



## Fire Safety and Suppression Activity Guide

The extreme California drought has raised the danger of wildfires. Additionally, earthquakes are another source of fires, and the fire can cause more damage than the earthquake. The activities here will help reduce your fire danger. Choose the activities that work for you, your household or your group.

### 5-Minute Activities

#### 1. Test Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors.



Free/Low-  
cost



Easy

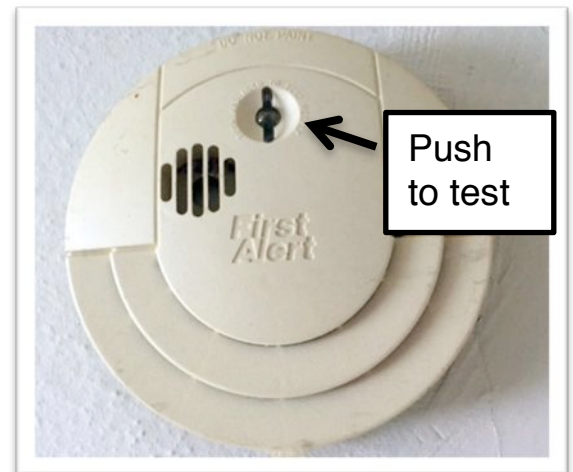
Take action to keep your household safe and to prevent small fires from growing into large fires.

#### TO DO NOW:

- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors by pushing the test button on each alarm, or in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Replace batteries in alarms that are not working, or replace the alarm if necessary.
- See also:

<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/campaigns/smokealarm/s/alarms/index.shtm>

FEMA recommends changing batteries in your detectors twice a year: at the beginning and at the end of Daylight Savings Time. Replace your batteries now if you don't remember the last time the batteries were replaced. If the detectors are more than 4 or 5 years old, now is probably a good time to replace them.



#### 2. Check Garden Hoses.



Free/Low-  
cost



Kid-friendly



Easy

Garden hoses can be used for extinguishing small fires when responders are not available.

#### TO DO NOW:

- Locate all garden hose spigots.
- Have a 5/8-inch or larger garden hose(s) attached and coiled for quick deployment.



## Berkeley Emergency Preparedness Month

October, 2015

- Keep garden hose(s) long enough to reach any area of home and/or multiple garden hoses around the exterior of the house.
- Put a nozzle on every hose that allows both straight stream and wide spray options and does not require you to squeeze a handle (“pistol grip”) to keep water flowing. A pistol grip nozzle can make your hand cramp up.

If you have more time, practice using a garden hose to put out a simulated fire, described in the 2-hour activity.

### 3. Check that your home address is clearly visible from the street.



Free/  
Low-cost



Kid-friendly



Easy

Responders need to be able to see your address from the street, so they can get to you in a crisis.

#### TO DO NOW:

- Walk out to the street and look at your home. Can you easily see the address? Would it be visible with a flashlight in the dark?

If you have to give complicated instructions to guests, responders will have just as much trouble finding your house. Put it on your to-do list to increase the size of the numbers, add numbers to the curb or mailbox, or add an arrow if needed to clarify your location. Numbers should be at least three inches high, in a contrasting color to the background.



#### 4. Locate Gas Shut-offs.



Free/Low-  
cost

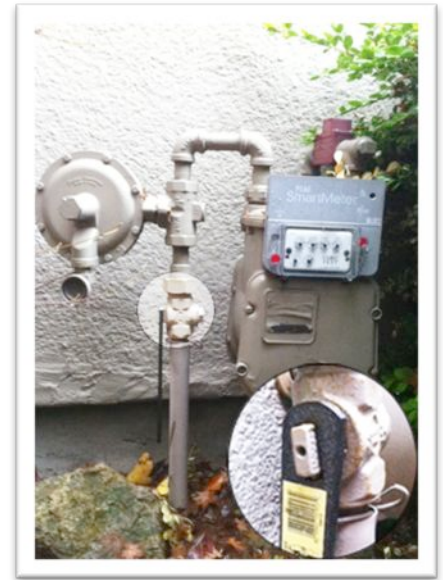


Easy

In an earthquake, gas lines may be broken, causing hazardous leaks. PG&E advises you to turn off the gas **only** if you smell gas or suspect a leak, or if there is an active fire nearby. All residents should learn how to shut off gas for their home.

