

FIRE

A person is silhouetted against a large, intense fire at night. The person is standing on a dark, elevated surface, possibly a hill or ridge, and is holding a tool, likely a fire extinguisher or a similar firefighting equipment. The fire is bright orange and yellow, with a large plume of smoke rising from it. The background is dark, with some trees visible in the foreground and middle ground. The overall scene is dramatic and emphasizes the power of the fire.

PROTECT AGAINST NATURE'S WRATH

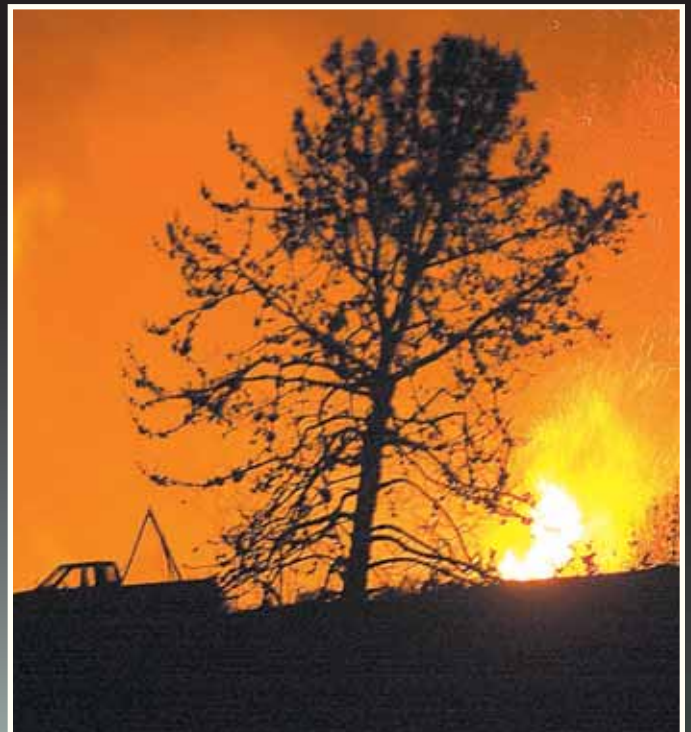
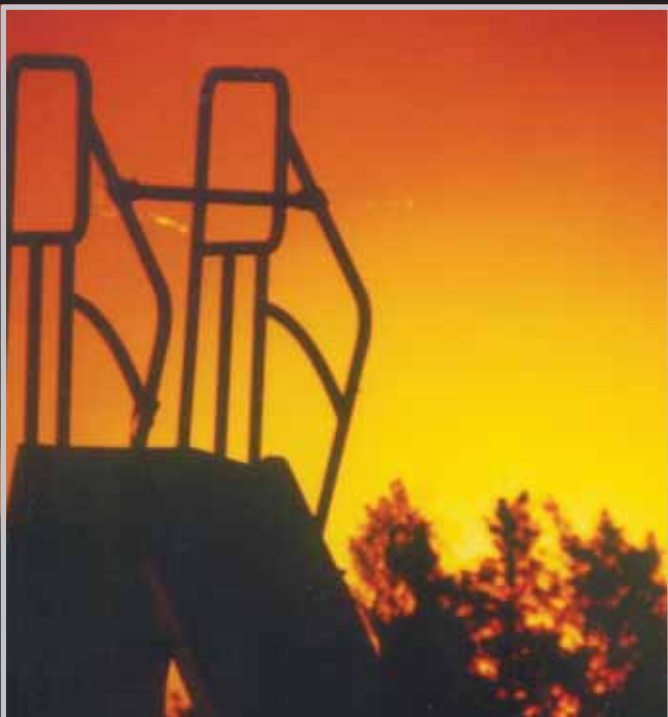
Mary Ellen LePage

All people should learn fire prevention, preparedness and evacuation. Many bird breeders live in the urban/wildland interface areas because these areas have larger land parcels on which to house birds. Along with the beauty of these areas comes the increased risk of wildfire. California and many other states's recurring nightmare is wildfire that spreads across the state. In 2003, California had 14 major fires in 5 counties, burning 750 thousand acres, thousands of homes, and killing 24 people. In 1991, 3000 homes were lost in the Oakland hills, CA fire. 97% of wildfires are controlled quickly, while 3% of the wildfires burn so intensely, there is little firefighters can do.



The perception of fire is different for someone who has never been in a wildfire. Most of us do not appreciate the fury of a wildfire.

We need to protect against, and control nature's wrath. The three components that determine wildfire behavior (start, speed, direction, intensity and ability to control) are weather, topography and fuel. We cannot do much about weather and topography but we can greatly reduce the fuel. In this presentation, I will discuss fire prevention, such as elements of defensible space, preparing for and evacuation from a fire.





