



**CHRISTMAS TREE HILL  
NEIGHBORHOOD RESPONSE GROUP**  
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# EVACUATION PREPARATION GUIDE

**SIGN UP FOR ALERT MARIN** to receive evacuation warnings by visiting:  
<https://www.marinsheriff.org/services/emergency-services/alert-marin>

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## When should you evacuate?

To assist you in knowing whether your area is under an evacuation warning or order, it is helpful to know your evacuation zone name / number. Authorities use zone names / numbers in media releases and on social media to notify residents which areas are under an evacuation warning or order. While it is helpful to know the name of your zone, however, it is not necessary. Marin County will always include the boundaries of an impacted zone when sending an AlertMarin alert. You can find your zone name / number here:

<https://knowyourzone.zonehaven.com/#evacuation-zones>  
<https://www.marincounty.org/depts/fr/divisions/operations/wildfire-evacuation-zones>

- **You receive no Alert** but you smell smoke, see flames or see others fleeing, or a major earthquake badly damages your home.
- **You receive an Alert or hear Hi Lo sirens. If you hear the Hi Lo evacuation siren – it's time to go!** To make sure you/your family/kids know what this siren means and what it sounds like - watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BISFt0-WzQM>.
- **Make sure you are signed up for Alerts** and keep batteries on hand for your battery-operated radio: Nixle: <https://local.nixle.com/register> | Alert Marin: [www.alertmarin.org](http://www.alertmarin.org)  
PG&E alerts and notifications: <https://www.safetyactioncenter.pge.com>

**The disaster events that should automatically prompt you to start your evacuation are a wildfire, a major earthquake that damages your home, or a slide.**

If such an event occurs, you should seriously consider evacuating by car rapidly to a safe area. Once there, observe and listen to reports before deciding if it is safe to return home. **If you smell smoke in the immediate vicinity or see fire we urge you not to wait for an order to evacuate.** By the time an order comes it may be too late to evacuate safely. At most, an early evacuation will inconvenience you, at worst, waiting for an official order may be too late.

Evacuation orders usually come in the form of police driving around streets using Hi Lo sirens and bullhorns / loud speakers and via Alert Marin. Waiting for this to happen may already find you on the wrong side of the evacuation curve and potentially in danger. The time it takes to load up your car, round up your valuables and important papers and locate and load your pets may place you at the end of a long line of cars that are already on CTH's narrow roads and you may find yourself unable to evacuate timely due to a major traffic jam. **We urge you to follow the advice below to ensure that you and your loved ones and pets are not on the list of those that do not make it out.**

## Evacuating by Car

- **During the fire season, especially on Red Flag days, park your vehicles facing outwards in your garage, carport or driveway.** This will allow you to pull out in the direction of traffic rapidly and not find yourself trying to back out into heavy traffic flow. Your go-bags should be kept inside your vehicle during the fire season, especially on Red Flag days.
- **If you will be using a car parked in a garage remember that most garage door openers do not function without power.** Evacuation is not the time to read the manual on how to open the door manually, so read it now and practice opening it manually.
- **If at all possible, use only one vehicle to evacuate.** This will increase the chance of everyone on CTH evacuating safely by minimizing traffic flow.

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- **Keep maps in your car for the North Bay and surrounding counties.** Go over them and plan evacuation routes in a number of different directions.
- **Keep your vehicles gas tank at least ¾ full at all times** as there may be no gas available due to high-demand or a power outage.
- **If you evacuate using your vehicle—unless directed otherwise by first responders—go North or South on Hwy 101, unless that takes you into the direction of a fire.** Take whichever way is open and will take you out of harm's way and be prepared to spend time in a hotel/motel/inn, or with friends. Know where local hotels/motels are located ahead of time.
- **Know your vehicular evacuation routes and available alternate routes.**
- **Prepare an evacuation plan and practice evacuation.** It is especially important to practice evacuation with your kids and to make plans for evacuating anyone with special needs. Think about what your plan of action will be if you have to abandon your car and evacuate on foot.