##### TO DO NOW:

- Locate gas shut-off valve for your home; see <http://www.pge.com/myhome/edusafety/gaselectricsafety/turgasoff/>.
- Do **not** turn off your gas, but ensure that a tool (wrench) to turn off the gas is in an accessible location near the shut-off valve.
- Contact your nearest neighbors and show them where your gas shut-off and tool to turn off the gas are. Ask them to show you where their shut-offs are. You never know who will be home when an emergency arises.
- If neighbors have automatic gas shut-off valves talk to them about how they like theirs, where they got it, and what it costs to have one installed.



The City of Berkeley offers free gas shut-off valves to homeowners who take steps to prepare for disasters. Learn more here: <http://cityofberkeley.info/gasshutoff/>.

### 30-Minute Activities

#### 5. Check Fire Extinguishers.



Free/Low-  
cost



Easy

All homes should be equipped with well-maintained fire extinguishers. Portable fire extinguishers are valuable for immediate use on small fires. If you don't have one for each level of your house, you can find one at a hardware store or big box store. Be sure to get an A, B, and C-rated one to be usable on all classes of fire.

##### TO DO NOW:

- Locate all of the fire extinguishers in your home or workplace.
- On extinguishers with a pressure gauge, check that the level is in the green zone.



## Berkeley Emergency Preparedness Month

October, 2015

- Ensure that the pin is in place on the handle.
- Look for a tag attached to the extinguisher with an expiration date. If expired or if there is no tag, you can take it to be recharged.
- If your manufacturer recommends it, shake or tap the extinguisher periodically to prevent the dry chemical powder from packing.
- Learn the acronym P.A.S.S.: **P**ull (the pin), **A**im (the nozzle), **S**queeze (the handle), and **S**weep (the base of the fire) with a back and forth motion.
- Never test the extinguisher. If you do, it must be recharged.
- See also:  
[http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home\\_fire\\_prev/extinguishers.shtm](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/extinguishers.shtm).



### 6. Get Ready to Evacuate.



Free/Low-cost

All Berkeley residents, especially residents of the Berkeley Hills, should be prepared to evacuate quickly if authorities recommend evacuation.

Do not wait to evacuate – leave as soon as authorities recommend it. By leaving quickly you will not only be safer, you will also clear the roads for responders so they can get into the neighborhood to protect lives and property.

#### TO DO NOW:

When you think an evacuation could happen, but you haven't been advised yet to leave, you may have time for some preparation. Practice these steps now so they will be familiar to you in an emergency:

- Practice exiting your garage or typical parking space. Are you able to exit if the power is out? Get in the habit of parking your car facing out, for easy departure.
- Put a flashlight and portable radio in your car or outside your door. You don't want to wear the car battery down when you're parked. Tune to AM 1610 during this exercise.

#### In a wildfire evacuation:

- Move combustible yard furniture away from the house.
- Shut all exterior doors and windows. Close interior doors to slow the spread of fire.
- Connect garden hoses to outside water valves or spigots for use by firefighters. Fill water buckets and place them around the house.
- Turn on all lights in the home. This will make the home more visible to responders.
- Call your Out-of-Area Contact and tell them your evacuation plans.
- Turn off your gas (see Activity 4)



- Put a go-bag in your car or where you can easily grab it. Include supplies for all members of your household, including pets. Do not put prescription medications in your car or anywhere they can get hot. Keep them in a cool location.
- Practice gathering your pets either in their carry crates or in one room in the house so you can quickly get them out when you have to evacuate.
- Write a room-by-room list of MUST-HAVE items. For each room in your home, write the things you absolutely need to take when you evacuate.
- Identify at least three different routes out of your neighborhood. Some routes could be blocked in an emergency.
- Locate gas shut-off valves (see Activity 4). In a real evacuation, you would shut off the gas when evacuating.

