

# Wildfire Preparedness and Evacuation Planning

## From the Blue Mountain Forest Stewardship Initiative (FSI)

Hello neighbors.

The FSI shares this to inform new residents and remind long-term residents of the evacuation planning aspect of living in our beautiful foothills community. Due to the "box canyon" geography of our community, with only one access road for ingress and egress, whenever there is a fire anywhere near BME, we get an evacuation notice from the Jeffco Sheriff's office. Sometimes, a Jeffco Sheriff's Deputy will be posted at the entrance to BME to restrict access. Residents need to have an evacuation plan in place for getting out quickly and for having neighbors lined up to help evacuate your elderly or adolescent family members, pets, and "fire tote" in the event you are away and not allowed back into the community.

### The FSI suggests the following 10 step priority list:

#### #1 priority: Have a Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Training and Assessment

The most important thing you can do to give your home a fighting chance to withstand a wildfire:

Have an HIZ Home Training/Assessment, performed by the FSI, to learn how to "Think Like an Ember" and the simple steps you can take in the Home Ignition Zone to "harden" your home. Contact the FSI for an audit by emailing [BlueMountainFSI@gmail.com](mailto:BlueMountainFSI@gmail.com) or sign up on our website at [www.BlueMountainFSI.org](http://www.BlueMountainFSI.org).

#### #2 priority: Know the current level of fire danger.

##### Know if a Red Flag Warning has been issued:

Watch the weather report on a local news station. The National Weather Service (NWS) issues a Red Flag Warning when certain weather conditions are present, which include wind speeds of 25mph or more, relative humidity of less than 15%, forecast of dry thunderstorm activity, and several other variables. At the time of this writing, several agencies are working with the NWS to devise a more comprehensive fire danger alert system for the general public.

##### The CCCFPD Fire Danger Ratings are:

Low, Moderate, High, Very High, and Extreme

The current rating is posted on Highway 72 between Highway 93 and Blue Mountain Drive. Ratings can also be found on the Coal Creek Canyon Fire Protection District website for current information, [CCCVFD website](#)

##### The Fire Restriction Stages are:

No Restrictions, Stage 1 Restrictions, and Stage 2 Restrictions

Each stage comes with explicit explanations of what activities are banned. Check the Coal Creek Canyon Fire Protection District website for current information, [CCCVFD website](#)

#### #3 priority: Register all family members' cell phones in the LookoutAlert Emergency Notification System.

LookoutAlert reaches numbers from two databases. One is the 911 database, which contains all listed and unlisted landline phone numbers in Jefferson County. If you have a landline, it is automatically included in this database.

The second database is made up of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) numbers (if you have a bundled internet/phone/television service you probably have a VoIP line) and also email addresses owned by people who have registered to receive LookoutAlert emergency notifications.

- ◇ If you don't have a landline phone, and would like to receive a VoIP number, email, text, or cell phone call from LookoutAlert, please register for this vitally important free service. To register, visit the LookoutAlert website at <https://www.smart911.com/smart911/ref/reg.action?pa=LookoutAlert> .

#### **#4 priority: Know when to leave!**

Emergency Alerts will be issued by the Sheriff's Department using Lookout Alert. See below to understand the three levels of alert. However, we encourage you to use common sense, **'when in doubt, get out!'** If you feel threatened, go! Keep in mind, in some cases, there is no time for formal evacuation notifications due to quickly changing fire conditions. Also, the completion of large housing developments nearby (Candelas, Leyden Rock, Canyon Pines) have put major stress on our inadequate roadway infrastructure. Residents of Coal Creek Canyon, and of these high density housing areas, will be trying to evacuate at the same time. Leave early!

##### **Shelter-in-Place Alert:**

There is a hazard in your area and you should remain or go indoors, not go outdoors, and not evacuate the area. This may be the safest strategy for hazardous materials spills, law enforcement, or other incidents wherein an evacuation could actually increase the danger to you.

##### **Pre-Evacuation Alert:**

There is a hazard in your area that may require you to evacuate in the near future. Everyone should be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. If you feel you are in danger and want to leave, do so. If you need additional time to evacuate, you should consider leaving now. If you need to arrange for transportation assistance, you should do so immediately. If you have horses, or other farm animals, you should consider removing them from the hazard area now.

##### **Evacuation Alert:**

There is a hazard in your area and you have been ordered to evacuate immediately. If you need assistance evacuating yourself or family members, call 911. If you need help evacuating animals, call Jeffco Animal Control at 303-271-5070. You will be provided the safest escape routes known, so make sure you follow the instructions as other routes may be closed or unpassable. You will also be told where an evacuation point has been established to provide information and a safe place if you have nowhere else to go.

*Do not delay – evacuation is mandatory and means you need to leave immediately!*

#### **#5 priority: Know where you are going.**

##### **Evacuation route:**

As BME has only one way in and out, an orderly evacuation of residents is vital. If you have livestock to evacuate, get loaded early and be ready to go. Follow evacuation instructions given by the Sheriff's Dept. Stick to the main roads. Do not attempt shortcuts. Trust that the Jeffco Sheriff's Department has mapped out the best evacuation route for you.

In the event Blue Mountain Drive is unsafe for use, the CCCFPD firefighters will coordinate and lead an evacuation, through private land, locked gates and private roads, to get community members safely to Highway 72.

