

10 Tips for Keeping Children Safe in a WILDFIRE



Get Ready. Get Safe.

A wildfire is an uncontrolled fire often occurring in open areas like forests, fields or parks. Wildfires often begin unnoticed, but they spread quickly igniting plants, trees and homes. More than four out of five wildfires are started by people, mostly through negligent behavior such as careless use of matches. While the sight and effects of a wildfire can be scary, there are steps families can take to protect their children.

PREPARE:

1. **Talk about wildfires.** Spend time with your family discussing why wildfires occur. Explain how to prevent them and what to do if one occurs. Explain that a wildfire can be a natural event and not anyone's fault. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
2. **Know your risk.** Learn about your area's risk of wildfires, particularly if you live near forests, in rural areas, or in a dry climate. Contact your local fire department, state forestry office, or other emergency response agencies for information on fire laws and wildfire risk.
3. **Learn caregivers' disaster plans.** If your child's school or childcare center is in an area at risk from wildfires, find out what its plans are for in case of a wildfire. Ask about its evacuation plans and if you would be required to pick up your children from the site or from another location.
4. **Practice evacuation drills.** Practice your family evacuation plan so that, if told to do so, you can evacuate quickly and safely. Plan and practice two ways out of your neighborhood as one route may be blocked.

DURING A WILDFIRE:

5. **Stay informed.** If a wildfire is approaching, listen regularly to local radio or television stations for updated emergency information. Follow the instructions of local officials as they will know safest evacuation route.
6. **Have supplies ready.** If you must evacuate, wear protective clothing such as sturdy shoes, cotton or wool long pants and long-sleeved shirts and gloves. Lock your home and take your disaster supplies kit with you.
7. **Avoid smoke and fumes.** Keep children, babies and infants away from areas where there is smoke or fumes, and stay indoors if possible. Smoke produced by the wildfire may cause breathing problems or contain poisonous toxins.

AFTER A WILDFIRE:

8. **Use caution when returning to a burned area.** Get fire officials permission before returning to a burned wildfire area. Look out for hazards such as fallen wires and ash pits and be alert as fire re-ignition may be possible.
9. **Clean up safely.** Follow public health guidance on safe cleanup of fire ash and safe use of masks. Keep children away from burned sites until cleanup is complete.
10. **Limit media exposure.** Protect children from seeing too many sights and images of the wildfire, including those on the internet, television or newspapers.

Additional Resources: The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to wildfires. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready for the next wildfire.

For adults:

- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): Wildfires. <http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Children-and-Disasters/Pages/Wildfires.aspx>
- American Red Cross (ARC): Wildfire Preparedness. <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/wildfire>
- Department of Homeland Security: Wildfires. <http://www.ready.gov/wildfires>

For children:

- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Wildfires. <http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/wildfires>