Fire Prevention

Pre-fire activities save lives and property. Making a home fire-safe can increase its chances of survival in a fire up to 86%. A home with an untreated roof has a survival chance less than 4% and fire retarding it will increase the likelihood of saving it by 50%. Creating defensible space will improve the chances of survival from 38% to 78%.

Wildland Firefighting

It is natural for forests to have fire. Conifer, pine, juniper, and cedar are highly flammable. Some trees propagate by fire, spewing their burning seeds great distances and causing the fire to spread. With flames less than four feet, firefighters can use hand tools; 4-8 feet flames require bulldozers and other heavy equipment; 8-11 feet flames require air tankers or helicopters. With flames more than 11 feet, direct fire suppression efforts will be ineffective. Firefighters retreat to other boundaries and attempt to burn out fuels. There are not enough engines to protect all structures in a fire, so firefighters will have to choose which structures have enough defensible space in which to make a stand against the fire.

Establish Defensible Space

Establish 100 foot (300 foot if on a hill) defensible space with a greenbelt of irrigated fire resistant low growing plants. Defensible space breaks up the continuous path of plants that would carry wildfire to your home. It also gives firefighters a safe zone from which to fight a wildfire.



- Remove flammable vegetation from around structures (100 feet). Break up continuous vegetation. The distance between tree canopies (branches) should be 10 feet for flat land, 20 feet for moderately sloping land and 30 feet for very steep land
- Trim trees so branches are six feet from the ground and 10 feet from your chimney. Prune branches to reduce fuel load
- Call your power company to trim trees around power lines
- Remove dead trees and vegetation – cut weeds and dead grasses six inches or shorter
- Have fire resistant landscaping. Separation between shrub canopies should be 2, 4, or 6 times the height of the shrub, depending on steepness of the land
- Clean dead leaves from roofs and gutters
- Avoid fuel “ladders” (grass leading to bushes leading to trees or house). Recommended separation of canopy is three times the height of the bush
- Water correctly

Fire-Resist Your Home

- If you are re-roofing, get a fire resistant roof. Flying embers can travel up to a mile from the fire
- Cover your chimney outlet and stovepipe with non-flammable ½ inch mesh screen
- If you are replacing windows, install dual or triple pane
- Enclose underside of eaves, balconies and decks with fire resistant materials to keep out embers
- Stack wood piles at least 30 feet from all structures
- Locate propane tanks at least 30 feet from all structures
- Have smoke detectors, change batteries, have fire extinguisher
- Safe storage of flammable materials

- Fire retardant sprays may be used if used correctly according to the manufacturer's instructions

Careful Use of Tools

Lawnmowers, weed-eaters, chainsaws, grinders, welders, tractors and trimmers can all spark a wildland fire.

- Spark arrestors are required on all portable gasoline powered equipment
- Do not clear in the heat of the day or when the wind is blowing
- Lawn mowers are for lawns; weed cutters are required to clear dry vegetation
- Equipment should be free of carbon and use the recommended grade of fuel
- Remove rocks in the area

Fire Preparedness

- Hot exhaust pipes and mufflers can cause a fire – don't pull off into the dry grass or brush
Plan the following before any threat of fire.
- Have your property number sign with reflective 3 inch by 3/8 inch wide numbers on a contrasting background
- Maintain an emergency water supply and generator
- Keep a cell phone nearby
- Keep a list of what items you want to take – medicines, home owner's insurance, personal papers, pictures of inventory, computer back-up, bird records, etc.

Plan for Bird Evacuation

- Identify a place to which you can evacuate your birds
- Identify where you will rent your trucks to transport, and the size you will need. Will they accept your credit card, or what will you need for payment to be able to rent?
- Identify someone to pick up the truck for you and people to come to help
- Keep enough carriers on hand to transport all your birds. You will need to decide which pairs can be put together in a carrier and which need to be split up into separate carriers. Even loving cockatoos pairs are likely to mate abuse if they are frightened
- Keep a supply of old cages with perches and food bowls so that you can set birds up at their temporary location. These will also have to be transported



Evacuate

When to evacuate? There are no clear rules as to when to evacuate. No one wants to stress their birds needlessly by moving them, but you also have to allow yourself enough time to catch them all and put them into transport carriers. You may even need to make multiple trips.

If you are told to evacuate by the fire company, you need to respect their advice. Fire spreads or changes directions quickly with change of temperature and wind direction. Also, even if the fire does not reach you, the smoke may kill your birds. Watching the spread of the fire and the wind conditions may help you to plan the evacuation. Do not expect the roads to be passable if you wait. They will be clogged with police cars, fire engines, other residents trying to get out and fire. When in doubt – get out!

Conclusion

The firefighters aren't going to save your house – you are going to save your house by creating defensible space. You are the firefighter!



Credits

Thank you to:

State of California Department of Forestry
 California FireSafe Council
 Santa Clara County Firesafe Council
for the pictures and information.



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