

# Opinion: Be prepared to evacuate

By Teri Mizuhara

It's your day off and you're home relaxing when suddenly you hear sirens, a lot of them, off in the distance. So you wander outside to see what's happening when you suddenly spot a large column of smoke from a wildfire on the horizon growing fast.

Your stomach knots up as you realize your worst nightmare is happening before your eyes and you have seconds to respond. What would you do.

Preplanning for an evacuation is in your best interest. When you walk through your home, room by room, and consider exactly what you would need to do when the real thing happens, you will be far better prepared to handle the stress of the situation.

## Pre-evacuation preparation steps

When an evacuation is anticipated, follow these checklists (if time allows) to give your home the best chance of surviving a wildfire:

### Inside the house

Shut all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked.

Remove flammable window shades and curtains and close metal shutters.

Remove lightweight curtains.

Move flammable furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.

Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights.

Leave your lights on so firefighters can see your house under smokey conditions.

Shut off the air conditioning.

## **Outside**

Gather up flammable items from the exterior of the house and bring them inside (patio furniture, children's toys, door mats, trash cans, etc.) or place them in your pool.

Turn off propane tanks.

Move propane BBQ appliances away from structures.

Connect garden hoses to outside water valves or spigots for use by firefighters. Fill water buckets and place them around the house.

Don't leave sprinklers on or water running, they can affect critical water pressure.

Leave exterior lights on so your home is visible to firefighters in the smoke or darkness of night.

Put your emergency supply kit in your vehicle.

Back your car into the driveway with vehicle loaded and all doors and windows closed. Carry your car keys with you.

Have a ladder available and place it at the corner of the house for firefighters to quickly access your roof.

Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.

Patrol your property and monitor the fire situation. Don't wait for an evacuation order if you feel threatened.

Check on neighbors and make sure they are preparing to leave.

## **Animals**

Locate your pets and keep them nearby.

Prepare farm animals for transport and think about moving them to a safe location early.

For more information, go online.

*Teri Mizuhara is public information officer for the CalFire Amador-El Dorado-Sacramento Unit.*