

Getting Out Alive

Preparing
for wildfire
and
evacuation
in the
Wildland
Urban
Interface



www.rsf-fire.org



Living with Wildfire

The Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District contains multiple communities nestled within the wildland urban interface, areas where wildland vegetation is intermixed with structures. As we saw in October 2007, warm climate, dense brush, flammable vegetation, drought conditions, and steep terrain combine for a volatile wildfire equation.

When living within the wildland urban interface, planning ahead for wildfires is a necessity. Fire strikes without warning and moves alarmingly fast, often leaving residents with limited time to gather household belongings and mementos. More and more communities are being developed within wildland-urban interface areas, placing people, pets, and homes at risk of succumbing to wildfire. Every year, communities throughout San Diego County experience the devastation of such disasters, which is not surprising when you consider the fact that 1/3 of all homes in San Diego County are located in the wildland urban interface.

Preparing for wildfires before they happen is your best defense against the flames. This brochure offers tips to help you prepare for potential wildfires to ensure your family and pets make a safe escape from wildfire, including information about developing an emergency plan, what to do if you have to evacuate, and what to do if you are not able to evacuate.



Before Disaster Strikes

The best way to protect your home from wildfire is to prepare before disaster strikes.

- Remove leaves and other debris from your roof and rain gutters.
- Keep 100 feet of “defensible space” around your home. Trim trees and vegetation away from the exterior of your home, rooftop, and chimney(s).
- Thin out combustible vegetation within 30 feet of roadways and driveways.
- Remove dead, dying, or diseased trees.
- Trim tree branches 10 feet from rooftops, chimneys, and outdoor barbecues.
- Dispose of yard clippings, plant waste, trash, debris, and other combustible materials in an appropriate manner.
- Replenish dead and dying vegetation with fire-resistant trees and plants; do not replant with flammable vegetation.
- Combustible material must be kept at least 10 feet away from propane tanks.
- Firewood should be neatly stacked with a minimum of 30 feet of clearance from structures.
- Private gates must be equipped with an approved fire district gate access switch and/or strobe sensor.



2007 Witch Creek Fire

Additionally, all new construction within the fire protection district must be built to ignition-resistant standards and must remain that way. Even when remodeling or putting an addition on to your existing home, be sure your plans match these guidelines:

- Exterior walls must be fire-resistant. Any wood siding must be treated or ignition resistant.
- Eaves must be boxed or constructed of heavy timber and all vents must be screened to prevent fire embers from entering the inside of your home.
- Windows must be dual-pane or tempered glass.
- Chimneys must have spark arrestors with a minimum ½” screen.



2007 Witch Creek Fire
Good defensible space

- Residential fire sprinkler systems must be maintained.
- Roof must be comprised of Class-A, non-combustible materials like tile, slate, cement, asphalt or metal. No wood shingles.
- Wood fences should be at least 5 feet from your home.
- Trellises, patio covers and other auxiliary structures must be made with non-combustible materials. Minimum timber size requirements are 4” x 6”, and columns must be masonry and stucco or precast concrete. The structure’s covering must remain at least 50% open, or Class-A roof is required.
- Decks should be non-combustible or constructed of heavy timber or fire retardant-treated wood.
- Landscape MUST be fire-resistant and well-maintained.

Evacuation Route Map

Wildfire fatalities most commonly occur when people leave their home too late or are over-taken by fire. If you live in an area that's at high risk for wildfire, it's important for you to plan your evacuation route now, before an emergency situation arises.

