Information about California Wildfires

4 Steps to Recover After a Home Fire

American Red Cross Video: https://youtu.be/COSMiLH_pXw

Returning Home & Recovering after a Wildfire

- Do not enter your home until fire officials say it is safe.
- Use caution when entering burned areas as hazards may still exist, including hot spots, which can flare up without warning.
- Avoid damaged or fallen power lines, poles and downed wires.
- Watch for ash pits and mark them for safety—warn family and neighbors to keep clear of the pits also.
- Watch animals closely and keep them under your direct control. Hidden embers and hot spots could burn your pets’ paws or hooves.
- Follow public health guidance on safe cleanup of fire ash and safe use of masks.
- Wet debris down to minimize breathing dust particles.
- Wear leather gloves and heavy soled shoes to protect hands and feet.
- Cleaning products, paint, batteries and damaged fuel containers need to be disposed of properly to avoid risk.

Ensure your food and water are safe

- Discard any food that has been exposed to heat, smoke or soot.
- Do NOT ever use water that you think may be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice or make baby formula.

Inspecting your home

- If there is no power, check to make sure the main breaker is on. Fires may cause breakers to trip. If the breakers are on and power is still not present, contact the utility company.
- Inspect the roof immediately and extinguish any sparks or embers. Wildfires may have left burning embers that could reignite.
- For several hours afterward, recheck for smoke and sparks throughout the home, including the attic. The winds of wildfires can blow burning embers anywhere. Keep checking your home for embers that could cause fires.
- Take precautions while cleaning your property. You may be exposed to potential health risks from hazardous materials.
- Debris should be wetted down to minimize health impacts from breathing dust particles.
- Use a two-strap dust particulate mask with nose clip and coveralls for the best minimal protection.
- Wear leather gloves to protect hands from sharp objects while removing debris.
- Wear rubber gloves when working with outhouse remnants, plumbing fixtures, and sewer piping. They can contain high levels of bacteria.
• Hazardous materials such as kitchen and bathroom cleaning products, paint, batteries, contaminated fuel, and damaged fuel containers need to be properly handled to avoid risk. Check with local authorities for hazardous disposal assistance.
• If you have a propane tank system, contact a propane supplier. Turn off valves on the system, and leave valves closed until the supplier inspects your system.
• If you have a heating oil tank system, contact a heating oil supplier for an inspection of your system before using.
• Visually check the stability of the trees. Any tree that has been weakened by fire may be a hazard.
• Look for burns on the tree trunk. If the bark on the trunk has been burned off or scorched by very high temperatures completely around the circumference, the tree will not survive and should be considered unstable.
• Look for burnt roots by probing the ground with a rod around the base of the tree and several feet away from the base. If the roots have been burned, you should consider this tree very unstable.
• A scorched tree is one that has lost part or all of its leaves or needles. Healthy deciduous trees are resilient and may produce new branches and leaves as well as sprouts at the base of the tree. Evergreen trees may survive when partially scorched but are at risk for bark beetle attacks.

As you rebuild
• Obtain information from local authorities about defensible space requirements.
• Clear 30 feet of space around your home of vegetation.
• Store firewood at least 30 feet away from your home.
• Clear debris off the roof, out of the gutters and away from air conditioning units.
• Plant fire-resistant shrubs and trees. Hardwood trees, for example, are less flammable than pine, evergreen, eucalyptus or fir trees.
• Use vegetation that is resistant to fire, and is found naturally in the area. Do not import vegetation.
• Equip chimneys and stovepipes with a spark arrester that meets the requirements of NFPA 211, a specific standard for chimney fire safety.
• Install 1/2-inch mesh screen beneath porches, decks, floor areas and the home itself. Also, screen openings to your floors, roof and attic.

Ask a professional to
• Select and install fire-resistant roofing, siding and other building materials.
• Install or develop an adequate outside water source such as a small pond, cistern, well, swimming pool or hydrant.
• Install freeze-proof exterior water outlets on at least two sides of the home and near other structures on the property. Install additional outlets at least 50 feet from the home.

Let your family know you're safe
If your community has experienced a disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well website to let your family and friends know you are safe. You may also call 1-866-GET-INFO to register yourself and your family.

CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

We are in contact with our California Vincentians impacted by this disaster.

- 22 separate wildfires
- 245,000+ acres
- 8,400 homes & structures burned
- 42 people killed and the death toll continues to rise, 21 still missing
- $4.6 Billion in Damage

Please pray for all those affected and for our Vincentians responding and for Elizabeth Disco-Shearer, DSC CEO, as she travels to California to support Vincentians actively working on the ground in the wildfire zones.