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TREE FARM BULLETIN

PREPARING FOR WILDLAND FIRES

By Joe Stehling, Hidden Lake Firewise Coordinator

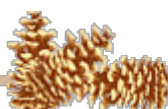
In previous articles I wrote about Firewise – Defensible Space and Identifying Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone. The recent devastating fires in California that wiped out a complete town, and killed many people, bring into focus wildfire prevention, mitigation, and survival. With that in mind I would like to talk about the Ready Set Go! Program that the International Association of Fire Chiefs developed in collaboration with, and to compliment, the Firewise Communities Program. The information herein is adapted from “Ready, Set, Go, Your Personal Wildland Fire Action Guide, New Mexico”.



Fire season is now a year-round reality in many areas, requiring firefighters and residents to be on heightened alert for the threat of wildland fire. Each year, wildland fires consume hundreds of homes in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Studies show that as many as 80 percent of the homes lost to wildland fires could have been saved if their owners had only followed a few simple fire-safe practices. In addition, wildland fire related deaths occur because people wait too long to leave their home. Your fire department takes every precaution to help protect you and your property from wildland fire. However, the reality is that in a major wildland fire event, there will simply not be enough fire resources or firefighters to defend every home. Successfully preparing for a wildland fire

enables you to take personal responsibility for protecting yourself, your family and your property.

The Ready, Set, Go! Program works in collaboration with New Mexico’s Living with Fire and other existing community wildland fire education efforts such as New Mexico Fire Adapted Communities and Firewise Communities USA.



This article will provide the tips and tools you need to: prepare for a wildland fire threat; create a personal action plan; have situational awareness when a fire starts; and act early as directed by local officials. By creating your own action plan, you will be better prepared to react quickly and safely during a wildfire emergency.

Fire is, and always has been, a natural occurrence. Hills, grasslands, canyons, and forests burned periodically long before homes were built. Wildfires are fueled by dry vegetation and driven by seasonal hot, dry winds, which are extremely dangerous and difficult to control.

Many people have built homes in the Wildland Urban Interface and landscaped without fully understanding the impact a fire may have on their lives. Few have adequately prepared their families for a timely evacuation in the event of a wildland fire. It is not a question of if, but when, the next major wildland fire will occur. Through planning, understanding and preparation, we can all be partners in the wildland fire solution. The tips are designed to create heightened awareness and a safer environment for you, your family and firefighters.

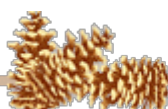


RSG! Program Tenets:

- **READY** – Take personal responsibility and prepare long before the threat of a wildland fire so your home is ready in case of a fire. Create defensible space using Firewise principles. Use fire-resistant landscaping and harden your home with fire-safe construction measures. Assemble emergency supplies and belongings in a safe place. Plan escape routes and make sure all those residing within the home know the plan of action.
- **SET** – Build situational awareness. Pack your emergency items. Stay aware of the latest news and information on the fire from local media, your local fire department and public safety agencies.
- **GO** – Act early! Follow your personal wildland fire action plan. Doing so will not only support your safety but will allow firefighters to best maneuver resources to combat the fire.

If you have prepared for a fire ahead of time and taken the precautions outlined in this program, you can feel more secure that your home will survive a wildland fire threat. However, there are additional actions you can take if a wildland fire is approaching your property. The information below are some guidelines for action. Remember, that no property is worth losing a life.

READY: Firewise principles can help individuals and communities accomplish the “Ready” tenet of RSG by providing the proven steps to empower individual homeowners to lower their property’s wildfire risk and to work with their neighbors to make their community safer. In

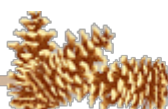


addition to identifying the hazards in the home ignition zone and creating Firewise defensible space, take the following steps:

- Create a Family Disaster Plan to evacuate family members and pets that includes meeting locations and communication plans. Plan and practice several different evacuation routes. Designate an emergency meeting location outside the fire hazard area. Be sure that everyone in the family knows the location of a prearranged meeting place, as well as evacuation routes. Include the evacuation of large animals, such as horses, in your plan.
- Have fire extinguishers on hand and teach your family how to use them. Ensure that your family knows where your gas, electric, and water main shut-off controls are and how to use them.
- Assemble an emergency supply kit as recommended by the NM Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Keep an extra kit in your vehicle. Appoint an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact so you can communicate with family members. Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers in your emergency supply kit.
- Have a portable radio or scanner so you can stay updated on the fire and weather emergency announcements.
- Make the decision and take action to evacuate early to avoid being caught in traffic or the fire itself.

SET: When a wildland fire threatens, take the following steps:

- Monitor fire weather conditions and fire status. See <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/> and <https://nmfireinfo.com/>. Stay tuned to your TV or local radio stations for updates. Alert family and neighbors.
- Place valuable keepsakes and important papers in your vehicle and place the vehicle inside the garage facing out, or back your car into the driveway to facilitate a quick departure. Leave the windows rolled up.
- Disconnect electric garage door openers so the door can be opened manually in the event of a power outage.
- Dress in appropriate clothing (i.e., clothing made from natural fibers, such as cotton, and work boots). Have goggles and a dry bandana or particle mask handy.
- Ensure that you have your emergency supply kit on hand that includes all necessary items, such as a battery powered radio, spare batteries, emergency contact numbers, and a lot of drinking water.
- Remain close to your house, drink plenty of water, and ensure your family and pets are accounted for until you are ready to leave.
- Close all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked. Remove all shades and curtains from windows. Move furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- Turn off pilot lights and air conditioning. Leave your lights on so firefighters can see your house under smoky conditions.
- Bring combustible items from the exterior of the house inside (e.g., patio furniture, children's toys, door mats, etc.)



