



# Evacuation Preparation Guide

Updated 8/16/2023

Evacuation can be very stressful. Advanced planning and practice can help reduce your stress and make evacuating go more smoothly. It can be helpful to break preparation and evacuation actions into lists based on how much time you have. For example, you can do an enormous amount now to prepare for a possible evacuation in our district. Then there are the items to take care of in the event of an evacuation warning or advisory. Most importantly, there are the things to do when it is time to evacuate based on an evacuation order or a perceived threat.

## Preparation in Advance

These are things you can do now and in the coming weeks to help make sure that you are as prepared as you can be for an evacuation. Most of the items on this list will be a lot harder or impossible to achieve on the day of an evacuation.

### **Sign up to Receive Emergency Notifications at BoCoAlert.org**

Pre-evacuation warnings and evacuation orders can be sent to people at their landline phone, to cell phones as calls or texts, and to email addresses.

If you have a landline, that phone number is automatically registered with the county's alert system. The phone companies provide updated lists on a quarterly basis.

To receive emergency alerts on a cell phone or via email, go to [BoCoAlert.org](https://www.bocalert.org) to register those points of contact. You will need to create an account if you've not already done this. If you've registered in the past, you might want to log in and verify that all contact information is current (see below).

Even if you have a landline, it's recommended that you register your cell and email as well so that there are more ways to reach you (e.g., in a fire, sometimes phone poles burn down, so a landline call may not go through while a text would likely reach you).

It is also highly recommended that each individual at an address create a separate account with his/her own contact information so that everyone directly receives emergency information in case you are not all together at the time.

Please note that we at Boulder Mountain Fire do not maintain the county's 911 Alert list and are not able to assist with any questions or problems related to registering.

## **Verify That You're Already Registered for Emergency Notifications**

To check if you're signed up for the county's emergency alert system, you can do the following:

- 1) Go to [www.BoCoAlert.org](http://www.BoCoAlert.org)
- 2) Click "Sign In" at the top right of the home page, then scroll down to the bottom of the sign-in page. Click "Forgot Username." You'll be prompted to enter the email address used to register for emergency notifications
- 3) Enter your email address and click OK.
  - 3a) If you enter an email address that is not associated with a registration, you immediately get a message that says "The email is invalid," which would mean you're not registered (at least not with that email address; if you have multiple email addresses, be sure to check each one).
  - 3b) If you enter an email address that is associated with a registration, you'll immediately get a message that says "Email has been sent. Please check your inbox." That indicates you are already signed up to receive emergency notifications from the county. And you'll get an email with your username.

## **Make Sure Your Cell Phone Won't Block Emergency Notifications**

Are you at risk of missing an emergency notification because, like many people, you don't answer calls from phone numbers you don't recognize? Or maybe you block incoming texts and calls at night and at other times? Now you can address that issue.

Boulder County Communications has provided us with the emergency notification system's caller ID so that you can add it to your phone to help avoid the potential of their calls being blocked.

The caller ID for all emergency notifications is 303-441-1400.

Here are links to information about how to make sure that certain contacts can bypass your cell phone's do not disturb and silent settings. The basic process is to create a contact for the emergency notification number in your contacts/address book, and then adjust various settings to always allow that contact to get through:

Apple iOS 16 (see the bottom of the page, "Allow calls from emergency contacts when notifications are silenced"): <https://support.apple.com/guide/iphone/allow-or-silence-notifications-for-a-focus-iph21d43af5b/16.0/ios/16.0>

Android (see "set who can interrupt you"):  
[https://support.google.com/android/answer/9069335?hl=en&ref\\_topic=7651002#zippy=%2Cset-who-can-interrupt-you](https://support.google.com/android/answer/9069335?hl=en&ref_topic=7651002#zippy=%2Cset-who-can-interrupt-you)

## **Plan Your Evacuation Ahead of Time**

Don't wait until the last minute to plan your evacuation. Our [Wildfire Evacuation Checklist](#) covers the basics, and more extensive information is below. Identify where you can go in the event of an evacuation. Try to have more than one option: the home of a friend or family member in another town, a hotel, or a shelter. Keep the phone numbers and addresses of these locations handy.

