

# Wildfire Safety



This Wildfire Preparation packet is designed to give you ideas you can use right now to plan for a potentially active wildfire season. It contains helpful tips, information, resources, and worksheets. We can work together to make our ourselves and our community more resilient to the challenge of wildfires.

## Stay aware

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Information page at [www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/fire](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/fire) for current Minnesota wildfire updates, fire danger levels, and burning restrictions
- The US Forest Service – Superior National Forest provides active information on their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/SuperiorNF](https://www.facebook.com/SuperiorNF)
- Visit the Cook County Firewise website at [www.cookcountyyfirewise.org](http://www.cookcountyyfirewise.org) to:
  - Learn more about wildfire safety
  - Register for the CodeRED emergency notification system and download the CodeRED Notification App
- Follow WTIP and Boreal for local news and events.

## Plan ahead

- Create an evacuation plan
- Pack a “Go Bag” with emergency supplies and copies of important papers
- Keep the gas tank in vehicles at least half full
- If the evacuation risk is high, back vehicles into your garage or park them in an open space facing the direction of escape.

## Assess your home

Assess the area immediately around your home for the presence of easily combustible materials and address any areas of concern

- If you need assistance clearing burnable materials from around your home, Care Partners Chore program may be able to help (please note we cannot use chain saws)

## Protect yourself from wildfire smoke

Even if a wildfire isn’t close enough to require evacuation, the smoke from surrounding fires can affect your health. See the attached handout for ideas to protect yourself and your loved ones.

## Care for your mental health

Experiencing any natural disaster – including wildfires – can affect us physically, mentally, and emotionally. See the attached handout for tools to support yourself and others before, during and after a fire.

# My Evacuation Plan



- Call these people if I need help packing up my car or getting out of the area  
(you might include friends, neighbors, family, faith community members)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

- Review my escape routes (you may want to attach a county map with routes highlighted in case cell phone or GPS service is unavailable)

**NOTE: Make sure to follow any officially designated evacuation routes**

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- Contact a friend or family member outside the area who can watch my pet if needed

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

- Call a friend or family member outside the area to let them know when I am leaving and what route I expect to take

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

- Grab my "Go Bag"

## When leaving your home during an evacuation order:

- Keep power and lights on.
- Leave a written note on the table indicating who evacuated, where you are heading, and the time and date.
- Leave your home or cabin unlocked.
- If you have a hose, turn it on with the nozzle in the closed position.
- Put any ladders up against your roof.
- Leave your boats in the lake with motor, gas, and life preservers.

## My Go Bag

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water (one gallon per person, for drinking and sanitation)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Medicine and medical supplies (a few days' worth, if possible)                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food (a several-day supply of non-perishable food)                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Large envelope with copies of important papers:  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family photos or mementos  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Trust or will</li></ul>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Health Care Directive</li></ul>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Homeowner's or rental insurance and auto insurance</li></ul>            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> N95 mask(s)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Medicare, Medicaid, and other health insurance policies</li></ul>       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manual can opener  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Personal documents such as ID (make sure they are up to date)</li></ul> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local and state road maps  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● List of medications and doctor's phone number</li></ul>                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone charger (wall plug and solar or battery powered, if possible) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Pet vaccination records</li></ul>                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pet food and supplies (including medications if needed)                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change of clothes  | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra eyeglasses/contact lenses  | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pillow, blanket, and towel   | _____   |



# My Medical Information

Your name and date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

## Primary Care Doctor(s)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Clinic \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Clinic \_\_\_\_\_

## Specialists (continue on back if needed)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Specialty \_\_\_\_\_ Clinic \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Specialty \_\_\_\_\_ Clinic \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Specialty \_\_\_\_\_ Clinic \_\_\_\_\_

