



Serving the Tri-county Area Since 1984

# Tri-County FireSafe Working Group

## Citizen Evacuation Guide

# Evacuating To Safety



**Wildfire Evacuation Guide**

**Montana counties of Lewis and Clark, Jefferson and Broadwater**

## Local Conditions

Tree mortality in Montana's forests has grown significantly in the past few years, primarily due to the pine bark beetle infestation and a continued and persistent drought. Many Montana residents live in and among these dead and dying trees. The fear of fire grows with each year that passes. When a fire threatens, are you prepared adequately enough to survive? Your local emergency responders are concerned about this and are working to increase your life safety along with theirs.

## What you can do

Take personal responsibility for your safety and understand your rights under Montana law:

1. Develop an Evacuation Plan
2. Assemble an Evacuation Kit
3. Develop a Neighborhood Network
4. Practice your Evacuation Plan
5. Stay Informed
6. Evacuate when told to do so



**Prepare Now!**

**Evacuate Early!**

**Evacuate Safely!**





## 1. Develop an Evacuation Plan

Your Evacuation Plan should be simple enough to be followed when under stress, detailed enough to cover these key elements and understood by everyone.

- ✓ Identify your evacuation routes:
  - At least two ways out of your neighborhood

***The evacuation routes determined by authorities will be dependent upon many factors, including which way the wildfire is moving.***

- ✓ Identify when you will evacuate:

You should evacuate when you:

  - Become aware of an approaching wildfire
  - Feel threatened
  - When public safety officials advise you to leave the area

***Keep in mind that wildfires may quickly threaten your HOME and your way out.***

Evacuation orders will be provided on the local radio Emergency Alert System by the DES coordinators. All radio and television stations in the greater Helena area will carry the Emergency Alert System message. Specific information will also be provided on the following frequencies: Boulder and Montana City – 105.9 FM; Basin – 102.3 FM; Cardwell – 106.1 FM; Elk Park – 103.7 FM; Jefferson City – 100.3 FM; Whitehall – 106.5 FM; Townsend – 98.3 FM and by Target Notification.

Keep your car fuel tank at least ½ full and be sure your vehicle is in good working order.

- ✓ Identify shut-off valves for:
  - Electricity – Leave electricity on to power well pumps and porch lights.
  - Gas
  - Water
  - LPG or propane
  
- ✓ Identify a family meeting place

A family meeting place should be:

  - A temporary place to assemble before moving on to evacuation center
  - Safely outside of the evacuation area
  - Doesn't interfere with emergency response activities
  - Easily traveled to by family members

***Remember family members may be coming from different locations such as work, school, appointments, home or other locations. If unable to reach home, all family members must have a place to meet and regroup.***

✓ Identify Evacuation Center Locations

***Evacuation Center Locations will be determined by public safety officials at the time of the evacuation and will be based upon the location of the wildfire, evacuation routes used and numbers of evacuees anticipated.***

***Center locations and phone numbers will be announced on the Emergency Alert System and DES public radio at the time of the emergency, or you can call your County's DES office.***

✓ Identify an Out-of-Area Emergency Contact

- Someone out of the telephone area code or out of state
- Available to receive calls and pass messages
- Everyone needs to know the contact's phone number
- Cordless phones will not work in a power outage; always maintain an older style plug in telephone.

***During a major emergency or disaster, local telephone circuits may become overloaded, whereas long distance circuits remain accessible. Identify a relative or friend who lives out of the area who can be used to check in with or pass messages back and forth to your immediate family members that may have gotten separated from you during the evacuation.***

✓ Special Considerations for Evacuations and Care of:

**(Pre-planning in advance for the following is strongly recommended).**

- Children and infants
- Elderly
- Dependent adults
- Persons with special needs such as medical and mental special care
- Pets, livestock and horses

***Special needs populations require special evacuation assistance. Special needs populations are those persons that cannot evacuate themselves without assistance. Don't rely on public safety agencies to evacuate you, your family or pets and livestock. Work with your neighbors to pre-plan and develop the assistance that you or they may need during an evacuation. Identify those living alone or those needing special assistance and pre-plan today how you will evacuate them during an emergency.***



## 2. Develop an Evacuation Kit

***An evacuation kit should be readily available and visible at all times, updated often and located near the front door of your house or in your car.***