### Evacuating on Foot (See the CTH Evacuation Map)

- **Make sure that you and your family know where all the CTH steps, lanes and pathways are in case you/they need to evacuate on foot.** They are marked on the evacuation map, but it is vitally important that you locate the ones nearest your home and that you follow them all the way down the hill to see where they lead and where you will/can exit if you use them.
- **Make sure you have a plan** to evacuate on foot should the need arise. **It is especially important to practice evacuation with your kids and to make plans for evacuating anyone with special needs.** Think about what your plan of action will be if you have to abandon your car and evacuate on foot. Make sure that you have a designated assembly point for your family.

### In General

- Keep a bag of quarters in your car or go-bag, for use at public phones in case cell towers are down or your battery dies, and a duplicate credit card. ATMs may not work if there is a power outage so keep emergency cash on hand.
- Store the documents you will need to restart your life in your go-bag, better yet photograph/record them on your phone/computer or store them on a memory stick so that you need not worry about taking time to locate and gather them in an emergency.
- You need little in the way clothing and food if evacuating during the summer, so do not waste time rounding up items in your closet and kitchen. Everything you need should already be in your go-bag(s), included a supply of bottled water and energy bars/snacks. Be sure to have suitable shoes in the event you have to evacuate on foot.
- For advice on preparing a go-bag and emergency supplies kit see:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPojKHxYc98>

<https://www.ready.gov/kit>

<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2020/emergency-go-bag.html>

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## Wildfire Risk and Hillside Evacuation Strategies from the Fire Department

Prepared by Scott Shurtz, Former Fire Chief Central Marin Fire Department

**Make sure your home is fire safe:** If you've taken the necessary precautions, your home will stand a much greater chance of surviving all but the worst-case fire scenarios. However, significant annual effort is needed to clear vegetation and other combustibles from around the home. As a start, ask yourself these questions:

- Are there areas of continuous vegetation from the yard to the house?
  - Do I have wood siding or wood roof shingles?
  - Do I have dry leaves, needles or branches on my roof or in my rain gutters?
  - Do I have firewood stacked against the home or under the deck?
  - Do I live on a steep slope with an abundance of vegetation below the house?
  - Are there tree limbs contacting the house or growing within 6 feet of the roof?
- If the answer is YES to any of the above, then you have work to do.

Find more information on preparing your home and property at: <https://www.firesafemarin.org/preparedness>

**Pay attention to the weather:** Vegetation fires need three factors present to become firestorm events. These are the conditions that are considered by the National Weather Service when issuing a "RED FLAG WARNING."

### 1. High Temperatures    2. Low Humidity    3. High Winds

- If all of these factors are present, you need to be aware that dangerous conditions are present.
- Be ready to mobilize if you see or smell smoke. It is better to leave the area early before road congestion and environmental conditions worsen.
- Consider keeping a radio tuned to a news channel for the day.
- Make sure everyone in the family is aware of the situation and knows your family plan.
- Pay attention to the weather and your surroundings!

**Travel Strategies:** The key to evacuation is to leave the area early before the streets become crowded and visibility and breathing conditions become compromised due to smoke conditions. As we saw during the North Bay fires, it is very difficult to predict what will happen on an extreme day. However, based on our local fire weather patterns, a strong, dry, off-shore wind (from the north or northeast) is the scenario that fire professionals feel is the most likely to create conditions that would require the need for evacuations. THIS IS NOT THE ONLY SCENARIO THAT IS POSSIBLE. It is simply a scenario that is commonly considered due to local weather patterns, topography and the location and arrangement of homes. If you have been paying attention to the factors that contribute to dangerous fire weather, you will have improved situational awareness and your reflex time (the time it takes to implement your evacuation plan) will be reduced.