Drive the four main evacuation routes out of Coal Creek Canyon so you are familiar with them. These routes are mapped on the CCCFPD website at [CCCVFD website](#).

##### **Safe location:**

Designate a safe place to stay well away from the fire zone. This might be a friend or family member's home, motel or Red Cross emergency shelter. If you were instructed to go to an emergency shelter, go and check in, even if you don't intend to stay. Checking in will help others know if you are safe.

Know that pets are not allowed in emergency shelters, though most support animals should be allowed. Make a plan to drop pets off with friends or at a boarding kennel. Livestock and farm animals can be taken to the Jeffco Fairgrounds for safe boarding in the event of emergency.

#### **#6 priority: Create a phone tree with the names and all contact phone numbers of 2 or 3 neighbors.**

If you are out of BME when the evacuation order is given you may not be allowed back in. Make a plan with neighbors to help retrieve your family members, pets, "fire tote" and important possessions. Give them a key or garage door code, or let them know where a key is hidden. Review the plan with each neighbor ahead of fire season each year.

## **#7 priority: Keep track of your family as you evacuate.**

Identify two meeting places, the first near your home so everyone can evacuate together, the second away from your neighborhood in case you can't return home.

Pick a friend or relative who lives out of the area that you can all call and say you're okay. Designate that person as the one to disperse info on your wellbeing to concerned others. Make a plan ahead of time and review it each year.

## **#8 priority: Create a "fire tote" at the beginning of each fire season.**

Keep your emergency tote near your front door, maybe in a coat closet. Make sure your backup evacuation helper neighbors know the location. Your tote can be a lidded plastic tote, a small trunk, a large backpack, or a large rolling suitcase (if locking is necessary.) Use it as a place to store:

### **Medical needs:**

Excess prescription medicines, inhalers, etc.

First aid kit

Pet medications

Extra pairs of contact lenses or prescription eyeglasses (even old eyeglasses can get you through)

COVID-19 supplies: a stash of facemasks, plastic gloves and sanitizing wipes

### **Connectivity needs:**

External backup drives of your computer files

USB charging power banks for phones and devices

Extra charging cables for all electronic devices and phones

### **Important documents:**

Driver licenses

Passports

Birth certificates

Written prescriptions for eyeglasses or contact lenses, unfilled medication prescriptions, etc.

Property deeds

Vehicle titles, registration and auto insurance cards

Credit cards, debit cards, emergency cash

Homeowner insurance policy

Inventory of all personal property for your insurance company

Invoices marked paid or bill of sale for high-ticket personal possessions

Wills, trusts, estate plans

A hardcopy of the BME Resident Directory

(Tip: Periodically, scan critical documents and email them to yourself. You can access them from any location in the future.)

### **Important items:**

Extra keys to home and cars

Antique or irreplaceable jewelry

Family photos which have not been digitized

## **#9 priority: Determine evacuation duties for each family member.**

### **Personal items:**

Make a list for each person to use in collecting their own personal “must have” items from the home. In your fire tote (or a separate tote) have a small, empty backpack for each family member with their list attached. Use the backside of each person's attached list to include your family emergency phone number list.

### **Vehicle loading:**

Determine which vehicles will be evacuated, who will drive each, and what will be loaded into each. Have a primary list of items to load if there are only minutes to do so safely (Evacuation Order issued.) Continue with a secondary list of items to load if there is more time to do so safely (Pre-Evacuation Order issued.)

## **#10 priority: Get your property ready for evacuation.**

If there is time, use a few minutes to take actions which will help firefighters defend your home.

### **Inside checklist:**

Close all windows and interior and exterior doors, leaving them unlocked.

Shut off furnaces, air conditioners, swamp coolers, ceiling fans, etc.

Leave lights on in a few rooms so firefighters can see your house under smoky conditions.

### **Outside checklist:**

Shut off natural gas at the meter.

Shut off main propane tank at the house valve.

Turn off all propane tanks at fire pits and BBQs.

Gather up flammable items from the exterior of the house and bring them inside (e.g. rugs, patio cushions, children's toys, door mats, brooms, etc.)

Leave hoses and sprinklers where firefighters can find them, a few feet away but detached from spigots (a burning plastic hose makes a wick to lead fire to your home.)

Turn off timed garden sprinklers, as every drop of BMWD water and water pressure may be needed for several days to fight a wildfire.

If you have a water tank or cistern, make water stored there available to firefighters.

Place a *metal* ladder against your house to be available for use by firefighters.

Leave exterior house and garage lights on.

Do not leave cars in your driveway. To defend your home, firefighters need to be able to get trucks and equipment in and out safely.

*IMPORTANT:* As you leave, hang a white cloth (pillowcase, t-shirt, towel) at the end of your driveway to indicate you have evacuated. If you have time, write “EVACUATED” on it, or keep a prepared white cloth in your fire tote to help you remember.

**See the Jeffco Ready, Set, Go! fire preparedness document for more information on sheltering in place or what to do if you are caught inside an automobile, or on foot, when the flame front passes:**

<https://www.jeffco.us/DocumentCenter/View/515/Ready-Set-Go-Colorado-PDF?bidId=>

Feel free to print this and post it somewhere for easy reference (inside a cupboard or broom closet door, maybe) or cut, paste, and modify to make a customized evacuation plan for your family. Stay safe and well.

**Blue Mountain Forest Stewardship Initiative (FSI)**

*Neighbors helping neighbors for the benefit of all.*

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