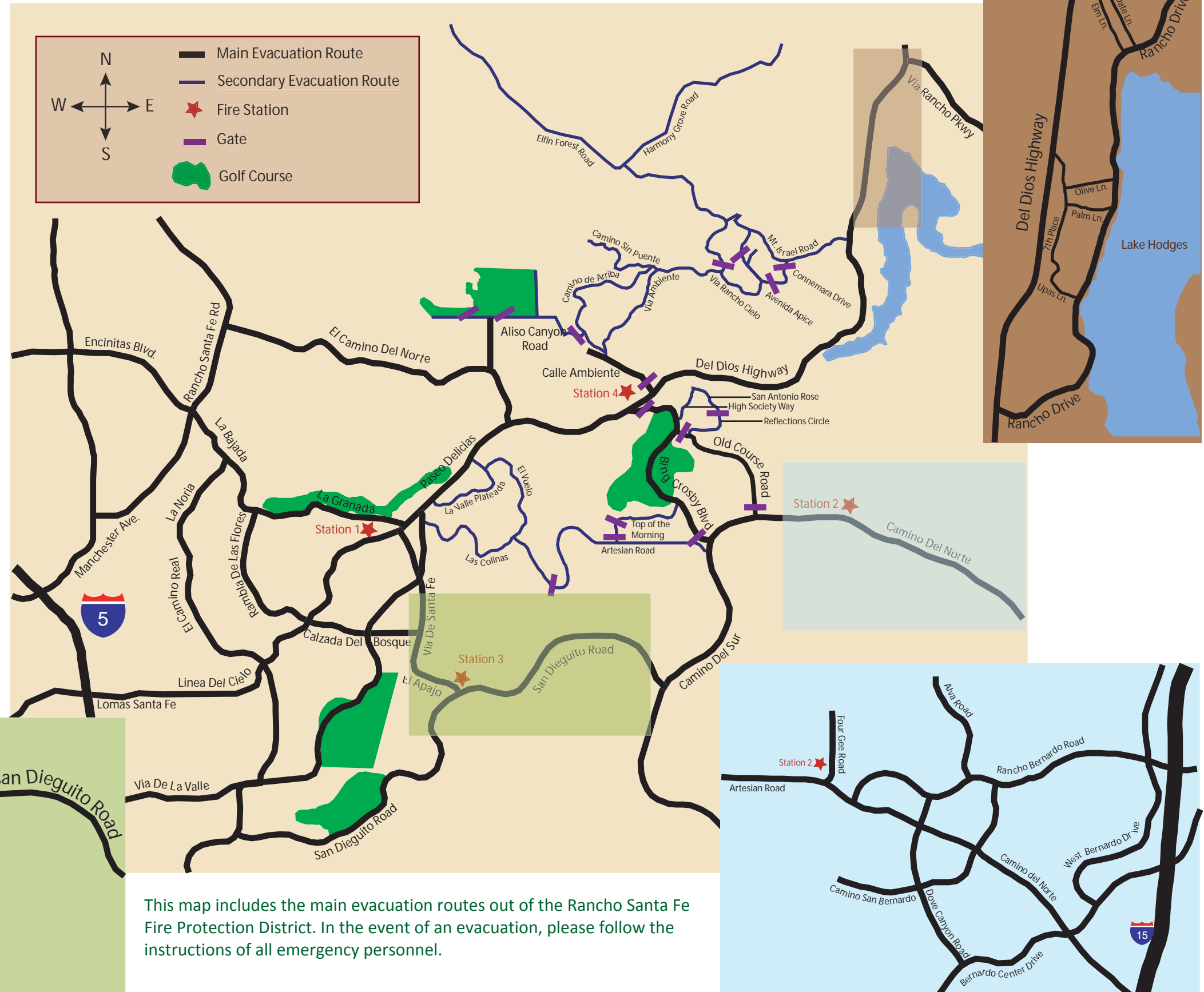
Relocate early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke or road congestion. Don't wait to be told by authorities to leave. In an intense wildfire, they may not have time to knock on every door. If you are advised to evacuate, don't hesitate!

"Should I stay or should I go Quiz":

- Are you physically fit to fight spot fires in and around your home for up to 10 hours or more?
- Are you and your family members mentally, physically and emotionally able to cope with the intense smoke, heat, stress and noise of a wildfire while defending your home?
- Can you protect your home while also caring for members of your family, pets, etc.?
- Do you have the necessary resources, training, and properly maintained equipment to effectively fight a fire?
- Does your home have defensible space of at least 100 feet and is it cleared of flammable materials and vegetation?
- Is your home constructed of ignition resistant materials?

If you answered "No" to any of these questions, then plan to evacuate early.

REMEMBER: By evacuating early, you give your family the best chance of surviving a wildfire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job.



This map includes the main evacuation routes out of the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District. In the event of an evacuation, please follow the instructions of all emergency personnel.

Develop a Plan

An emergency plan is an essential for a safe and methodical evacuation during a disaster. Prepare, review, and practice your evacuation plan with your family before an emergency situation occurs.

When designing your plan with your family, be sure to include the following:

- Identify a minimum of two (2) main exit routes from your neighborhood. Map out alternative routes in the event main routes are blocked. (There is a map of the immediate area provided on pages 4 and 5).
- Know the location of safe zones (such as golf courses or large open fields) and evacuation centers in the area during wildfire or other disaster situations.
- Make a list of "IMPORTANT ITEMS" that cannot be left behind:
 - Medications, prescriptions and eyeglasses
 - Important documents (e.g., birth certificates, tax records, etc.)
 - Photos, art, jewelry and other important mementos
 - Pets, pet food, leash(es), pet carrier(s)
 - Emergency Supply Kit (Sample checklist enclosed)
 - Cell phones, wallets, and other essential personal items
- Designate a relative or friend as an out-of-area contact through whom family members can relay information. Long-distance phone systems are often operational when local phone communications are overloaded.
- Plan how you will transport your pets. Make sure all your animals are wearing either a license or identification tag. Consider having your animals micro-chipped for identification purposes. PLEASE NOTE: If you own large animals, such as horses and livestock, make arrangements far in advance for their transportation and lodging during an emergency. Train them in advance how to load into trailers quickly and easily. A disaster situation is not the time to trailer-train a horse. DO NOT let horses loose to fend for themselves.
- If you are unable to drive a car, develop a network of neighbors, friends and/or caregivers who can help you prepare for and assist you during a disaster.
- Make a contingency plan should you not be home when wildfire threatens. Make arrangements in advance for people or pets that will be home when you are not. Pre-arrange a family meeting place outside of your neighborhood as well.
- Register your home phone number, cell phone number, and email address with AlertSanDiego, San Diego County's mass emergency notification system. Registration can be done online at www.AlertSanDiego.org.



