

# WHEN WILDFIRE APPROACHES

Should homes be threatened by wildfire, occupants may be advised to evacuate to protect them from life-threatening situations. Homeowners, however, do have the right to stay on their properties if they so desire and so long as their activities do not hinder fire fighting efforts. If occupants are not contacted in time to evacuate or if owners decide to stay with their homes, these suggestions will help them protect their properties and families.

- Evacuate, if possible, all family members not essential to protecting the house. Evacuate pets as well.
- Contact a friend or relative and relay your plans.
- Make sure family members are aware of a prearranged meeting place.
- Tune into a local radio station and listen for instructions.
- Place vehicles in the garage, have them pointing out, and roll up windows.
- Place valuable papers and momentos in the car.
- Close the garage door, but leave it unlocked. If applicable, disconnect the electric garage door opener so that the door can be opened manually.
- Place combustible patio furniture in the house or garage.
- Shut off propane at the tank or natural gas at the meter.
- Wear only cotton or wool clothes. Proper attire includes long pants, long sleeved shirt or jacket, and boots. Carry gloves, a handkerchief to cover face, water to drink, and goggles.
- Close all exterior vents.
- Prop a ladder against the house so firefighters have easy access to the roof.
- Make sure that all garden hoses are connected to faucets and attach a nozzle set on "spray."
- Soak rags, towels, or small rugs with water to use in beating out embers or small fires.
- Inside, fill bathtubs, sinks, and other containers with water. Outside, do the same with garbage cans and buckets. Remember that the water heater and toilet tank are available sources of water.
- Close all exterior doors and windows.
- Close all interior doors.



Photo courtesy of Jim Linardos

- Open the fireplace damper, but place the screen over the hearth to prevent sparks and embers from entering the house.
- Leave a light on in each room.
- Remove lightweight and/or non-fire resistant curtains and other combustible materials from around windows.
- If available, close fire resistant drapes, shutters, or venetian blinds. Attach pre-cut plywood panels to the exterior of windows and glass doors.
- Turn off all pilot lights.
- Move overstuffed furniture (e.g. couches, easy chairs, etc.) to the center of the room.
- Keep wood shake or shingle roofs moist by spraying water. Do not waste water. Consider placing a lawn sprinkler on the roof if water pressure is adequate. Do not turn on until burning embers begin to fall on the roof.
- Continually check the roof and attic for embers, smoke, or fire.

If a fire should occur within the house, contact the fire department immediately. Continue to inspect your house and property for embers and smoke.

## Most importantly, STAY CALM!

In May of 1999, the University of Nevada, Reno (Cooperative Extension and Agricultural Experiment Station) and the Sierra Front Wildfire Cooperators initiated a program entitled Living With Fire. One of the products of the Living With Fire program was a publication for homeowners.

The Pacific Northwest Prevention Working Team for the Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group reviewed and modified this publication for use throughout the Northwest.

For more information please contact your local fire service office.

## Fire Drill

To find out if your home makes the grade, answer the following questions. Your goal is to make your home survive a wildfire, so be honest in evaluating your progress.

### \*True/False

- T  F I have a minimum 30-foot non-combustible area around my home
- T  F My landscaping includes fire-resistive varieties
- T  F I have evaluated my wood shake roof for treatment or replacement
- T  F Overcrowded or weakened trees have been thinned or removed from my property, and low-hanging branches have been pruned
- T  F The grass and weeds are consistently cut
- T  F My wood pile and left-over building materials are at least 30 feet from my house
- T  F I've cleared needles, leaves and debris from my roof and deck
- T  F Street signs and the address of my home are visible from the road
- T  F I have an emergency checklist in the event of a wildfire, and I know to monitor local media for up-to-date information

\*If you answered False to any of these questions, bone up your efforts and try again! The more correct answers you give, the greater your chances of survival—and passing the ultimate test!

### Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group

- NW Fire Prevention Cooperatives
- Oregon Department of Forestry
- Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Washington Office of State Fire Marshal
- USDA Forest Service
- US Department of Interior
  - Bureau of Indian Affairs
  - Bureau of Land Management
  - National Park Service
  - Fish and Wildlife Service

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)  
[www.firefree.org](http://www.firefree.org)  
[www.firesafespokane.com](http://www.firesafespokane.com)  
[www.nifc.gov](http://www.nifc.gov)  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)  
[www.firesafecouncil.org](http://www.firesafecouncil.org)