

Be Prepared for Wildfire – Family and Individuals

By Doug Cram, Extension Forest and Fire Specialist, NMSU

- 1) **Medication grab-bag.** Consider what medications you need on a daily basis so that in the event of an emergency evacuation, you can quickly grab what you need. In the event of a mandatory evacuation, it could be days before you will be allowed to return; and even then, there may not be anything standing upon your return.
- 2) **Prepare a pet evacuation plan.** This may be as trivial as grabbing your pet and heading out, but as the size and number of pets increase, so too does the complexity – which then requires proactive arrangements, such as multiple pet carries and a pickup truck for example. Lost pets and pictures are the top two items cited by fire victims as things they wish they could get back.
- 3) **Back up your photos.** As noted above, lost photos are greatly missed. It is relatively easy to solve this problem. Digital photos can be stored in the cloud as well as on social media servers (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, etc.). We can also use our digital cameras to take pictures of our wall photos – the quality won't match the original, but it will be better than nothing. Focus first on irreplaceable photos and prints.
- 4) **Important documents?** Most documents can actually be replaced if necessary (e.g., birth certificates, social security cards, real estate deeds). However, living and last wills may be documents you want to take with you in the event of an evacuation.
- 5) **Go (Early)!** Grab your medications, pets, and water bottles. Be familiar with multiple evacuation routes – all your neighbors will be out there with you. Turn on your headlights. Drive cautiously. Remain calm in order to make rational decisions.

Speaking of evacuation, one of the best ways to receive emergency notifications – such as approaching wildfire – is to sign up for your county's free reverse 9-1-1 service.

Given more time, discuss adequate coverage with your insurance agent regarding fire loss. In addition to the primary dwelling, consider outbuildings, fences, livestock, forage, vehicles and other outside equipment. This can be as simple as a phone call.

There are steps you can take to harden your house and yard to wildfire, but they are best used proactively, not in the hours or minutes before an evacuation. However, if you have time, the first 5 feet surrounding the perimeter of your home should be completely devoid of anything that can burn.

Do NOT plan to slow down a wildfire or save your house with a garden hose! Intense heat, flames, and blowing smoke will render this approach useless and dangerous.

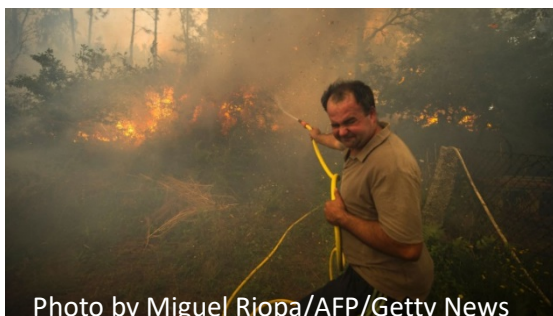
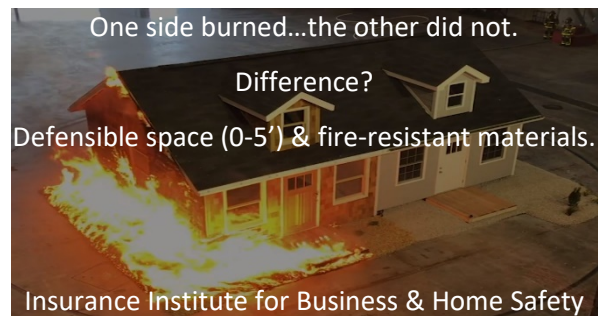


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