Map your primary routes and backup routes to your evacuation destinations in case roads are blocked or impassable. Put a physical map of the area in every vehicle in case GPS satellite transmissions are down or your devices run out of power.

Pre-arrange a designated place to meet in case your family members are separated before or during the evacuation. Make the location specific. Ask an out-of-town friend or family member to act as a contact person for your family.

Making a home inventory, keeping it up to date, and having it accessible will:

- Be useful if you need to apply for disaster aid
- Help ensure that you have purchased enough insurance to replace your personal possessions
- Speed the insurance claims process, if necessary
- Substantiate any losses for income tax purposes

## **Create a Go Bag and Checklist of What to Take**

Make sure your go bag is ready and by the door in case of a fire that requires you to evacuate at a moment's notice. Create a checklist of what goes with you in an evacuation ahead of time and keep it in a handy and readily accessible place.

Your go bag and checklist might include:

- Important documents (see next section)
- Medications and prescriptions
- Prescription eye ware
- Changes of clothing
- Computers with chargers
- Cell phones with chargers
- Family photos
- Keepsakes and heirlooms
- Cash
- Special equipment for elderly or disabled family members
- Toys and supplies for children
- Supplies for pets (food, leash, litter box, crate)
- First aid kit
- Bottled water and snacks
- N-95 masks (in case you have to travel through thick smoke)
- Flashlight, battery-powered radio, extra batteries
- Bedding (sleeping bags, pillows)

## **Gather Important Documents**

Keep the following important documents in a safe place that you can easily access and take with you in the event of an evacuation, or in a safe deposit box. Although for most of these you'll need the original, it's a good idea to make digital copies and keep them with you on a thumb drive and back them up online.

- Prescriptions
- Birth and marriage certificates
- Passports
- Driver's license or personal identification
- Social security cards
- Insurance policies (homeowners, auto, life, and any others)
- Recent tax returns
- Employment information
- Wills and deeds
- Stocks, bonds, and other negotiable certificates
- Financial information such as bank, savings, and retirement account numbers
- Home inventory

## **Consider Adding Yourself or a Family Member to Our Special Needs List**

Boulder Mountain Fire maintains a list of individuals who may require extra help in the event of an emergency. We call this the Special Needs List. We keep the list confidential. It is distributed only to the department's incident commanders and placed in our engines. You can learn more about the list here: <https://www.bmfpd.org/special-needs-list>

"Special needs" covers a lot, and changes a lot, so we need you to help us keep the list current. For example, you might want to be on the list if you use an oxygen concentrator, so if there's an extended power outage, we can attempt to get bottled oxygen to you. Or if over the next six-plus months, you or a loved one is going to have problems evacuating independently in the case of a wildfire or other emergency, please ask to be included on the list.

How To Join/Update Your Info on the Special Needs List:

To get on the list and keep the list accurate for you and your family, call Pippa May at 303-513-1613 or email her at [specialneeds@bouldermountainfire.org](mailto:specialneeds@bouldermountainfire.org)

## **Have a Backup Plan for Evacuating Your Essentials**

Have a plan for getting your go bag, keepsakes, and important documentation out of your house if you're not home to do so yourself. For tips on how to do this, download the Neighborhood Emergency Teams Guidebook from the bottom of this page of our website: <https://www.bmfpd.org/prepared>

## **Plan for Your Pets**

Have a plan for getting your pets to safety in case you're not home and evacuations are ordered. For tips on how to do this, download the Neighborhood Emergency Teams Guidebook from the bottom of this page of our website: <https://www.bmfpd.org/prepared>

## **Know Your Evacuation Routes**

Know your evacuation routes. Find district evacuation maps and other helpful evacuation information here: <https://www.bmfpd.org/evacuation>. Keep printouts of evacuation routes in every vehicle.

## **Know How to Open Your Garage without Electricity**

Oftentimes wildfires happen during high wind events, which means power may be out when you need to evacuate. Be sure to learn how to open your garage door if your power goes off and you can't open your garage door automatically. The general procedure is to pull the handle at the end of the short rope that hangs from the track on the garage ceiling. Pull really hard until the chain disengages. Then push the door up by hand. A heavy door may take two people to lift. Don't wait for power to come on to evacuate.