Remember, **you do not need to wait for authorities to issue an evacuation order.** If you sense danger and are feeling concerned about your vulnerability during an extreme weather event, you should consider leaving the area until conditions improve. If evacuating, use streets that provide direct egress out of the area. If there are any alternate routes out of your neighborhood, learn and practice them now. You want to understand and be very familiar with your optional routes before the emergency, when anxiety will be high and visibility may be low. Stay off trails unless there are no other alternatives and do not take routes you're unfamiliar with unless specifically directed by authorities.

**Evacuation Terminology:** It is important to be familiar with evacuation terminology. In Marin, fire agencies and law enforcement will use the terms Evacuation Warning, Evacuation Order and Shelter in Place.

**Evacuation Warning:** Fire is expected to arrive in 2 hours or more, with threat to civilian life. Evacuate as soon as possible. See <https://www.firesafemarin.org/preparedness/evacuation> for an Evacuation Checklist.

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Depending on the specific information provided in the warning, there may be time to further prepare your home. However, because of the high-risk conditions and limited routes out of many of our wildland interface areas, residents should plan to leave as soon as possible after receiving an Evacuation Warning. **Be aware that waiting increases the likelihood that you will encounter greater challenges and additional hazards while evacuating.**

**Evacuation Order:** Fire is expected to arrive in less than 2 hours (but possibly much sooner), with threat to civilian life. Evacuate immediately, do not delay to gather belongings or prepare your home.

**Shelter in Place:** Community members should stay secured in current location. Sheltering in place may be used when evacuation would cause greater threat to life.

**Modes of Evacuation:** There are no evacuation regulations that must be followed. Only strategies and suggestions can be offered. Common sense, preparedness and awareness are keys to a successful evacuation. Plan on early evacuation by car, meaning well ahead of any active fire or ember shower activity in the immediate area. FIREsafe Marin has an extensive discussion of evacuation preparation and procedures at <https://www.firesafemarin.org/preparedness/evacuation>. If you plan to evacuate in a vehicle that is typically kept in a garage, be sure that your garage door equipment has a battery backup in case the power is out when it's time to leave. You should also be familiar with the procedure to open the door manually. Understand that your escape doesn't involve traveling tremendous distances. In Southern California and in certain locations of the East Bay hills, residents need to travel - in some cases - several miles to reach safety. **It should be emphasized that it is generally unsafe to be outside (on foot or a bicycle) during a firestorm. It is dangerous to be caught in a situation where it is too late or too difficult to evacuate, but if confronted with that reality, the protection of a vehicle or house is preferred to being exposed to the environment during the passage of a fire front.**

If evacuating by vehicle, the **FIREsafe Marin Evacuation Guide** recommends:

- *Do not leave your vehicle unless there is no other option or your car is on fire. Leaving your car is a last resort and may prove deadly. You are almost always safer in your car or a building.*
- *Do not abandon your car in the roadway. Park it off the road if there is no other option.*

As emphasized above, the key is to leave the area early before the streets become crowded. **You do not need to wait for authorities to issue an evacuation order.** If you are aware of critical weather conditions (such as those during Red Flag Warnings) and you smell a strong odor of smoke or sense other dangers, you should consider leaving the area until conditions improve or it becomes clear that your neighborhood is not threatened.

**Remember that there are almost 2000 residents for every on-duty firefighter, so during a community-wide disaster, it will not be possible for emergency responders to provide the personalized service that residents have come to expect during more localized emergencies.** Wildfires are dynamic events! Because of this, there are too many possible scenarios and variables to realistically provide a predetermined solution for each. When it comes down to it, people who live or spend time in the wildland interface areas need to be prepared to make decisions about their safety and survival without the immediate assistance of professional emergency response personnel. Become familiar with your evacuation options, prepare your property, have a plan for your family, maintain situational awareness and be ready to act in the case of an emergency.

**STAY SAFE BY BEING PREPARED!** We are happy to provide advice and information as it relates to the wildfire threat to the community but the Police Department is ultimately in charge of evacuation procedures and protocols. Please feel free to reach out to your NRG leaders, the Fire Department, or the Police Department if you have any additional questions regarding evacuations. <https://centralmarinfire.org> | 415-473-6717.