

WILDLAND FIRE

Before the Fire

Red Flag weather conditions mean that humidity is very low (usually below 15%) and winds exceed 25 mph. When a Red Flag Warning or Alert has been issued there is a greater possibility for brushfires to spread rapidly. If you live in an urban-interface area subject to Red Flag Alerts here are a few tips:

- Park your car heading out and keep your car keys handy
- Disconnect automatic garage door openers in case of power failure
- Place your important records and documents inside your car
- Keep pet carriers handy
- When you leave your home:
 - Keep drapes and window coverings open
 - Close all interior doors in your home
 - Close all windows
 - Keep interior lights on
 - Move combustible furniture away from windows and towards the center of the room

Los Angeles County is well known as one of the world's great urban centers, but the county is also home to the 650,000-acre Angeles National Forest and a large portion of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreational Area. Thousands of homes are located in foothill communities near these natural areas, creating unique challenges for local fire agencies.



For more information on building emergency plans visit www.fire.lacounty.gov.



FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION CHECKLIST

- ❑ Remove needles, leaves, or other vegetative material from the roof of any structure.
- ❑ Remove or trim all vegetation a minimum of ten feet from chimneys or stovepipes.
- ❑ Keep landscape clean, remove litter under trees and shrubs, prune out all dead wood.
- ❑ Remove dead and dried portions of ground covers and succulents.
- ❑ Leave space between shrubs and trees to prevent fire spread. Avoid continuous tree or brush canopies.
- ❑ Separate native shrubs by removing adjacent plants.
- ❑ Limit the number of specimen trees and shrubs within 30 feet of any structure.
- ❑ Tree crowns should not overhang the roof and should be pruned high enough to avoid ignition by a ground fire.
- ❑ Within 200 feet of structures consider removing common garden plants that have proven particularly flammable due to high brush buildup and foliage oils such as Cypress, Fountain Grass, large Juniper, Eucalyptus, Pines, and other Conifers. Many trees are distributed to the public by the County of Los Angeles Fire Department each year. These trees are solely intended for erosion control and windbreaks, and not for landscape purposes. It is recommended that these trees be planted a minimum of 200 feet from any structure and on the bottom two-thirds of any slope below a structure.
- ❑ Give special consideration to problem trees such as Eucalyptus, Palms and Pines. Remove dead limbs, litter, dead fronds and loose bark from the ground as well as from the trunk of these trees.

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Brush Clearance on Privately Owned Land

- Brush inspections usually begin by the Los Angeles County Fire Department on May 1st.
- The minimum requirement for brush clearance is 200 feet from a structure.
- If not cleared, the local fire station will issue a notice of non-compliance, and the property owner will be given 30 days in which to bring the property into compliance.
- If still non-compliant, the local fire station will forward to the Department's Brush Clearance Unit for enforcement. (The local fire station may, at its discretion, issue the property owner an additional 14-day extension to bring the property into compliance.)
- If property is turned over to the Brush Clearance Unit for enforcement, County Agriculture Weed Abatement Services will clear the property and include this service cost in the property owner's tax bill.

Brush Clearance on Publicly Owned Land

Brush clearance requirements vary for government-owned lands, and are not enforced by the Los Angeles County Fire Department. For additional information on fire safety, call the Fire Department's Community Relations Office at (323) 881-2411 or your local fire station.



QUICK FACTS ABOUT SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

- A total of 23 fires burned from Oct. 20 to Nov. 9, 2007
- 10 confirmed fire-related fatalities
- 139 injured
- 517,267 acres burned
- 3,204 structures destroyed (2,233 homes, 5 businesses, 966 outbuildings)
- The fires resulted in the largest evacuation in California's history
- There was a high of more than 321,500 mandatory evacuees



In case of a house fire, don't stop for anything—just get out. Call the Fire Department from a neighbor's telephone after you are out of the house.



During the Fire

- Follow your evacuation plan instructions and the directions from Sheriff and Fire Department personnel.
- Gather your family, pets and disaster supply kit and immediately leave your home or business.
- Drive carefully at a normal speed with your headlights on.
- Never park your vehicle in a traffic lane or safety area.
- Keep pets in carriers or on leashes.

TIP Pre-wetting your home and surrounding areas will not improve the safety of your home—and it wastes valuable time and water resources.

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After the Fire

- Don't return to your home before the area is declared to be safe by local officials. Returning home can be both physically and mentally challenging.
- Assess damage; check that your home is safe to occupy.
- Before returning home, be sure that utilities are operational.
- Check with the Department of Public Works at **1-800-675 HELP (4357)** or at **www.ladpw.org** to find out what roads are damaged.
- Remember, burned hillsides may have trouble absorbing water after a fire. Monitor burn areas and be prepared to evacuate if necessary.

For more information on Fire Safety please visit the Los Angeles County Fire Department website at **www.fire.lacounty.gov**.



IF YOU LIVE NEAR A RECENTLY BURNED AREA...

Flash floods and debris flows may now be a danger. Once the smoke clears from a wildfire, the danger is not over! Other hazards, such as flash floods and debris flows, now become the focus. Steep mountainsides and hillsides recently burned by wildfires are particularly susceptible to flash floods and debris flows during rainstorms. Just a short period of moderate rainfall on a burn scar can lead to flash floods and debris flows. Rainfall that is normally absorbed by vegetation can run off almost instantly. This causes creeks and drainage areas to flood much sooner during a storm, and with more water than normal.

Additionally, the soils in a burn scar are highly erodible so flood waters can contain significant amounts of mud, boulders, and vegetation. The powerful force of rushing water, soil, and rock, both within the burned area and downstream, can destroy culverts, bridges, roadways, and structures, and can cause injury or death if care is not taken.