

Being prepared means being prepared for all hazards!

Lessons learned from California Wildfires.

Although many of our discussions deal with hypothetical situations, it is sometimes helpful to look at actual disasters to see if we can learn a lesson or two. The horrific wildfires in California are a sobering reminder of what can happen when conditions are right. The Oregon coast shares some similarities with Northern California so let's examine some details we heard about that could help preparedness here.

Some of the similarities between our region and the Northern California town of Paradise are:

- Both are adjacent to large wooded areas with uneven terrain
- Paradise median age is 50
- Subject to extreme winds at times
- Can go long periods without rainfall
- There are not many roadways to use for escape routes
- In thinking of the Malibu fires, not even being next to the ocean has saved homes there.

Some lessons to be mindful of from the fires:

The fires spread so fast (one report said that an area equal to 30 football fields caught fire in one minute) that the roads quickly became impassable. We all know one escape route but should have two - one would be on foot in case automobile escape is not possible. Do you have your "earthquake boots" in a handy place? What about your animals? Do you have carriers and food set aside for them?

Many people were unprepared and had to leave with only the clothes on their backs – Do you have your go bag in a good place? Have you figured out what you would load into your car?

Do you always have at least one half a tank of gas in the car? Did you scan important documents onto a thumb drive, and then give a copy to a friend or relative in another area? The number of people listed as missing is also frightening and we hope most of them are simply not able to communicate their location. A comprehensive plan should be put in place to ease the burden on searchers and responders by figuring out how people will contact authorities about their status.

The scale of the California fires is probably much larger than we would experience here but some good might come from it by increasing awareness of how to handle events like this.

The questions you should answer:

- Have you registered your cell phone on Tillamook's warning 911 system? (you MUST individually register your cell number, your home phone is automatically registered. Register cell phones on: [Reverse 911 link to sign up](#))
- Do you have a GoBag in your car and at home?
- Do you have a family plan and a person outside of the area you can text?
- Do you know at least 2 exit routes from both home and work?