

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

My heart goes out to everyone who has been touched by our most recent fires.

Right now we are flanked by fires. The most devastating we have watched develop to the East of us in Redding, but there are also major fires to our South in Mendocino and to our North in Brookings. We are literally surrounded.

The fires I've witnessed in Humboldt have been major, but they have been in the forests, and not ripping down the middle of residential areas.

Humboldt County does a thorough job getting the word out on how to prepare for the next earthquake. Their education is persistent and their message consistent.

Since the Valley fire in Lake County in 2015, I have been mentally preparing for a "what if" scenario in Fortuna—what do I need to have ready to go. And I thank the Earthquake preparedness people for much of that. But there are additional tips that are different when it's a fire.

Someone who made it through the Sonoma fires last year posted a few suggestions that supplement what we usually hear and I wanted to share them with you.

First, have N95 rated facemasks ready at hand. Purchase them now for your kit. They have been vital to have during the fires, especially in Redding.

If you evacuate, take both cars. I hadn't thought of that.

Make sure the gas tanks are full. That's one our preparedness people regularly talk about and why my tank doesn't go lower than half.

Stay informed. Listen to local radio news, like KINS. If the cell towers burn down, cable and power may also be off for a few days.

Pack charging cables for your phone and other electronics and keep an external battery charged up. Sometimes I'm good about that, but right now, my external battery is not charged.

Take pictures of the inside of your home and upload them to the cloud storage.

Make sure you have up to date photos of your pets in case you get separated. I've been meaning to do that, but haven't yet. I don't know what I would do if my pets were lost in a fire.

It isn't over until the fires are 100% contained, so the evacuation will go on for days. Be mentally prepared for that.

Get a back-up battery for the garage door. Many people were trapped in Sonoma when the power went out.

Have pet carriers by the door. Animals panic and bolt out doors and car windows so they need to be in carriers when you leave. They are still looking for pets in Sonoma County from the fire.

And finally, if you are in an evacuation zone, put a note on your door that says OUT in big capital letters so firefighters don't waste their time checking.

Fortuna, do you know where your disaster center is? River Lodge just became the official emergency center. Do you know where your emergency center is?

Join me in getting your preparedness kit together this week, and if any of these tips make sense, add them to your list. I have.

This has been Erin Dunn with a Community Comment.