

This is Troy Nicolini with the National Weather Service.

While it may be a little foggy on the coast, late summer in Humboldt County is often warm, beautiful, and can be a perfect time to enjoy the natural scenic wonders of our pristine rivers, imposing mountains, and vast forests. However, as these forests dry up in the summer sun, the threat of wildfire becomes very real, and can this can pose a danger to all who live and recreate here. With a little bit of preparation, you can learn how to protect you and your family from a wildfire, and also help prevent fires from starting in the first place.

While fire is a natural part of the ecosystem and helps to maintain a healthy forest, 94% of all wildfires in California are started by humans! When vegetation becomes tinder-dry, even the smallest of sparks can ignite a raging wildfire, so extra care is needed to prevent this.

All drivers should make sure that nothing is dragging on the ground behind them, as chains are known to throw sparks and start roadside fires. Also, avoid driving through tall grass, including driving machinery such as lawnmowers and tractors, as the heat from these machines can easily start fires in dry grass. If you must mow your lawn, be sure to do so early in the morning when winds are calm and temperatures are low. Other activities like welding and cutting pipes outdoors should also be avoided entirely.

Campers and backpackers should also make sure that all campfires are managed properly. Clear vegetation a minimum of 5 feet away from the fire, and when putting it out, make sure to drown it in water and that it is cool to the touch. Do not simply cover it with dirt! Campers should also be aware of and obey local burn bans. Similarly, those wishing to burn debris piles should take care to do so safely, obey local burn bans, and always obtain the proper permits from the Air Quality Management District.

Unfortunately these precautions alone won't completely eliminate the threat of wildfire, so homeowners need to be prepared just in case. Before a fire starts, you should **Be Ready** by making sure to develop what is called "defensible space" around your home, as this will reduce the likelihood that your house will ignite and also give firefighters a chance to defend it. Flammable vegetation should be cleared to 100 feet around your home, and more if you live on a hill. Gutters should also be kept clean and free of debris, and chimneys should be screened and kept clean. These simple precautions will help make your home fire-safe.

Residents should also **Get Set** by preparing for a possible evacuation. Create a Wildfire Action Plan that includes evacuation plans for both people and animals. Also, prepare an emergency supply kit for every member of the family, and develop a communication plan that includes important contact information. Taking the above precautions ahead of time will ensure that you are ready to **GO** quickly in the event of an evacuation. Should this occur, do not hesitate!

Humboldt County is a beautiful place to live and visit, and while wildfires are a very real threat, preparation ahead of time can help make sure you, your family, and your property are safe. For more information on steps you can take to prepare for wildfire, please visit www.readforwildfire.org