



# UI Extension Forestry Information Series II

Fire 23

## Wildfire Evacuation - In the Event of a Wildfire

*Yvonne Barkley*

This is it – you have been told to evacuate. Maybe you have some time to ready family and property, or maybe not.

If there is time, a member of your local fire services, law enforcement, or emergency responder agency may stop by to personally alert residents during the evacuation. In some areas, homeowners may receive automated telephone notification and/or text on their cell phone.

Media outlets are another good source of information and radio stations, Emergency Broadcast Systems and local government websites can be checked for status updates.

**DO NOT WAIT TO BE TOLD TO EVACUATE. If you are uncomfortable with the situation, LEAVE.** Sixty percent of lives lost to wildland fire are of those that chose to stay and wait and see, and then evacuated too late.

Some areas of Idaho use a three-stage evacuation warning system.

### **LEVEL 1: A Level 1 Evacuation means “BE READY” for potential evacuation.**

- Residents should be aware of the danger that exists in their area, monitor emergency services websites and local media outlets for information.
- This is the time for preparation and precautionary movement of persons with special needs, mobile property and (under certain circumstances) pets and livestock. If conditions worsen, emergency services personnel may contact you via an emergency notification system.

### **LEVEL 2: A Level 2 Evacuation means “BE SET” to evacuate.**

- **BE PREPARE TO LEAVE AT A MOMENTS NOTICE.** This level indicates there is significant danger to your area, and residents should either voluntarily relocate to a shelter or with family/ friends outside of the affected area, or if choosing to remain, to be ready to evacuate at a moment’s notice. Residents **MAY** have time to gather necessary items, but doing so is at their own risk.
- **THIS MAY BE THE ONLY NOTICE THAT YOU RECEIVE.** Emergency services cannot guarantee that they will be able to notify you if conditions rapidly deteriorate. Area media services will be asked to broadcast periodic updates.

### **LEVEL 3: A Level 3 Evacuation means “GO” Evacuate NOW.**

- **LEAVE IMMEDIATELY!** Danger to your area is current or imminent, and you should evacuate immediately. If you choose to ignore this advisement, you must understand that emergency services may not be available to assist you further. **DO NOT** delay leaving to gather any belongings or make efforts to protect your home.
- **THIS WILL BE THE LAST NOTICE THAT YOU RECEIVE.** Entry to evacuated areas may be denied until conditions are safe. Area radio and TV stations have been asked to broadcast periodic updates.

### **Ready your Family for Emergency Evacuation**

**Give notice.** Gather all persons in the household together and let them know you are getting ready to evacuate.

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**Dress for safety.** Put on socks, closed-toed leather shoes or boots, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt. Leather gloves, a bandanna, and a hat can be handy as well.

**Ready your vehicles.** Park vehicles in the direction you will escape. Leave the keys in the ignition.

**Pets too.** Put pets in pet carriers and in a safe, accessible place, ready to load into your vehicles when you leave. Load horses or other livestock that will need to be evacuated into trailers and hitch them to vehicles.

**Pack.** Put your emergency kit and valuables in vehicles.

**Contact the neighbors.** Check with neighbors to see if they need assistance. Offer to share transportation. Notify others when you are leaving and where you plan to go.

## **If it's Safe; If There's Still Time**

If all vehicles are packed and everyone is ready to go, you may still have time to safely do a few things to help protect your home.

**Ready your house.** Close ALL windows and doors. Place removable covers on attic and basements vents. Remove flammable window treatments. Turn on all outside lights to help firefighters find your house.

**Emergency water supplies.** Place generators near pumps to provide backup power should fire fighters need to use your well. Connect hoses and place where they can be easily found. Ensure water tanks in enclosed areas are marked and easily accessible.

**Clear outdoor living spaces.** Move flammable outdoor belongings into enclosed storage areas and/or cover securely.

**Safely store recreational vehicles.** Move recreational vehicles away from structures and/or into enclosed storage areas or cover securely.



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