## **Take the 10-minute Evacuation Challenge**

To ensure that you and your family are fully prepared for a sudden evacuation, do a real-time test. Give yourself just 10 minutes to get your family and belongings into the car and on the road to safety. By planning ahead and practicing, you should be able to gather your family members and pets, along with the most important items they will need, calmly and efficiently, with a minimum of stress and confusion. Learn more about the challenge here: <https://www.iii.org/video/evacuation-10-minute-challenge>

## **Bookmark Official Information Sources**

The Boulder Office of Disaster Management (ODM) is the primary information source about fires in our area. Bookmark these resources:

- Website: <https://www.boulderodm.gov>
- X (formerly Twitter): <http://twitter.com/boulderoem>
- Wildfire Incident Map: <https://aware.zonehaven.com/zones/US-CO-BOU-BC-43G>
- Information Map: <https://boco.org/OEMInfoMap>

## **Take Fire Mitigation Measures**

Wildfires can become incredible destructive when they get into the tree tops, which happens more easily in unmitigated landscapes. In addition, during wildfires, many homes burn down because they catch on fire from ember cast (as opposed to flames).

To see how fire embers fly in the wind and ignite a home, please watch the video found on the Boulder Mountain Fire Wildfire Mitigation Crew website, in the middle of this page: <https://www.bmfmitcrew.com/structure-preparation>

The good news is that a little work done today really can make a big difference. Here is a list of things you can do before a wildfire that will greatly increase your home's chances of survival.

- Remove flammable debris from the base of your house and around and under decks
- Clean your gutters and roof of needle cast (do this periodically throughout the year)
- Move wood piles to safe locations (e.g., at least 30 feet from and uphill of any structure)
- Weed whack grasses to a height of 6 inches or less in the defensible space (learn more about defensible space here: <https://www.bmfmitcrew.com/defensible-space>)
- Remove deep needle cast away from the base of large trees
- Limb low-hanging branches within the defensible space
- Remove any accumulations of trash and other flammable debris from the defensible space

### **Use Extra Caution on Red Flag Days**

On red flag days, avoid all activities that have the potential to create a spark. If you see someone engaging in activities that are prohibited on red flag days (e.g., smoking on the side of the road, welding) and you're not comfortable speaking with them, note the address and description of the person, and report the incident to the Sheriff's office via the non-emergency phone number: 303-441-4444

### **If You Smell Smoke or See a Fire**

If you smell smoke or see a fire — or what you think may be a fire — immediately dial 911 to report it. Do not call the fire station. Doing so will delay response because the station is not staffed 24 hours.

### **Join Your Neighborhood's Email Group and the Fire Department's Notification List**

Neighborhood Email Lists: The fire department does not maintain an email list for residents, but rather communicates with district residents through 8 separate lists, which are each maintained by the relevant district group/neighborhood. Information about how you can join the various forums is available here in the "Be Connected" PDF:

<https://www.bouldermountainfireauxiliary.org/resources1>

BMFPD frequently sends information about red flag days, preparedness, and more to these email groups. We also try to send information out about emergencies, but that is not always possible. In addition, be mindful that information provided by residents during emergencies is oftentimes helpful and accurate, but also sometimes incorrect.

**BMFPD Urgent Notification List:** The only list that the fire department maintains is an urgent notification list, and you must subscribe to it (or unsubscribe from it) yourself. The intention is to use it only when there is a life-safety message that needs to go out, such as an evacuation order or shelter-in-place order. However, there is no guarantee we will have the resources or time to use this list in an emergency. Information about how to register for that list is here: <https://www.bmfpd.org/emaillist>

**Know that the emails Boulder Mountain Fires sends to residents about emergencies are *supplementary* to official evacuation warnings and orders.** We do our best to send timely information, but the public information officers are also firefighters, so sometimes we're fighting the fire (or lack cell coverage), so we're not able to get informational emails out as quickly as we'd like. Sometimes we can't send them at all.

# Evacuation Warning or Advisory Actions

An evacuation warning notification means that you should prepare to take action, which in the case of a wildland fire means prepare to evacuate. There are things you can do if you have a little time prior to an evacuation, such as when you receive an evacuation warning notification. That said, an evacuation warning should be treated as an imminent emergency. In particular, if you need extra time getting out, you should consider taking immediate action when a warning notification is issued.

