CAUGHT IN A WILDFIRE

In a major conflagration, fire protection agencies may not have enough equipment or firefighters to be stationed at every home; you cannot depend solely upon the help of fire agencies. One of the principal responsibilities of firefighters is to stop the spread of fire from house to house. Therefore, if one home is on fire, firefighters may have to pass it by to save another in the path of the fire.

Careful planning and action on the part of you, the homeowner, can help save your home during a wildfire. Be prepared. Talk with your neighbors to see what resources are available and consult with local fire personnel for professional advice and assistance.

If you do not evacuate in time, or if you decide to stay with your home, the following suggestions will increase your chances of safely and successfully defending your property.

Evacuate your pets and all family members who are not essential to protecting your home.

Dress properly during a wildfire. Cotton and wool fabrics are preferred to synthetics. Wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt or jacket, gloves, goggles, boots and a damp handkerchief to shield your face.

Remove all combustible items from around the exterior of your home including lawn and poolside furniture, umbrellas and tarp coverings. If these items are left outside they may catch fire; the added heat could ignite your home.

Close outside attic, eave and basement vents. This will eliminate the possibility of sparks blowing into hidden areas within the house. Close window shutters.

Place large plastic trash cans or buckets around the outside of the house and fill them with water. Soak burlap sacks, small rugs and large rags; these can be helpful in beating out burning embers or small fires.

Place garden hoses so they will reach any place around the house. A spray-gun type nozzle works best; adjust the nozzle to the spray position.

If you have portable gasoline-powered pumps to take water from swimming pools or tanks, make sure the pumps are operable and in place

Place an aluminum ladder against the roof of the house opposite the side of the approaching fire. If you have a combustible roof, wet it down.

Back your car in the garage, keeping the windows closed and keys in the ignition. Close all garage doors and disconnect the automatic garage door opener (so you can still remove your car in the event of a power failure).

Place valuable papers and mementos inside your car in the garage for quick departure, if necessary. Any pets still with you should also be put in the car.

Inside the house, fill bathtubs, sinks and other containers with water. Water from toilet tanks and water heaters can also be used.

Close windows and doors to the house to prevent sparks from blowing inside. Close all doors inside the house to prevent draft. Open the damper on your fireplace to help stabilize outside-inside pressure, but close the fireplace screen so sparks will not ignite the room.

Turn on a light in each room to make the house more visible in heavy smoke. Turn on porch and yard lights, as well.

Turn off pilot lights. Shut off gas at meter.

Move overstuffed furniture away from windows and sliding glass doors and into the center of the house.

If you have time, take down your drapes and curtains. Close all Venetian blinds or fire resistive window coverings to reduce the amount of heat radiating into your home. This gives added safety in case windows give way to heat or wind.

When the fire approaches:

Enter your home with your family, closing but not locking the doors. Keep the entire family together and remain calm. Remember; if it gets hot inside the house, it is four or five times hotter outside.

After the fire passes:

Check the roof immediately. Extinguish any sparks or embers.

Check inside the attic for hidden burning embers. Extinguish any fires with remaining water from your pool, sinks, toilet tanks, garbage cans, etc.

Over the next several hours continue monitoring your home for signs of smoke and embers.