For more evacuation preparation, read here:

- <http://hillsemergencyforum.org/docs/evacuation%20tips.pdf>
- <http://lafd.org/safety/evacuation-information>
- [http://www.readyforwildfire.org/pre-evacuation\\_preparation](http://www.readyforwildfire.org/pre-evacuation_preparation)

## 2-Hour Activities

### 7. Prepare Your Home to Resist Fire.



Free/Low-  
cost



Neighborhood  
Group Activity

Every home in Berkeley – not just the Berkeley Hills - is at risk from fires. The extreme California drought makes fire risks even higher. Every home can be made safer. We start by getting rid of anything outside our homes that can catch fire easily.

#### TO DO NOW:

This activity can be done on your own or as a team effort in a neighborhood.

- Clear weeds and all dead plant material on your property. Trees, shrubs, or green & healthy ground cover need not be removed as long as they are healthy & alive.
- Remove combustibles, leaves and pine needles from roof.
- Remove any portion of a tree within 10' of the chimney outlet.
- Remove combustible grass and weeds within 10' of roadway.
- Remove limbs 1/3 the tree's height from the ground and remove all vines from tree trunk.

The checklist here provides easy and inexpensive steps you can take to increase your defensible space: [http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/uploadedFiles/Fire/ProtectYourHomeFromWildfireChecklist\(1\).pdf](http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/uploadedFiles/Fire/ProtectYourHomeFromWildfireChecklist(1).pdf)



In addition to the above steps, consider installing a spark arrestor on all chimneys and stovepipes.

## 8. Practice Using a Garden Hose on a Pretend Fire.

Neighborhood Groups can put out small fires quickly and safely as soon as they see them. If the fire is small, act now. If the fire is larger than a door, get away from it and let the professionals handle it.

### TO DO NOW:

Watch FEMA's video about CERT fire safety here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m95AhPhm85c>

Practice how you would use a hose to put out a small fire:

- Attach a good quality garden hose to a spigot.
- Have the nozzle in the *off* position.
- Grab the hose and stretch it as far as it will go.
- Have another Group member turn on the water.
- Turn the nozzle to "straight stream" and point the water at the base of the fire while you are still far enough away to be safe.
- Sweep the water from your right to your left, back and forth.
- Walk slowly toward the fire while you open the nozzle to the spray pattern shown here.

Groups can use many things to create a pretend fire. One Group has used cardboard cut out to resemble flames and colored with red markers. Another Group just used some plastic lawn chairs set out in the street.

You can also create different kinds of pretend fires to manage. One can be labeled "Wood," another can be called "Grease" and you can have an "Electrical" fire, too. If you want to test the Group's knowledge put a HazMat symbol on one fire. That's the one CERT Volunteers should not try to put out.

However your Group chooses to do this practice, it's one the children love doing too. Avoid wasting water in the drought and consider doing this practice over some thirsty groundcover plants.



Free/Low-  
cost



Kid-friendly



Neighborhood  
Group Activity



*Use the straight stream for initial fire suppression from a safe distance.*



*As you approach the fire, widen the spray pattern to a fog to absorb heat and provide protection to yourself*



### **Fire Safety and Evacuation Tips**

- When a wildfire is approaching your home, if you are asked to evacuate or you leave on your own, put a note on the door so firefighters know you are gone.
- Assume all downed power lines are live (electrified) and carrying electricity. Do not touch anything that the line is touching. Even trees and the ground under your feet can carry the electricity from a downed line. Stay 50 feet away and instruct others to stay away too.
- If you are in a car that is hit by (or close to) a downed power line, stay in your car and wait for help. If your car is charged by the power line, you'll be safest in the car and you may get seriously shocked if you try to exit. Don't let anyone else except PG&E responders approach or get in the car.
- In case you need to evacuate in an emergency, get into the habit of keeping at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  tank of fuel in your car at all times. Gas may be hard to get in an emergency.
- If you can, set your voicemail or answering machine's outgoing message to tell callers that you are OK and direct them to your out-of-state contact for any further calls. If you are evacuated, try forwarding calls to your new location.
- Did you know that 42% of Hurricane Katrina evacuees did not bring enough of their prescription medications with them when they evacuated? If you need prescription medication, bring as much as you can when you evacuate, and take copies of your prescriptions with you.