How much time you'll have varies because emergency incidents are fluid, unpredictable, and evolve rapidly. But if you have a couple of hours to prepare prior to evacuating, using what time you have in a calm and efficient manner will make all the difference. Here are some actions to consider:

## Consider Evacuating Right Away

If you see smoke or flames near you, or feel like you are in an unsafe place, evacuate immediately. Do not wait for a reverse 911 or other official evacuation order. And do not call 911 to ask if you need to evacuate. Doing so ties up emergency resources, delaying help for others who need emergency help

Voluntary evacuations are advised if you are concerned for your safety, feel you need additional time to exit the area, or have health conditions that may be aggravated by this incident. You are also encouraged to move pets and animals out of the area to prepare for mandatory evacuations.

## Monitor Official Information Sources

Monitor these official Boulder OEM resources for updates on evacuations and the fire:

Website: <https://www.boulderoem.com>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/boulderoem>

Incident map: [boco.org/OEMInfoMap](http://boco.org/OEMInfoMap)

## Inventory Your Go Bag and Gather Your Checklist Items

Make sure you have everything you need by going through your go bag and checklist of items to take (see the above section "Create a Go Bag and Checklist of What to Take").

## Other Preparation Measures

As time permits, here are some other ways to prepare your home just before you evacuate:

- Gather children, dependents, and pets/livestock, or make arrangements to meet them in town if they are not with you at home



- Gather your go bag and the items on your evacuation checklist and put them in your vehicle
- Crate your pets so they are ready to be loaded into your vehicle
- Open your garage door
- Park your vehicle facing out
- Review your evacuation routes. District evacuation maps are available here: <https://www.bmfpd.org/evac-maps>
- Turn house lights on, close windows, turn off air conditioner, leave doors and garage closed and unlocked
- Dress to prevent burns. Wear natural fiber clothing (long pants and long-sleeved shirt), boots, goggles, hat, and bandana or N-95 mask—but don't waste time looking for these items
- Move propane and BBQ appliances away from structures
- Place a ladder against the house
- Move combustible deck furniture and doormats inside
- Attach outdoor hoses and make them visible

If the evacuation order comes, or if you smell smoke/see flames or otherwise feel unsafe, act immediately. Load people and pets and GO!

# Evacuation Order Received or Evacuation Based on Perceived Threat

When you receive an evacuation order or when you decide to evacuate because of an immediate perceived threat, you no longer have time to prepare beyond grabbing your go bag and loading your family and pets in your vehicle. It is time to go, immediately.

## When to Leave

- If a fire happens in our area and you feel your safety is threatened, take appropriate actions. You do not need to wait for an evacuation notice to leave.
- When you receive an evacuation order, leave immediately. This will have you avoid being caught in fire, smoke, or road congestion. Don't wait to be told by multiple times by authorities to leave. In an intense wildfire, they may not have time to knock on every door. If you are advised to leave, don't hesitate!
- Do not check your neighborhood's email forum to ask if you should leave
- Do not call 911 to ask if you need to evacuate. Doing so ties up emergency resources, delaying help for others who need emergency help

## Where to Go

- Leave to a predetermined location (it should be a low-risk area, such as a well-prepared neighbor or relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, a hotel, etc.)

## How to Get There

- Have several travel routes in case one route is blocked by the fire or by emergency vehicles and equipment
- Choose an escape route away from the fire

# More about Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District

## **Monetary Donations to Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District**

As always we welcome your tax-deductible donations to Boulder Mountain Fire. You can donate online with a credit card by going to this page of the department website:

<https://www.bmfpd.org/donations>

You can mail a check, made out to Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District, to:  
Station 1 at 1905 Linden Drive, Boulder, CO 80304

If you're contemplating making a larger gift or would like to make a gift of stock, please contact Bob Loveman, who is president of the BMFPD Board, by phone at 303-926-0204 or by email at [rloveman47@gmail.com](mailto:rloveman47@gmail.com)

## **Volunteering with Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District**

You can learn about how to volunteer with the department, whether as a firefighter or in varied support roles, here: <https://www.bmfpd.org/volunteer>

**Thank you for your support!**