Evacuation

The following suggestions will help in the pre-evacuation and evacuation process:

- Wear cotton or wool long pants, long-sleeve shirts or jackets, gloves and a damp cloth to cover your nose and mouth. Do not wear short-sleeve shirts or synthetic fabrics.
- Back your car into the garage (facing out) keeping the windows closed and keys in the ignition.
- Close the garage door, but leave it unlocked. Disconnect the automatic garage door in case of power failure.
- Place valuable documents, family mementos, pets and other valuables in your car in the garage for a quick departure.
- Move yard furniture, firewood, or other combustible materials away from the exterior of the house or store it in the garage.

- Attach garden hoses to spigots. Place hoses so they can reach any area around your home.
- Fill sinks, bathtubs and buckets with water to serve as extra water reservoirs.
- To eliminate the possibility of sparks blowing into hidden areas within the house, close window shutters if they are fire resistant and cover windows, attic openings, eave vents and sub-floor vents with fire resistant material such as 1/2-inch or thicker plywood.
- If you have one, place an aluminum ladder against the house on the side opposite the approaching fire to help firefighters access your roof quickly.
- Close all windows and doors to prevent sparks from blowing inside. Close all interior doors to slow interior fire spread.
- To make your home more visible in heavy smoke, turn porch and yard lights on and turn on a light in each room of your home.
- Shut off liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) or natural gas valves.
- Most communities within the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District have narrow roads, which can cause traffic congestion leading to panic for those evacuating. Evacuate early.
- You do not need to wait for an evacuation order. If at any time you feel threatened, leave. You may also want to leave early if the evacuation will take a long time, such as if you are evacuating with small children, dependent adults, or large animals.
- If you are told to evacuate, do so immediately. While having your home damaged or destroyed by fire can be devastating, it is not worth risking your life or the lives of firefighters.
- Evacuate in the opposite direction of the fire.
- Do not attempt to pick up children from school or daycare. Staff members are trained to protect your children and will institute proper emergency procedures on site.
- Call your out-of-town contact and let them know you are evacuating and where you are going.
- Once you have left, stay out of the area until authorities permit re-entry. This may take a while as fire and safety personnel have to make sure it is safe and the infrastructure is in place for residents to repopulate the area.

If You Can't Evacuate

If the fire approaches too rapidly for you to be able to safely evacuate from the area, your home is the safest place for you to seek shelter in which to wait out the fire. The following outlines the safest way to shelter-in-place:

- Stay indoors and wait for the wildfire-front to pass, usually within 30 minutes.
- Call your out-of-town emergency contact to let them know you are sheltering-in-place. If local phone lines go down, try using a cellular phone as an alternative, or correspond via email if possible.
- Shelter in rooms at the opposite end of your home from where the fire is approaching. Stay away from the perimeter walls.
- If the interior of your home catches fire, go to a neighbor's home.
- Once the fire front has passed, thoroughly check your home, yard, roof, attic, etc. for fire. Use a garden hose or fire extinguisher to extinguish any spot fires or smoldering embers.



For further information on Sheltering-in-Place, you may contact the Fire District, 858-756-5971.

Emergency Supply Kit

Emergency supply kits can be used for various disaster situations like wildfires, earthquakes and floods. Supplies should be stored in easy-to-carry crates or backpacks. Your emergency supply kit should be updated twice annually and contain the following items:

- A 3-day water supply providing one gallon of water per person, per day
- A 3-day non-perishable food supply including a can opener and kitchen utensils
- One change of clothing and shoes per person
- Enough blankets and/or a sleeping bag for each person
- First aid kit, including family prescriptions and spare eyeglasses
- Emergency tools and work gloves
- A battery-powered radio or television and extra batteries
- Flashlights with extra batteries
- Matches and/or a lighter kept in a water-proof container
- Sanitation and hygiene items
- Special items for infants, seniors and those with disabilities
- A credit card and cash; personal identification; extra set of car and house keys
- Extra pet food, leash(es), and enough pet carriers to transport all pets
- Sunglasses and/or goggles (for high wind and blowing embers)
- Entertainment (e.g. books, games for the family, or child's favorite toy)
- Cell phone and charger
- Computer, hard drive, or laptop (with charger)
- Prescriptions, medications
- Important documents, including birth certificates, passports, and insurance records
- Jewelry
- Additional items:

