



## WILDFIRE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



*Recent fires have made it all too apparent that we need to be ready in case of emergency. Are you ready? Do you have a plan? Do you have a go bag ready? If the answer to any of these questions is, "No." you need to read this article and make some preparations. NOW!*

Surrounding our Rio, Tonto and Trilogy Verde communities, we have The Rio and Tonto Verde **Firewise** Task Forces which are local volunteers who dedicate their efforts to providing information about wildfire risk mitigation to fellow residents in close cooperation with the Rio Verde Fire District. Firewise USA® is a voluntary program that provides a framework to help neighbors get organized, find direction, and take action to increase the ignition resistance of their homes and community. Visit [Firewise.org](https://www.firewise.org) for more details about preparing your home from wildfires.

The number one action that you can take to defend your home is to create defensible space!

1. Clear a 30 foot - 50-foot-wide space around your home, free from weeds and dry brush. Trim tree branches away from your home, remove wood piles.
2. Check and make sure you have a fire extinguisher on hand.
4. Do not forget your roof maintenance to keep off dry debris. One spark igniting dry pollen or debris can set your roof on fire.
5. Check with your insurance company to make sure that your policy is up to date and covers appropriate replacement value.
7. Make sure your address is visible from the road.
8. Take videos/pictures of your personal belongings or household item, along with valuables, back up the pictures/video to the cloud/Amazon Prime or your phone carrier.

*Sometimes things just happen, don't they?*

*Especially when you may least expect, or be prepared for it, something will happen and you find yourself needing some assistance.*

*To help us all be better prepared for an emergency, our July publications will identify programs that keep you informed of the status of emergencies, educate you on what you can do ahead of time, and share ways for you to get registered.*

The first program is being run at the State-level. "Ready, Set, Go!" is a nationwide program adopted by the 15 Arizona Sheriffs that "encourages proactive measures to take before an emergency and actions to follow when communities are threatened." Details can be found at <https://ein.az.gov/ready-set-go>. The key components to each of the three steps are as follows:

**READY – Prepare Now (Be aware of the hazards that can threaten your community.)**

- Take steps now to prepare for seasonal threats.
- Register with the local emergency notification system. In the Verdes, residents will be notified through the community emergency notification system (CENS). <https://www.maricopa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/45726/CENS-Brochure>. This will provide a recorded message regarding the emergency to landlines and cell phones in our community. Cell phones will require the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) app to be downloaded on cell phones. Visit [www.ready.Maricopa.Gov](http://www.ready.Maricopa.Gov) to download. Everyone is encouraged to register their landlines and cell phones to receive emergency information.
- Connect with your local emergency management office, sheriff's office, and public health department on social media.
- Make a family evacuation and communication plan that includes family phone numbers, out-of-town contacts and family meeting locations. Keep in mind physical distancing recommendations, wearing face coverings or other public health recommendations.
- Build an emergency go kit with enough food, water, and necessary supplies for at least 72 hours. Include supplies to help keep you and your family healthy, such as face coverings, hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes. Focus initially on the "5 P's" - people and pet supplies, prescriptions, papers, personal needs, and priceless items.
- Check with your neighbors, family, friends, and elders through video chats or phone calls to ensure they are READY.
- Keep up to date on local news, weather watches, weather warnings, and public health recommendations.

*The SET alert might be the only notice you receive. Emergency services cannot guarantee they will be able to notify everyone if conditions deteriorate rapidly. Once you get the SET alert, be ready to GO!*

**SET – Be Alert (Know when there is significant danger in your area.)**

- Residents should consider voluntarily relocating to a shelter or with family/friends outside the affected area. Residents should avoid close contact with those who are sick and should practice public health recommendations when relocating.
- Grab your emergency go kit.
- Keep in mind unique needs for your family or special equipment for pets and livestock.

Stay aware of the latest news and information from public safety and public health officials.

*Note: The “SET” might be the only notice you receive. Emergency services cannot guarantee they will be able to notify everyone if conditions rapidly deteriorate. Be SET to GO!*

**GO! – Evacuate (Danger in your area is imminent and life threatening.)**

- Residents should evacuate immediately to a shelter or with family/friends outside of the affected area. Residents should avoid close contact with those who are sick and should practice public health recommendations when relocating.
- If you choose to ignore this advisement, you must understand emergency services may not be able to assist you further.
- Follow instructions from emergency personnel, stay on designated evacuation routes, and avoid closed areas.

*Emergency  
Management*

*Things to know*



**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

- Large scale emergencies in the community are managed utilizing the Maricopa County Emergency Operations Plan, a framework for emergency responders and all county supporting agencies, including ours.
- The Rio Verde Fire Department works with Maricopa County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) on all emergencies and evacuation plans, this was evident on the Verde Fire when the Fire Chief updated community leaders and residents on fire conditions during the fire.
- The OEM has the ability to send out emergency alerts to all cell phones in the Verdes communities (similar to Amber Alerts). These alerts will inform residents on current emergency conditions and give direction if needed.

**EVACUATION**

- It would be highly unlikely that we would need to evacuate the community due to a wildfire. Evacuations would most likely take place, if needed, to the homes that border our community in which the fire is headed. Residents should stay in their homes and wait for direction from the emergency alert systems.
- Any evacuations would be directed by the Rio Verde Fire District, OEM and the sheriff's department. Verde cares is also critical to the plan to identify those who may have special needs or mobility issues.
- There are generally three types of evacuation processes: shelter in place; local evacuation center, and out of the community evacuation. The emergency alert system will instruct residents on where to go and what to do. It is vital for all residents to take the time to download these apps and visit the websites to learn more.

Additional emergency services information or questions regarding emergency services in the Verde's, please visit <https://www.rioverdefire.org/emergency-services>.