- If you have a pool, place combustible items in the water.
- Turn off propane tanks and other gas at the meter.
- Don't leave sprinklers on or water running. They can affect critical water pressure.
- Leave exterior lights on.
- Have a ladder available. Patrol your property and extinguish all small fires until you leave. Cover attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals if time permits.
- Don't panic; remain calm and attempt to remain in touch with emergency personnel if available.

EMERGENCY SUPPLIES LIST: The NM Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management recommends every family have 3 types of emergency supply kits assembled long before a wildfire or other emergency: 1 kit at home, 1 kit in the car, and 1 kit per individual that is portable. Each kit should have a 3-day supply of water (1 gallon per person, per day) and non-perishable food (3-day supply). First aid kit and sanitation supplies. Flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries. An extra set of car keys, credit cards, and cash. Extra eyeglasses, contact lenses, prescriptions, and medications. Important family documents and contact numbers, including insurance documents and proof of residence, such as a utility bill or driver's license with correct address (to get back in, if needed, during incident while evacuation is in effect). Easily carried valuables and irreplaceable items. Personal electronic devices and chargers. Note: Keep a pair of comfortable shoes and a flashlight handy in case of a sudden evacuation at night.

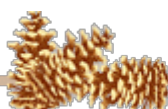
www.ready.gov/build-a-kit.

GO: By leaving early, you give your family the best chance of surviving a wildland fire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job in a safer environment. Most deaths from a wildland fire occur when residents leave too late.

- Do not wait to be advised to leave if there is a possible threat to your home or evacuation route. Leave early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke, or road congestion. If you are advised to leave by local authorities, do not hesitate!
- Leave to a predetermined location (it should be a low-risk area, such as a well-prepared neighbor or relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, motel.)
- Have several travel routes in case one route is blocked by the fire or emergency vehicles. Choose the safest route away from the fire.
- Take your emergency supply kit containing your family and pet's necessary items.

If You Are Trapped Survival Tips:

- Stay in your home until the fire passes. The flame front usually passes very quickly. If you have good defensible space, your home is the safest place to be if you cannot evacuate. Shelter away from outside walls.
- Bring garden hoses inside house so embers and flames do not destroy them. Remember, firebrands, flying embers, are the greatest danger to your house more so than the actual flame front.



- Look for spot fires and extinguish if found inside the house. A bucket of water and a mop can be used to extinguish small fires.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants made of natural fibers such as cotton.
- Stay hydrated.
- Ensure you can exit the home if it catches fire (remember if it's hot inside the house, it is four to five times hotter outside).
- Fill sinks and tubs for an emergency water supply. Place wet towels under doors to keep smoke and embers out.
- After the fire has passed, check your roof and extinguish any fires, sparks or embers. Check the attic as well. If there are fires that you cannot extinguish, call 911.

To learn more about the Ready, Set, Go! Program and its partners visit

<http://www.wildlandfirersg.org/>

1) COMMITTEE MEETING

All Tree Farmers are invited and encouraged to attend our 1st New Mexico Tree Farm Committee Meeting of the year (three held annually). Please join us at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, March 6th, 2019 at the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish office located at 7816 Alamo Road. NW, Albuquerque, NM 87120. Come out and hear what other tree farmers have been up to and share your tree farm accomplishments with the group. We look forward to visiting with you. If you have any questions, please contact Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

2) BUY, SELL OR TRADE

Are you looking for forestry related equipment to buy (i.e. chipper, splitter, chainsaw, etc.)? Or, do you own forestry related equipment you would like to sell or trade? Forestry related equipment only, please, no homes or land. We would like to help you make the connection with other New Mexico Tree Farmers. Provide us with a description of the equipment, price, photo and contact information and we will post it in the New Mexico Tree Farm Bulletin. If you would like us to help you make the connection, please provide information to Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

Property owner looking to purchase a towable chipper that can handle 3" to 4" diameter branches. If you have a towable chipper and would like to sell it, please contact Duane Trythall at 505-821-1319 or DTrythall1@outlook.com

3) COMMUNITY CORNER

If your community is having a forestry related public event let us know the details and we would be delighted to promote your event in the New Mexico Tree Farm Bulletin. Give us the event details, Who, What, Where and When with contact information and we will include in our monthly bulletin.

If you would like us to help you promote your event, please provide information to Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

4) E-MAIL INSTEAD OF SNAIL MAIL

Would you prefer to receive your Tree Farm Bulletin by e-mail instead of snail mail? If so, contact Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us and provide him with your contact information. By receiving your Tree Farm Bulletin by e-mail our operating costs are reduced. Thank you for considering this option.

