

ESP FOCUS

Wildfires



That dry brush is waiting to burn!

The warm, dry climate that has attracted millions of people to California brings with it the potential for disaster each summer and fall.

Several times since 1982, wildfires in California have resulted in either gubernatorial proclamations of a state of emergency or presidential declarations of a major disaster.

Among the worst years in state history was 1993. Twenty-one separate fires raged in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura counties. Between October 26 and November 7, the blazes caused four deaths and 162 injuries, destroyed more than 1,200 structures and consumed almost 200,000 acres.

To bring the blazes under control and prevent additional losses, more than 15,000 firefighters were deployed in the largest mutual-aid call-out in California history.

Wherever you live, work or play, use the reverse side of this *Focus Sheet* to help you reduce your risk to wildfires.

Each month, ESP will examine a different hazard that could affect Californians and offer suggestions on how to reduce its impacts. These hazards are not limited to the month featured in the ESP Focus Sheet and can occur at any time.



TOYOTA

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Make Your Environment Safer

Reduce your risk of fire-related death injury or property damage by conducting a fire hazard hunt. Take the following steps to make the environment outside and inside your home safer:

Outside Your Home

- Clear dry grass, brush and leaves as required by local regulation. Use ice plants and other fire-resistant plants to landscape.
- Clear all debris from the roof, gutters and spouts.
- Remove dead limbs located over roofs and all limbs within 10 feet of chimneys.
- Prune the lower limbs within six feet of the ground on all trees 18 feet high or taller to keep ground fires from spreading to trees.
- Thin out heavily wooded areas.
- Remove weak, dead and leaning trees.
- Vary the heights of plants, shrubs and trees and provide adequate spacing between them.
- Relocate firewood at least 30 feet from all structures and 10 feet from vegetation.
- Keep plants, shrubs and trees away from power lines.
- Keep gas and propane tanks at least 30 feet from all structures and 10 feet from hazards.
- Replace wood shake and other combustible roofing materials with noncombustible materials.
- Cover chimneys and stovepipes with non-flammable screens with mesh 1/2 inch or less.
- Box and enclose roof eaves that extend beyond the exterior walls.
- Cover all attic and ridge vents with non-flammable 1/2-inch mesh screens.
- Make sure the number of your house is clearly visible at the curb side.

Inside Your Home

Smoke detectors

- Make sure smoke detectors are made and certified by an approved lab.
- Install smoke detectors on ceilings inside each bedroom and in the hallway on every level.
- Test detectors at least once per month.
- Change batteries every six months.

Fire Extinguishers

- Ensure that fire extinguishers are approved by an independent testing lab.
- Place fire extinguishers in easily accessible locations.
- Teach responsible family members where they are located and how to use them.
- Remember, the word **P-A-S-S** when using the extinguisher:
 - P**ull the pin.
 - A**im the nozzle at the base of the fire.
 - S**queeze the trigger.
 - S**weep the chemical side-to-side to extinguish the fire.

Plan for Evacuation

- Develop and practice an evacuation plan for your home. Your plan should include:
 - A floor plan with all escape routes.
 - Easily accessible exits for young children, seniors and persons with disabilities. (Locate their rooms as close to exits as possible).
 - A list of valuables to take in an emergency. (Store them together in one location if possible.)
 - A place to reunite after evacuation.
 - The location of animal shelters or other sites that house pets.
 - Practice drills.
- Work with neighbors to assist:
 - People with special needs.
 - People who need transportation to other sites.
- Work with local emergency officials to identify:
 - Several routes out of your neighborhood.
 - Likely evacuation sites.

What to Do When a Fire Occurs

If a fire occurs while you're inside, remember the following:

- Call 9-1-1; tell the dispatcher where you are.
- Feel the top and bottom of the door with the back of your hand before exiting. Cautiously open the door if it's cool. Do not exit if the door is hot. Try your alternate exit instead. Repeat this step at every closed door.
- Close doors behind you when evacuating to slow down flames, smoke and heat.
- Help young children, seniors and persons with disabilities evacuate.
- Close the door and stay in the room if fire, smoke or heat are blocking both escape routes.
- Keep smoke and fumes out by stuffing cracks around doors and vents with sheets, blankets, etc.
- Open a window if no smoke is entering the room; place a sheet or cloth outside to signal for help.

Sources included the California Department of Fire Protection publication "Fire Safe—Inside and Out."

GETTING IT DONE IN 2001 PREPARING FOR ALL HAZARDS



This action sheet is produced as part of the Earthquake Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an awareness campaign designed to increase individual and home earthquake preparedness. ESP was developed by the County of Los Angeles. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES); representatives from Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Yuma counties; and representatives from Southern California Edison assist in the development of campaign materials and coordination of the campaign.