



# Shelter in Place, when Wildfire Evacuation is not possible.

AFD's Wildfire Division advocates for early evacuation in every scenario. But, wildfires are unpredictable and spread quickly. This is why Home Hardening and Defensible Space actions are taken well in advance of a wildfire. Nevertheless, even if you have prepared in advance, you may be required to shelter in place if ordered or if you find yourself trapped by a wildfire. To survive this frightening scenario, it is important to remain calm and keep everyone together. Prepare yourself mentally for darkness (even during the day), noise, chaos, and the natural urge to flee the safety of your shelter. If you are unable to evacuate, it is probably safer inside a car or building where your airway, eyes, and skin are protected.

Sometimes, evacuation is not safe, for example, when your only evacuation routes would take you into the fire or when the fire is moving too quickly/is too close that you do not have the time to evacuate safely. Other scenarios in which you should not evacuate: If you cannot see where you are going due to smokiness or if your escape routes are too congested or blocked. Emergency personnel may also recommend that you stay.

Take shelter in a nearby place that is best able to withstand the fire. This may be your home, another building made of more resistant materials or that is less exposed to burning vegetation, your car, or an open outdoor area like an irrigated playing field or parking lot far from vegetation. Stay calm and together while the wildfire passes. When directed, or when the fire outside subsides, move to a safer area. However, some houses and structures are not safe for sheltering in place. In those cases, make plans with neighbors to evacuate to their safer house should the need arise.

If safe evacuation is not an option, follow these steps to help you stay safer:

- If trapped, call 9-1-1 and give your location, but be aware that emergency response could be delayed or impossible. Turn on lights to help rescuers find you.
- Call your out-of-town emergency contact to let them know you are sheltering in place. If local phone lines go down, try using a cellular phone as an alternative, or correspond via email if possible.
- Turn off the house's propane or natural gas.
- Fill sinks and tubs with cold water.
- Keep doors and windows closed but unlocked.
- Stay indoors and wait for the wildfire front to pass, usually within 10 to 15 minutes.
- Shelter in rooms at the opposite end of your home from where the fire is approaching. Stay away from the perimeter walls.
- Use an N95 mask to protect yourself from smoke inhalation or limit your exposure to smoke by doing the following:
  - Close off the room from the outside air and set up a portable air cleaner or filter to keep the air in this room clean even when it is smoky in the rest of the building and outdoors.
  - Use high-efficiency filters in your central air conditioning system to capture fine particles from smoke. If your system has fresh air intake, set the system to "recirculate" mode and close the outdoor intake damper.
  - If you are not ordered to evacuate but smoky conditions exist, stay inside in a safe location or go to a community building where smoke levels are lower.
- Try to stay calm. It will likely get very hot inside the house, but it is even hotter outside. Stay inside.
- If the interior of your home catches fire, go to a neighbor's home.
- Once the fire front has passed, thoroughly check your home, yard, roof, attic, etc. for fire. Use a garden hose or fire extinguisher to extinguish any spot fires or smoldering embers.
- Re-call 9-1-1 and your out-of-town emergency contact to let them know you are safe.