- ✓ Items to include in your Evacuation Kit include:
  - Copy of your Evacuation Plan
  - Evacuation map and local area map
  - Important family documents and telephone numbers
  - Prescription medicines and eyeglasses
  - First Aid kit
  - At least one change of clothing, pillow and blankets
  - Flashlight with extra batteries
  - Hygiene supplies
  - Entertainment material for all family members
  - Food and water for all family members
  - Cash and coin for emergency purchases
  - Extra set of car keys
  - Special items for infant, children, elderly or those with special needs
  - Safety glasses or goggles and bandana for blowing wind and fire embers
  - Emergency tools (work gloves, sturdy shoes, and battery-operated radio)
  - Essential valuables
  - Cell phone and charger

## 3. Develop a Neighborhood Network

- ✓ Work with neighbors to:
  - Identify people with special needs
  - Identify people who need transportation to the evacuation center
  - Work with neighbors to coordinate the evacuation of pets, livestock and horses
  - Identify utilities that may require shutting down in your absence
  - Identify those protective actions that are required around your home when wildfire approaches
  - Develop a neighborhood communication plan, which includes a telephone tree to notify others in case of emergency or evacuation

***You may not always be at home during times of wildfire.***

***You need your neighbors to help in your absence!***

## 4. Practice your Evacuation Plan

- ✓ Quiz your children periodically so they remember what to do in case of wildfire.
- ✓ Conduct regular fire and emergency drills.
- ✓ Drive evacuation routes so you remain familiar with them and road conditions.
- ✓ Maintain your evacuation kit.
- ✓ Be sure that all visitors and guests know and understand your evacuation plan and evacuation routes.

***Practice, practice, and practice! Repetition breeds the automatic response you will need when having to act under stress during emergencies.***

## **5. Stay Informed**

- ✓ Stay informed on current weather

Local Weather Service Information

NOAA Weather Radio – Helena Station 162.400

Telephone: (406) 443-5151

Web Link: <http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?zoneid=MTZ014&zflg>

- ✓ Stay informed on current emergency plans and preparations.
- ✓ Call your local Disaster and Emergency Services:

**Lewis and Clark County: 447-8285**

**Jefferson County: 225-4035**

**Broadwater County: 266-9250**

## **Dial 9-1-1 for Emergencies only!**

This is not for informational purposes! Please do not tie up a 911 phone line for information.

## **6. Evacuate when told to do so**

- ✓ Law enforcement agencies are responsible for enforcing an evacuation order. Follow their directions promptly and exactly!
- ✓ You will be advised of potential evacuations as early as possible. Take the initiative to stay informed and aware.
- ✓ Listen to your radio/TV and for announcements from law enforcement and emergency personnel.
- ✓ You may be directed to a temporary assembly area out of the area to await information and directions to an evacuation center.
- ✓ When heavy smoke reduces visibility, movement may be restricted only to escorted convoys.
- ✓ Always drive cautiously!

***Evacuate immediately if told to do so! Evacuate when you become aware of an approaching wildfire. Evacuate if you feel threatened. Evacuate before it becomes too late!***



## **Phases of The Evacuation Process**

### **1. Evacuation Alert –**

Good probability of the need to evacuate. Recommend movement of persons requiring extraordinary care, large mobile property and livestock (if feasible). This phase will be implemented under the following conditions: Active fire in the area.

### **2. Evacuation Order –**

A disaster declaration or emergency proclamation has been issued, and authority has been granted for the Incident Commander to order the evacuation. Access to the affected area is prohibited to anyone not authorized by the Incident Commander or designee. This phase will be implemented under the following conditions: Fire would impact evacuation routes within 12 hours.

### **3. Maintenance Phase –**

Perimeter roadblocks are maintained, and evacuated area(s) are patrolled 24 hours a day. Regular incident status briefings are provided for evacuees at pre-designated sites. Limited access for evacuees to return for specified periods may be allowed if conditions and responder resources permit and directed by the Incident Commander, in conjunction with the County Sheriff.

### **4. Recovery Phase -**

Evacuees are allowed to return only as hardship and special needs are evaluated and addressed by designated relief and response agencies. During this phase, general public access to certain areas may be restricted, as determined by the Incident Commander and the County Sheriff.

## **Returning Home**

***Officials will determine when it is safe for you to return to your home.***

- ✓ Local officials will follow a Re-entry Plan in working towards getting you back into your neighborhood.
- ✓ This will take place when it is safe for you, emergency personnel and utility workers. Routes will be open and accessible.
- ✓ Prior to re-entry, utilities must be repaired and in service; sewer and sanitation must be repaired; running water must be available and essential services (gas, medical services and food) must be available.