## Medications

Medication \_\_\_\_\_ Dose/Frequency \_\_\_\_\_

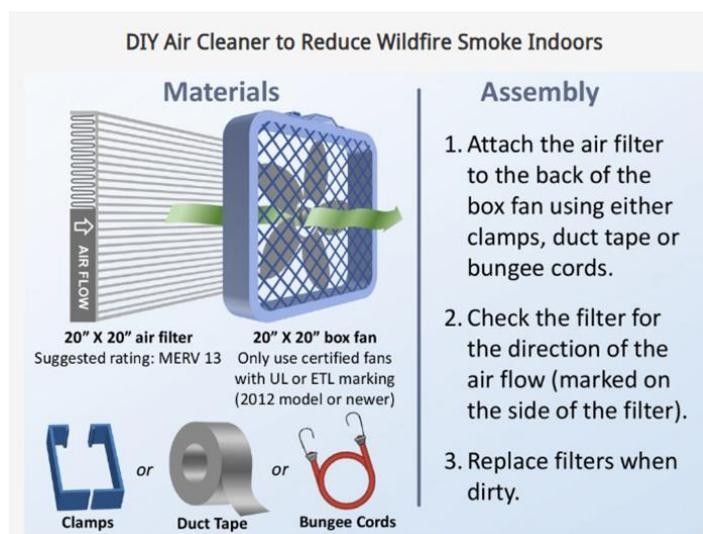
**Attach copy of most recent insurance card**

# Protect Yourself from Wildfire Smoke

Wildfire smoke is a mix of gases, water vapor and small particles from burning trees, plants, buildings and other material. Breathing in wildfire smoke can hurt your health. Older adults, children, pregnant women and people with asthma, lung disease, or heart disease are especially at risk.

You can take simple steps now to protect yourself and your family from wildfire smoke.

- Keep track of air quality levels
  - To view air quality information using your mobile device, download the Environmental Protection Agency's free AirNow mobile app or visit [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov).
- If you are part of a sensitive or at-risk group, check with your doctor or nurse about what you need to protect yourself from wildfire smoke.
- Stay indoors and minimize outdoor activity as much as possible when the air quality is poor.
- Use an air purifier at home.



You can make a DIY air filter by attaching a furnace filter to a box fan. Remember to turn off the DIY filter when you leave your home.

Remember to do it yourself at your own risk. Care Partners of Cook County is not liable or responsible for any damage or loss from making an air filter at home or for your use of this information.

(image from [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov))

- Consider setting up a cleaner air space where you live by following these general guidelines:
  - Choose a room to be your cleaner air space.
  - Prevent smoke from entering the room (close the windows).
  - Keep the room cool by using fans or an air conditioner.
  - Filter the air in the room with an air cleaner or DIY air filter.
  - Avoid activities in your home that create smoke or other particles (like burning candles, vacuuming, frying food, etc.).
  - Spend as much time as possible in the cleaner air room.
- If you cannot create a cleaner air space in your home, visit cleaner air shelters and spaces in communities such as churches and libraries.

This page adapted from Oregon State University Extension resource "Our Future in Our Hands" (EM9404)

# Assess Your Home

The number and size of wildfires across the United States have increased, affecting many communities. Thankfully, there are basic and affordable actions you can take to protect your home.

## Why homes burn

Embers are a major reason why homes are destroyed during a wildfire. Embers are pieces of burning matter from the fire. Wind can carry embers far away from the active fire area. If these embers land on materials that are burnable on or near a house, the home will be at risk of burning. Preparing your home and the area around your home for wildfire and embers can help protect you and your community.

## Check that the area surrounding your home is cleared of burnable materials

- Leaves and needles cleared from yard, home foundation, gutters, under decks
- Landscape materials immediately surrounding foundation are non-burnable (i.e. gravel, rock or concrete pavers rather than mulch )
- Tree branches not hanging over roof
- Wood piles stored at a distance from home exterior
- Lawn mowed and plants watered
- Dead or dried plant materials removed from yard and gardens
- Lawn shrubs and trees spaced apart

## Help make access to your home easier for firefighters

- Street names and house or apartment numbers are clearly marked.
- Driveway cleared of vegetation, including branches, shrubs and trees.

## If your home is in a deeply forested or vulnerable area, consider installing an exterior wildfire sprinkler system

Check with your local fire department or [www.cookcountypfirewise.org](http://www.cookcountypfirewise.org) for more information



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# Care For Your Mental Health

Here are a few tips and tools to support your mental well-being if you are affected by wildfire. This is not a complete list. If you or someone you know is experiencing mental health challenges due to wildfire, please contact a behavioral health care provider or other services for support.

