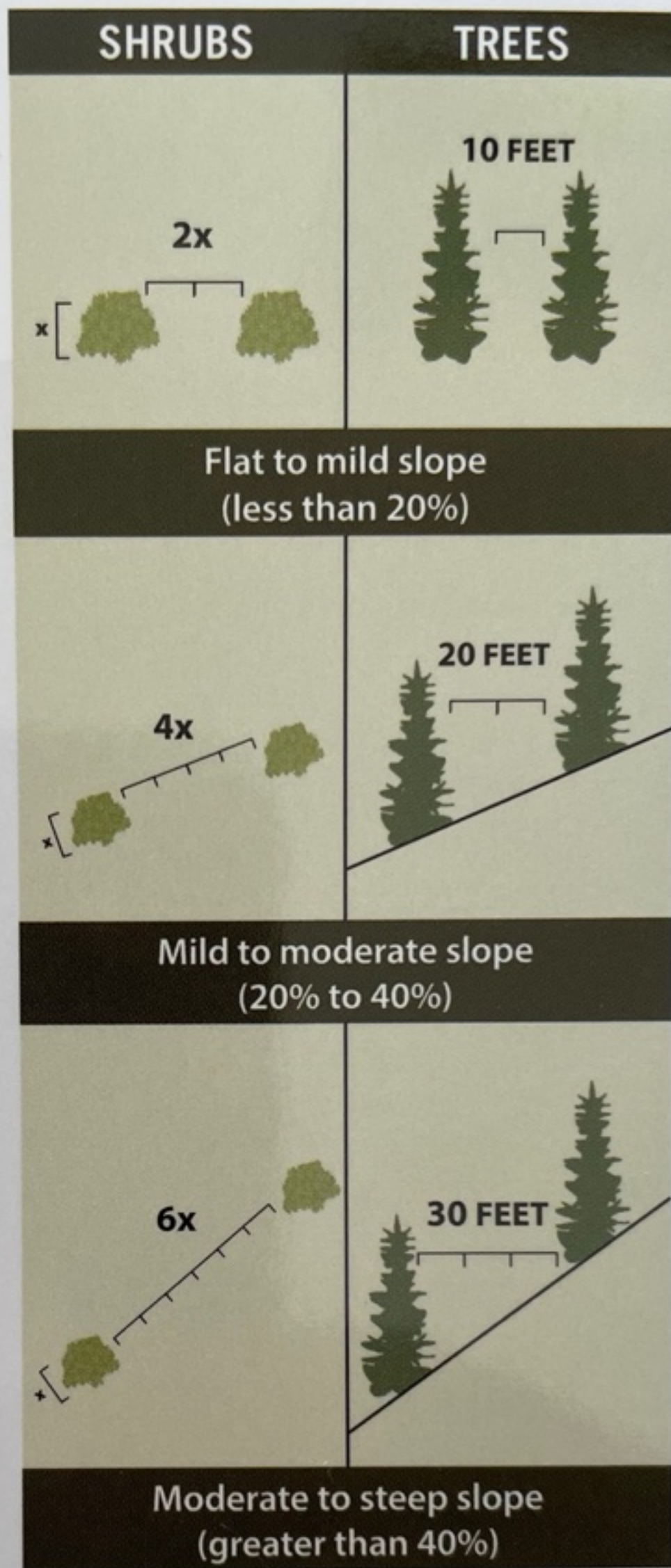
- Prune low-hanging branches 6 feet to 10 feet from the ground.
- Space plants, shrubs and trees so as not to lead a fire to the home.
- Use driveways and gravel walkways as firebreaks.
- Choose fire-resistant plants, shrubs and trees that don't ignite easily: <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/pnw590>



### 3. REDUCED FUEL ZONE: 100 FEET - 200 FEET

#### The First Line of Defense

- Thin and prune trees so canopies are not touching but still provide adequate shade to the ground below.
- Encourage a mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees.
- Create extra vertical space between shrubs and trees to prevent a surface fire from climbing into the tree crowns and carrying flames to the house. Proper horizontal spacing depends on the slope of the land.



SPACING

DEFENSIBLE SPACE

Driveways should be at least 12 feet wide with 15 feet of vertical clearance for emergency response vehicles.

- Post your address at the end of your driveway using 4-inch reflective numbers.

Consult your local fire agency or forestry field for more information. Flip to the "Resources" tab for contact information.



# HARDEN YOUR HOME

Consider the following construction options that can help your home withstand a wildfire.

## ROOF

The roof is the most vulnerable part of your home. Wood shake roofs are easily ignited by flying embers.

- When building a new home or replacing your roof, use fire-rated roof shingles, such as asphalt, metal, clay tile, slate or concrete products.