### **These things take time. BE PATIENT.**

The safety of you and the safety of emergency service personnel are the priority.

- ✓ When you return home:
  - Be alert for downed power lines and other hazards
  - Check propane tanks, regulators, and lines before turning gas on
  - Check your residence carefully for hidden embers or smoldering fires
  - Contact your insurance company if you have suffered loss or damage

# ONE LESS SPARK ONE LESS WILDFIRE

The wildfire that doesn't happen will result in fewer evacuations, a reduction in suppression costs and less damage to property. Wildfire prevention works! Studies have demonstrated that prevention education reduces the number of human-caused wildfire ignitions and the number of acres burned. Fire prevention education "pays for itself many times over." An additional dollar invested in prevention education would return \$35 in avoided fire suppression costs and associated property losses.

The theme for these prevention efforts in the Tri-county area is centered on the "One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire" (OLS) campaign to address human-caused fires. The OLS campaign provides a versatile, centralized message that increases the awareness of the effects of wildfire. The program facilitates participation by everyone including communities, individuals, government agencies, groups, and private initiatives.

***Individuals realize their role in preventing wildfire and take personal responsibility to reduce the risks and effects of wildfire.  
Each person can make a difference!***



## Are you Prepared?

- Plant and maintain non-woody, low-growing green vegetation around structures.
- Remove ladder fuels and prune trees to create a separation between vegetation, keeping fire on the ground.
- Thin trees to a minimum of 10 feet between tree tops or create vegetation "islands" to break up continuous fuels.
- Keep deck surface and area under the deck clear of combustible materials.
- Remove leaves and combustible materials from roof and area immediately surrounding the home.
- Make sure your address is visible from the road.
- Create a wildfire action plan for your family.
- Include evacuation routes and meeting locations.
- Assemble an emergency supply kit.
- Monitor fire and weather conditions.

## Drown Your Fire

**ONE LESS SPARK**  
**ONE LESS WILDFIRE**



- Keep campfires small and within an established fire ring, pit or metal grate.
- Choose a location away from overhanging branches and dry vegetation.
- Never leave campfire unattended.
- Using a shovel, stir water and dirt into campfire to make sure it is wet and cold to the touch.
- If it is too hot to touch, then it is too hot to leave.
- Drown...Stir...Feel. Make sure your campfire is DEAD OUT and COLD to the touch.





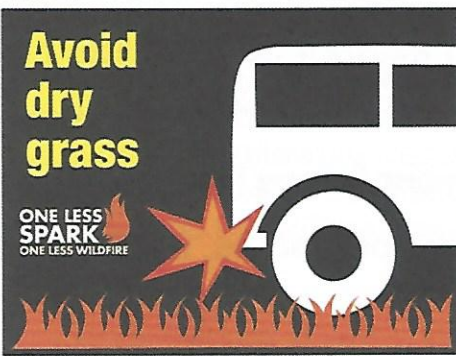
- Think before you ignite your burn piles.
- Make sure you are complying with local regulations. Obtain the proper permit.
- Keep your burn piles small and less than 4 feet in diameter. Clear flammable vegetation within 10 feet of the outer edges of your burn piles.
- Check your local weather forecast.
- Don't burn on windy days.
- Never leave your burn piles unattended.
- Have water readily accessible.

## Watch for Sparks!



- Carry a fire extinguisher.
- Ensure spark arrestor is working properly.
- Conduct maintenance checks.
- Stay on designated roads and trails.
- Avoid dry vegetation.

## Avoid dry grass



- Carry a fire extinguisher.
- Properly maintain your vehicles. Check tire pressure. Make sure nothing is dragging.
- Don't drive over or park on dry vegetation.
- Don't pull off the road into tall, dry grass.
- Properly lubricate wheel bearings to prevent overheating.
- Make sure brakes are in proper working order.
- Maintain and clean exhaust systems and spark arrestors. Clean out engine compartments and catalytic converters.

## Check Trailer Chains



- Carry a fire extinguisher.
- Use appropriate safety pins and hitch ball.
- Secure safety chain and make sure nothing is dragging on the ground.
- Properly maintain vehicles. Check tire pressure.
- Don't pull off to the side of the road into tall, dry grass.

## Prevent wildfires while target shooting



- Place your targets on dirt or gravel or clear an area around your target, avoiding dry grass and flammable materials.
- Bring a supply of water and/or a blanket to put out a fire, just in case.
- Don't shoot trash (TVs or household appliances).
- Don't shoot with steel core ammo.
- Remember that exploding targets, tracer ammo and incendiary ammo are illegal on public lands.

## **When A Wildfire Approaches**

- **Park vehicles facing out with windows rolled up and keys in ignition.**
- **Place your evacuation kit and important valuables in your vehicle.**
- **Prepare children and elderly family members for evacuation.**
- **Secure pets and livestock and prepare them for evacuation.**
- **Close shutters, windows, and fireplace dampers.**
- **Turn off heating and air conditioning.**
- **Remove combustible window coverings from windows.**
- **Move any last minute combustible items such as lawn furniture, newspapers or doormats away from your home.**
- **Leave electricity supply, inside lights and exterior porch lights on.**
- **Place a garden hose and buckets full of water around your house.**
- **Place aluminum ground ladders outside your house for firefighting.**
- **Cover up by wearing 100% cotton clothing (long pants, long sleeved shirt), goggles, hat and bandana.**
- **Notify your out-of-area contact(s). Inform them of your intended evacuation destination.**
- **Leave a note attached to your front door for neighbors and public safety officials, advising them of your evacuation destination and telephone number if available.**
- **Evacuate when wildfire approaches, you feel threatened, or directed to do so by public safety officials.**



# If You Become Trapped

## ✓ While in your vehicle:

- Stay calm.
- Park your vehicle in an area clear of vegetation.
- Close all vehicle windows and vents.
- Turn air conditioning to “max” mode or “re-circulate.”
- Cover yourself with wool or 100% cotton blanket or jacket.
- Lie on vehicle floor.
- Keep your vehicle running; with your headlights on.
- Use your cell phone to call 9-1-1 and notify officials of your situation and location.

## ✓ While on foot:

- Stay calm.
- Go to an area clear of vegetation (a ditch or depression), if possible.
- Lie face down.
- Cover mouth and nose. Cover your body with cotton clothing, coat or blanket.
- Use your cell phone to call 9-1-1 and notify officials of your situation and location.

## ✓ While at home:

- Stay calm.
- Keep your family together.
- Call 9-1-1 to notify officials of your situation and location.
- Fill sinks and tubs with cold water.
- Keep doors and windows closed, but unlocked.
- Stay inside your house.
- Stay away from outside walls and windows.
- If your house catches fire, move to the far end of the house and close windows and inside doors to restrict the spread of the fire. When it is safe to do so, exit your house and move to a “blackened” area of your property or neighborhood that has already burned. It is safer to be in an area that has already burned than an area not yet burned.

***It will get hot in the house, but this is much safer than being outside and exposed to flames and dangerous fire gases.***

## ✓ After the fire passes (if safe to do so):

- Check your family and neighbors.
- Check roof and exterior of house for fire.
- Check under decks, crawl space, and inside attic for fire.
- Check your yard for burning trees, woodpiles and firewood stacks.
- Extinguish embers and sparks.
- Continue to check for fires, embers and sparks for at least 12 to 24 hours after the fire has passed.

# MY EVACUATION PLAN

## Evacuation Routes out of my neighborhood

Primary: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate: \_\_\_\_\_

## Evacuation Routes out of the general area

If wildfire approaches from the North: \_\_\_\_\_

If wildfire approaches from the South: \_\_\_\_\_

If wildfire approaches from the East: \_\_\_\_\_

If wildfire approaches from the West: \_\_\_\_\_

## Designated Family Meeting Place (outside evacuation area)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## Evacuation Tasks (identify family member assigned to each task)

Ready exterior of house for evacuation (combustibles, propane, hose, water, ladders) \_\_\_\_\_

Ready interior of house for evacuation (windows, window furnishings, air conditioning) \_\_\_\_\_

Ready vehicle for evacuation \_\_\_\_\_

Ready evacuation kit and important valuables \_\_\_\_\_

Ready pets and livestock for evacuation \_\_\_\_\_

Ready children and elderly members for evacuation \_\_\_\_\_

Leave note for neighbors and public safety officials \_\_\_\_\_

# IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

## Emergency 9-1-1

### Out-of-Area Emergency Contact

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Neighborhood Contact for Evacuation Assistance

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Children's Schools & Childcare

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### Veterinary & Animal Boarding Services

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### Lewis & Clark

447- 8293

447-8285

911

911

### Jefferson

225- 4075

225-4035

911

911

### Broadwater

266-3441

266-9250

911

911

Sheriff

DES

FIRE

Ambulance