

## **What to Consider in an Evacuation Situation**

The local officials have come to your door and have advised you that you have 5 minutes to pack what you can, and get out of your house due to an imminent threat. Now you find yourself standing in your living room paralyzed with indecision. What should I take...what's important...where is it?

Fire season for our communities is here, and now is the time to get prepared. Here are some tips that might help you make the most of that 5 minutes to help you, your family and your neighbours.

1. Create a "Go Bag". Place inside what is vital and important for your family to cope for up to a week out of your home. Put this bag near an outside door for easy access. Suggestions include:

- a. Important documents – passport, medical info, insurance
- b. Food & Water – enough for at least four days for all members of your family and any pets – don't forget a can opener!
- c. Medication
- d. Cash – try to have smaller denominations
- e. Cell phone chargers, flashlight and extra batteries
- f. First aid kit
- g. Blankets
- h. Dust masks, moist towelettes, plastic bags ( can be used for personal sanitation if necessary)
- i. Sturdy shoes, change of clothes, jacket & rain gear
- j. Comfort items for small children

2. Let's not forget our pets! They need food, water and bedding too. If you have a carrier make sure your name, your pet's name and your cell phone number are written on the carrier.

3. Keep your gas tank full and ensure that you have local area maps. You don't want to have to sit in line waiting to get gas.

4. Social media and direct text's are the best way of communicating – a text will often go through when calls do not. Avoid calling whenever possible as calling uses much more battery power. Make sure all your important phone numbers are in your phone and that you have a paper copy in your go bag in case your phone dies and cannot be recharged. Once you have that in place, you may want to take some steps to think about what steps you can take to make your home less susceptible to threats such as fire.

## **Home & Yard**

1. Roof
  - a. Material – Use fire-resistant or fire-retardant roofing. Options include metal, asphalt, clay and composite rubber tiles. Untreated wood shakes create a dangerous combination of combustible material and tons of crevices for embers or sparks to enter.

- b. Maintenance – Every inside corner of your roof is a place where debris and embers can collect. Regularly clean your roof of combustible material.
2. Chimney – A spark arrestor on your chimney will reduce the chance of sparks and embers starting a fire.
3. Gutters – Regularly remove debris from the gutters, since sparks and embers can easily ignite these materials. Consider screening your gutters with metal mesh to decrease accumulations.
4. Eaves & Vents – Open eaves created a surface that can be affected by embers and direct heat. Make sure soffits are properly fitted to reduce the risk of embers and heat reaching the rafters.
5. Siding – Best choices are stucco, metal siding, brick/concrete and fibre cement siding. Untreated wood and vinyl siding offer very little protection.
6. Windows – Tempered, double-paned windows are recommended.
7. Doors – All doors into your home should be fire rated and have a good seal. Same thing goes for the garage door.
8. Decks – Embers and sparks can collect under these spaces. Enclose these areas. Sheath the base of the decks, balconies, and houses with fire-resistant materials.
9. Other Areas
  - a. Fence Lines – Wooden fences create a direct path from the fire to your home. Separate your house with a metal gate. Remember to keep the grass cut along the fence line as well, since long dry grass can ignite easily.
  - b. Shed/Outbuildings – If these are within 10 metres of your home, give them the same considerations as you did for your home.

Don't forget to make a family evacuation plan and communicate it to your family and friends. If you are separated, where will you meet? Designate a person you will communicate with and have them advise the rest of your loved ones, rather than having them all calling you. Finally, follow the directions of emergency personnel! They are there to get you safely away from the threat, and have the most up to date information.

### **Be safe! Be Prepared!**

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