## BEFORE: Be ready

- Use the information in this packet to plan ahead for a fire. This can help you feel more prepared during an emergency and give you tangible action steps to take.
- Consider adding a few items to support your mental health in your “Go Bag” such as a book, game, small piece of artwork, religious text, or journal
- Ask friends, co-workers and family members about what they are doing to prepare for fires. Share any worries, fears or uncomfortable emotions that you may be experiencing. This can help you process those emotions with people you trust, get more ideas for your preparedness plan and feel connected to others who may be experiencing the same thing.

## DURING: Take care

- Check accurate local information sources such as county emergency management or the county sheriff’s office to stay updated on the fire status and evacuations.
- If you are evacuated, try to find a safe place where you can get food, water, rest and medical care if needed for yourself, your family and your pets.
- Practice self-care. It is normal to go into “survival mode” and feel “off” during an emergency. It can also be hard to do what you would typically do to take care of yourself. Even if it may seem difficult to practice self-care during a fire, it is essential. Practice deep breathing and use calming self-talk.
- Keep a journal, try to maintain a schedule, take breaks from the news and social media, get enough sleep and reach out to others.

## AFTER: Know the signs

Wildfires affect everyone differently. Signs of emotional distress after a fire could include:

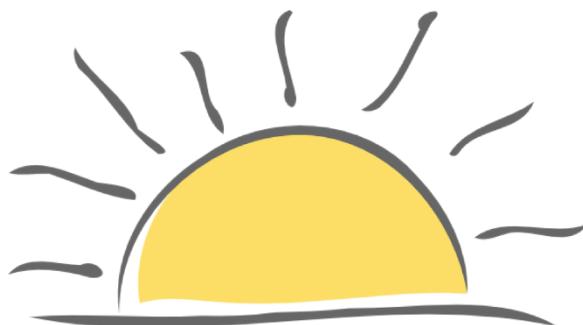
- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Angry outbursts
- Being easily startled
- Worrying or feeling guilty
- Restlessness and wariness
- Difficulty remembering things
- Sadness and depression
- Pulling away from people or things
- Having no or low energy, feeling tired
- Feeling afraid
- Unexplained aches and pains, like constant headaches or stomachaches
- Excessive smoking, drinking or abusing drugs or prescription medications
- Thinking of hurting or killing yourself or someone else

## AFTER: What to Do

Because everyone experiences different impacts from wildfires, there is also a lot of variety in what tools and strategies work for people and how long it takes to feel better. Consider which of these approaches makes the most sense for you.

- Connect with others about your feelings to help get through a tough time. Talk to family, friends, coworkers, church members, other wildfire survivors and peer support groups.
- Think about other times when you had to cope with something difficult and what helped you then. Use those coping skills now.
- Seek support from professionals who are trained in dealing with what you are experiencing.
- If you are also experiencing other health issues, visit a doctor or clinic. Physical and mental health issues can be related to each other.
- Try self-care exercises like walking or exercising, eating well, meditation, deep breathing exercises, listening to music, or practicing a hobby or creative activity.

Be prepared for emotional distress around the event's anniversary and other triggers. Many people experience renewed feelings of fear, anxiety and sadness around the anniversary of a wildfire. Certain sounds, smells or sights can also take people back to the wildfire or trigger fear of it happening again. Mental health professionals can help you identify healthy coping strategies.



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# More Resources and Information

## Cook County Firewise

website: [www.cookcountyfirewise.org](http://www.cookcountyfirewise.org)

Cook County Firewise Coordinator, Aaron Mollin-Kling: 218-387-4133

## Cook County Emergency Management

Emergency Management Director, Mike Keyport: 218-387-3059

## Cook County Sheriff's Office

Phone: 218-387-3030

Emergency: **911**

## Air Quality Information and Updates

Includes current air quality index by zip code and air quality email alert signup

Website: [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov)

## Disaster Preparedness for Older Adults

[www.ready.gov/older-adults](http://www.ready.gov/older-adults)

## Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA)

Website: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

General Information number for region 5 (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI): 312-408-5500

## Minnesota Mental Health Hotline - dial 988

## Wildfire Smoke Readiness

Online resource from Cook County Public Health:

[https://co.cook.mn.us/government/departments/public\\_health\\_and\\_human\\_services/public\\_health/indoor\\_air\\_quality.php](https://co.cook.mn.us/government/departments/public_health_and_human_services/public_health/indoor_air_quality.php)



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