

Be Aware and Prepare: Wildfires in Arkansas

Wildfire is inevitable, especially during droughts when scorched vegetation acts as tinder for forest, range and pasture lands. They can be triggered by everyday activities, such as lawn mowing, hay baling, or parking hot vehicles on tall grass. Do you know how to be ready if fire threatens your home or farm? Are you prepared to evacuate? Evacuation orders are made by your local officials and may come with little or no warning.

Put together a “to-go” kit and include:

- Essentials such as water, nonperishable foods (and pet foods), clothes, medications and flashlights, emergency radio, first aid kit, matches, sanitation supplies.
- Important home and financial records in fire safe, waterproof security boxes.

Make plans now for you and your family:

- Recognize the safety of your family as your first priority. Property is secondary.
- Create 30- to 100-foot safety zones around your home, barns and other buildings by removing debris, dry vegetation and combustible materials. Clear trash and combustible materials from insides of buildings as well.
- Decide your criteria for staying or evacuating.
- Plan and practice at least 2 different evacuation or escape routes in different directions.
- Know where your family will meet if you are separated; plan for multiple means of communicating with each other.
- Know the location of emergency shelters.
- Plan for the needs of companion animals and know which shelters will welcome them.
- Plan for safely transporting and/or releasing animals and livestock that are in danger.

Stay informed:

- Post emergency phone numbers (fire, law enforcement, ambulance) in multiple locations.
- If you see unexpected fire or smoke, call 911 or your local fire department.
- For details on specific wildfires or to report wildfires, call the Arkansas Forestry Commission Dispatch Center 1-800-468-8834.
- Keep a portable radio tuned to local news and a cell phone with you at all times.
- Remove fuels, pesticides, medicines and other chemicals from your premises.

Be ready:

- Keep a full tank of gas in your vehicle.
- Back your vehicle, packed with emergency kit and other supplies, and with the windows closed, into a garage, carport or barn, heading out.
- Close your garage door but leave it unlocked. Disconnect automatic door openers in case of power failure.

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Before you evacuate:

- Move or otherwise provide for animals.
- Shut off gas valves.
- Attach hoses to water faucets to reach as many buildings as possible.
- Close windows, shutters and doors around your home and farm buildings to keep sparks from blowing inside and to slow spread of fire inside.
- Turn on lights inside and around buildings so they will be more visible through smoke and darkness.



For more information:
www.aragriculture.org/disaster/