## DECKS, FENCES AND OTHER ATTACHMENTS

Any wooden attachments, such as decks, porches, stairs and fences, can ignite and lead a fire to your home.

- Build decks using fire-treated wood boards or nonflammable materials.
- Insert a fire-resistant buffer, such as metal fencing or another nonflammable material, where fences touch any structure.





## SIDING

Common siding materials, such as wood boards, panels and shingles, are flammable.

- Use ignition-resistant siding, such as brick, stone, fiber-cement, plaster, stucco or aluminum.

## VENTS

Flying embers can enter your home through vents.

- Cover vent openings with 1/8-inch metal mesh (do not use plastic or fiberglass mesh).

## WINDOWS

Radiant heat from a wildfire can break windows, allowing burning embers to enter your home and start a fire inside.

- Install dual-paned windows that include one pane of tempered glass.
- Reduce heat exposure by removing flammable vegetation under windows.





## HOW CAN I GET MY COMMUNITY INVOLVED IN PREPARING FOR A WILDFIRE?

Your house is only as safe as the houses around you. Communities whose residents take steps to reduce their fire vulnerability have a greater chance of surviving a wildfire.

Talk to your neighbors about wildfire safety. Plan how the neighborhood can work together before, during and after a wildfire.

Becoming a nationally recognized Firewise USA® site requires completion of the criteria below, along with annual renewal requirements.

1. Arrange a site visit and obtain a written wildfire risk assessment from your state forestry agency or fire department.
2. Form a board/committee that is comprised of residents and other stakeholders.
3. Create an action plan of prioritized risk reduction projects/investments for the site.
4. Conduct a minimum of one wildfire risk reduction educational outreach event or related activity annually.
5. Annually invest the equivalent of one volunteer hour per dwelling unit in wildfire risk reduction actions. (A minimum of 8 individual single family dwelling units is required within the site's identified boundary.)
6. Submit an application for Firewise USA® site recognition.

**QUICKCLICK**



Learn more about becoming a Firewise USA® site by contacting your Oregon Firewise liaison at: [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)

**FIREWISE**



# EVACUATION PLANNING FOR WILDFIRE

Preparing now for a possible wildfire can help save your family's lives.

➤ Draw a home escape plan and discuss it with everyone in your home.

- ➔ Practice the plan at least twice a year.
- ➔ Know at least two ways out of every room.
- ➔ Have an outside meeting place located at a safe distance.
- ➔ Teach children how to escape on their own.
- ➔ Close doors behind you as you leave.
- ➔ Discuss temporary housing options with friends or relatives.
- ➔ Have an evacuation plan for pets or livestock.

## QUICKTIP

Prepare an emergency supply kit that you can grab on the go. Keep an extra kit in your car.





# DURING A WILDFIRE

## BE READY, BE SET, GO!

Your local law enforcement agency orders evacuations. If you feel threatened by a wildfire, do not wait for an official evacuation order.

There are three levels of evacuation:

**LEVEL 1 – Be Ready:** Prepare and monitor. Pack your valuables.

**LEVEL 2 – Be Set:** Be set to evacuate at a moment's notice.

**LEVEL 3 – Go:** Leave immediately!

If you are advised to evacuate, do so immediately. Take your emergency supply kit, lock your home and choose a route away from the fire hazard. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of the fire and smoke. Tell someone when you left and where you are going.

Remember the eight Ps in case an immediate evacuation is required:

1. People
2. Pets
3. Personal computer
4. Prescriptions
5. Paperwork  
(important documents)
6. Pictures
7. Phone (cell phone)
8. Plastic  
(credit/bank cards)





## PREPARE YOUR HOME

If you are not ordered to evacuate and have time to prepare your home, take the following actions:

- Close all windows, doors and vents, including pet entrances, to reduce the risk of flame and embers entering your structures.
- Close all doors inside the home to prevent drafts.
- Open the damper on your fireplace, but close the fireplace screen.
- Shut off any natural gas, propane or fuel oil supplies at the source.
- Connect garden hoses to the outdoor water faucet and fill any pools, hot tubs, garbage cans, tubs or other large containers with water.



PREPARE YOUR HOME



- If you have gas-powered pumps for water, make sure they are fueled and ready.
- Place a ladder against the house for quick access to the roof.
- Close all garage doors.
- Place valuables that will not be damaged by water in a pool, pond or full bathtub.
- Turn on outside lights and leave a light on in every room to make the house more visible in heavy smoke.

#### QUICKTIP

Go to a designated public shelter if you have been told to evacuate or you feel it is unsafe to remain in your home. Text SHELTER + your ZIP code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area (e.g., Red Cross).



## PREPARE YOUR HOME

DURING A WILDFIRE

AFTER A WILDFIRE

INSURANCE TIPS

RE-SOURCES



# AFTER A WILDFIRE

## RETURNING HOME

It is dangerous to walk through a burned structure. Return to your home only if you are given the all clear from fire officials or local law enforcement. The OK to return is given



when the wildfire threat has subsided and when there are no hazards, such as downed power lines. Homeowners may still experience smoke and small hot spots in the area.

### Be cautious.

- Be very careful when entering your home for the first time following the fire.

### Dress properly for protection against any hazards.

- Wear a long-sleeved shirt, pants, leather gloves and sturdy boots with soles that resist puncturing and hot spots.
- Keep a hard hat and dust mask on hand.

### Outside your home, look for:

- Unstable burnt trees or power poles.
- Live power lines on the ground.
- Hot embers.
- Holes filled with hot ash.



## When first entering your home:

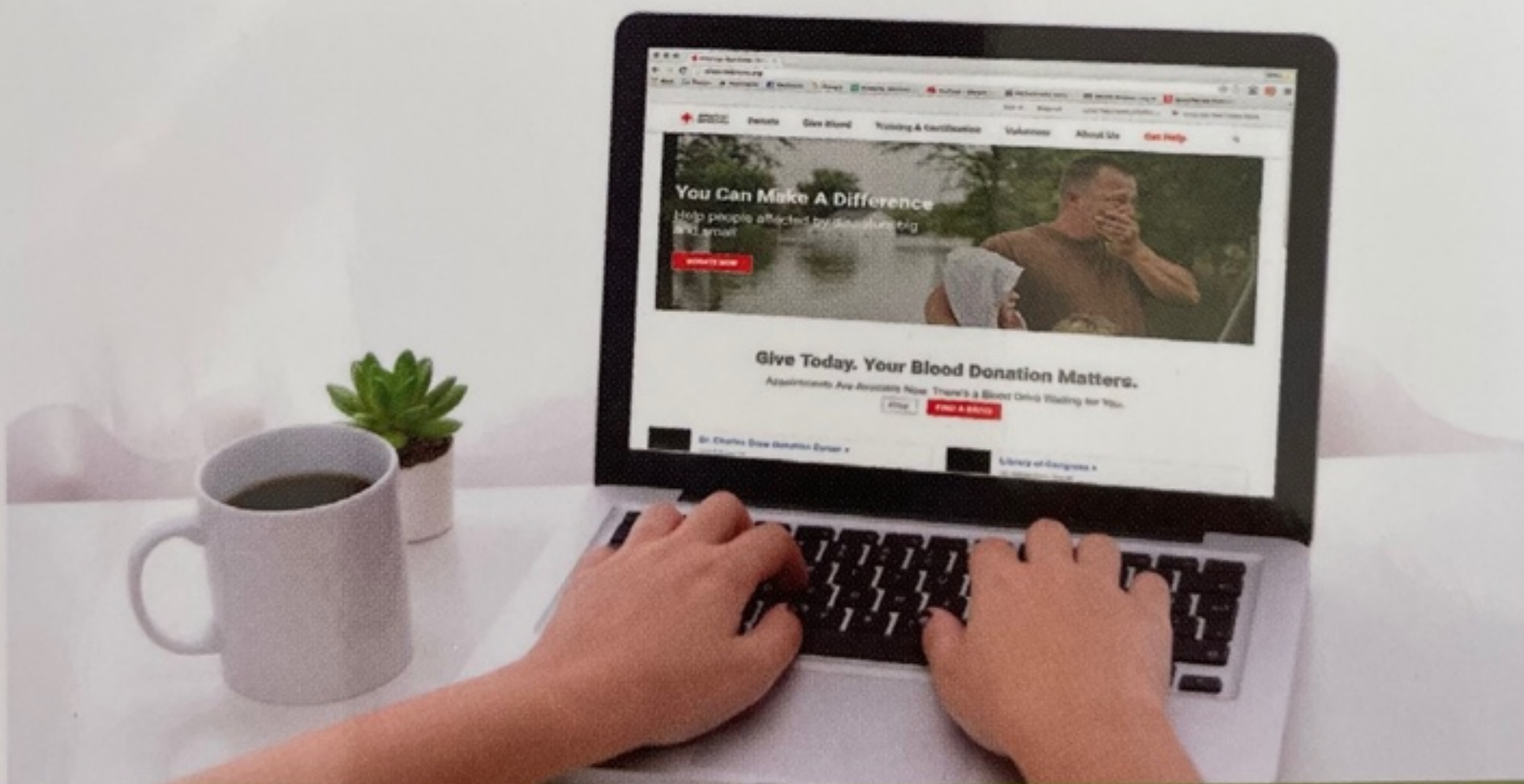
- If you smell gas, open the windows, leave the house and turn the supply off at the tank. Call your utility provider.
- If you have power, turn it off until your inspection is complete.
- Inspect the roof, attic, rain gutters, porch, etc., for sparks or burning embers. If you find any, wet them right away.

### QUICKCLICK



If you get separated from your family during a wildfire, register with the American Red Cross Safe and Well website to let your family know you are safe at:

<https://safeandwell.communityos.org>



### QUICKTIP



If a fire official has placed a color-coded sign on your home, do not enter until you get more information, advice and instructions about what the sign means and whether it is safe to enter your home.



## Once inside your home:

- Check for embers in your attic. Do this several times over a few days.
- Keep children out of the area.
- Wear protective clothing while sifting through the debris.
- Watch for animals that may have found shelter in your home or garage.
- Contact your utility providers to restore services, such as electricity, water and gas.
- Throw out any food that has been exposed to heat, smoke or soot.
- Do not use water that you think may be contaminated to wash dishes, brush your teeth, prepare food, wash your hands, make ice or mix baby formula.
- If you have a safe or strong box, do not try to open it. It can hold intense heat for several hours. If it is opened before the box has cooled, the contents can catch fire.
- Do not throw away anything until you have contacted your insurance provider.
- Take pictures and record video of your damaged belongings.





# INSURANCE

Your home is your biggest asset. Protect it with insurance. Most homeowner's policies cover property losses caused by brush, grass or forest fires.

## QUICKCLICK

For more information on homeowner's insurance, visit the Insurance Information Institute's website at: [www.iii.org](http://www.iii.org)

## INSURANCE TIPS

### Before a Fire

- Create and keep a written inventory of your possessions with lists, pictures or video. Document each room, closet and drawer. Remember to include electronics, sports equipment and the contents of your garage.
- Keep receipts of major purchases. Store important documents and insurance cards and policies outside the home.
- Understand your policy and know what it covers. Contact your agent or company annually to make sure your homeowner's coverage is still valid and that it provides enough coverage to pay the full cost of replacing your property.
  - » Update your policy after a remodel.
  - » Make sure your policy reflects your home's square footage.
  - » Be sure your policy includes additional living expenses to cover lodging, food and other expenses if you're forced to leave your home after suffering a covered loss.

BEFORE A FIRE

INSUR-  
ANCE TIPS



## After a Fire

- Contact your insurance agent or company right away. Keep a record of all communication you have with your company.
- Make a list of your damaged property. Photograph or record a video of the damage, if possible. Don't throw away damaged items until a claims adjuster has seen them.
- Make the necessary repairs to protect your home and property from further damage. Keep a record of your repair expenses and save all receipts.
- Ask your agent about additional living expenses. This coverage reimburses you for food and lodging expenses while your home is being repaired. Most policies pay up to 20% of your home's insured value. Keep your receipts.
- Know what deductibles you have to pay.
- Be home when the adjuster inspects your damage.

### QUICKCONTACT

Whether your home is or is not insured, contact your local American Red Cross ([www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter](http://www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter)) or a FEMA Disaster Recovery Center for assistance: **800-621-3362**

### QUICKTIP

When repairing your home, work only with licensed and bonded contractors. Ask them for references and check them. Insist on having an itemized contract and pay only as work is completed.



# RESOURCES

Use the following contact information to get more information on preparing for or dealing with wildfires.

**Oregon Department of Forestry**  
[www.oregon.gov/odf](http://www.oregon.gov/odf)

**Oregon Office of the State Fire Marshal**  
[www.oregon.gov/osp/sfm](http://www.oregon.gov/osp/sfm)

**Keep Oregon Green**  
[www.keeporegongreen.org](http://www.keeporegongreen.org)

**Oregon Explorer**  
<http://oregonexplorer.info>

**Pacific Northwest Fire Adapted Communities**  
[www.pnwfac.org](http://www.pnwfac.org)

**Ready.gov**  
[www.ready.gov/wildfires](http://www.ready.gov/wildfires)

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

**Insurance Information Institute**  
[www.iii.org](http://www.iii.org)

**U.S. Fire Administration (USFA)**  
[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)

**Firewise USA®**  
[www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
Emergency Preparedness and Response**  
[www.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires](http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires)

**American Red Cross**  
[www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/wildfire](http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/wildfire)

**Register for the Safe and Well listing:**  
<https://safeandwell.communityos.org>

**American Red Cross Emergency App**  
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cube.arc.hzd>



# IS YOUR FAMILY PREPARED FOR A WILDFIRE?

Every year, wildfires throughout Oregon claim people's homes, property and sometimes lives. Learn how to prevent and prepare for a wildfire before you become a victim.

In this guide:

- Wildfire behavior
- Preventing wildfires
- Mitigating your risk
- Protecting your home
- Dealing with the aftermath of a wildfire



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