

# ***What to Take If Evacuating Your Home: 35+ Item Checklist***

When in immediate danger, people and pets are the biggest priority. However, if you have some time to figure things out, this is what my family has discovered while experiencing the West Coast wildfire season from year to year.

First, we went through our home, room by room, through all of our drawers, closets, and cupboards. We evaluated everything we owned against its fundamental value to life and came up with a shockingly small list. Below, you'll see a few things we thought were essential and combined that with some research and real conversations with other family and friends.

## ***1. Cell phone/charger***

Emergency agencies highly recommend you keep your phone charged up when facing an impending evacuation. Locate any cords you'll require for your phones and if you've got some extra portable chargers, pack those, too.

**Kid-tip:** Pack a fully-charged cell phone in your child's backpack and leave the GPS tracker on.

**Pro-tip:** Conserve battery power by keeping your screen at low-light and close all apps not in use.

## ***2. Laptop computer/cord***

Your computer will come in handy if you need to evacuate. One reason is you'll have ready access to insurance and medical contact information. Another is that you can bring your work with you, which matters when you need to think about your next paycheck.

**Kid-tip:** Stream a cartoon or feel-good movie once you get on the road to help with anxiety.

## ***3. Clothing/shoes***

Pack a change of clean, dry clothes, and don't forget socks and underwear. Although you may have coveted that sweater or pair of heels for months before you bought them, comfort and warmth are a much bigger priority over fashion. Just ask yourself, "Does this serve me now?"

If there's a chance you'll be camping, pack the following additional clothing items in case the weather turns cold:

Warm layers

Wool socks

Hiking boots

Hats and mittens

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Lined coat

Waterproof essentials

**Kid-tip:** Pack brightly colored clothing like primary colors and anything neon. Include a backpack that'll catch your eye, too.

## ***4. Small memento/heirloom jewelry***

You may think you can't choose just one, but the choice becomes apparent relatively quickly if you weigh its value against your survival. For me, if it doesn't fit in a shirt pocket, then it isn't going in my bag.

**Kid-tip:** Their first teddy bear is important enough to pack, and so are some of their favorite toys. Just have this conversation with them before it's a full-on emergency.

## ***5. Eyeglasses, contacts, dentures, hearing aids***

With these items, bring along any accessories like cases, saline, adhesive, or chargers that you'll need. It'll make life a lot more comfortable when you've got what helps you see, eat, and hear.

## ***6. Medication***

Pack enough medicine to keep your body healthy during stressful times. You don't want to be stuck at a pharmacy after midnight, trying to get a prescription transferred.

### **Food and Survival Items to Pack When Evacuating Your Home**

If your goal is to find a hotel, you may be on the road or camping until you find vacancies. So, pack for travel time, too. Evacuations can last from a few days to a few weeks or more and with an increase in cars on the road that could mean you're driving for quite a while.

## ***7. Non-perishable food***

A good rule of thumb is to pack for at least three days. Fruit, granola bars, trail mix, and nuts are a great start. They'll give you proteins and sugars to keep you full and energized for quite a while. But you know your preferences better than anyone, so pack accordingly. Include canned food (and a can-opener), too.

**Kid-tip:** Pack extra formula just in case you can't get to a store anywhere soon.

## ***8. Filled reusable water bottles***

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Portable, fresh, clean water is an essential must-have during any emergency. Think of it this way, with non-perishable food and a lot of fresh water, you can keep going as long as the MPGs will allow.

Pro-tip: One gallon of water is equal to 16 8-ounce glasses of water. Pack enough for your entire family and pets for at least three days.

## ***9. Useful basic toiletries***

If you're lodging in a motel/hotel, some of these things won't be necessary. Still, the following basic toiletries and essentials will be helpful if you wind up camping for a few days:

- Toilet paper, facial tissue, and sanitary supplies
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, & floss
- Soap & washable cloth
- Travel-size shampoo
- Antiseptic cleansing cloths
- Comb or brush and hair ties
- Nail file
- Condoms

## ***10. First aid kit***

People clean out the drug store shelves pretty quickly when there's an emergency happening. Stock up now on the following first aid kit items to reduce your stress levels later:

- Pain reliever, acid reducer, and antibiotics
- Nasal spray and eye drops
- Bandages, moleskin, medical gloves, gauze, and tape
- Coral safe sunscreen and n-95 face masks
- Insect repellant
- Hygiene and sanitation needs

## ***11. Camping gear***

When hundreds or thousands of people are evacuating, there may not be a hotel for many miles, so you'll need optional shelter and something to cook food. Here are the essentials:

- Tent, sleeping bags, and sleeping pads
- Two tarps
- Cookstove and cookware
- Lantern

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**Pro-tip:** Next time you think of it, get out the tent and check for holes. If this slips your mind, make sure your survival bag (see next item) has some duct tape in it.

## ***12. A survival bag***

People have many names for this bag, and it's commonly assembled as the “grab-n-go” bag for just about any emergency. Narrow or expand the contents to suit what you may need for a temporary hotel or camping stay.

- Flashlight, matches, lighter, and headlamp
- Duct tape
- Batteries, battery-powered or crank radio
- Whistle and bear spray
- Work gloves and hand warmers
- Additional car keys
- Paper maps with two marked routes
- Quarters and cash
- Prepaid phone card
- Pro-tip: Add confidence to your purchase choices by buying quality items.

## **Items For Pets to Pack When Evacuating Your Home**

Pet care is and always has been a primary concern for my little family and me. That means anything we can do to make them comfortable and happy is a top priority, especially during stressful, anxious situations.

## ***13. Veterinary records and ID tags***

Be prepared for any pet kennel or human hotel to ask for shot records just in case. The last headache anyone wants is to be out in the cold because of a missing piece of paper. Make sure they've got up-to-date information listed on their ID tags, too.

## ***14. Daily needs***

Think about all the daily things that your little one needs from food and water to litter, leashes, cages, poop bags, newspaper, cedar chips, etc. If you're packing for an evacuation, include these essentials too.

## ***15. Medication***

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Much like humans, pets need their daily medications to remain healthy and alert. If you're running low during hurricane or wildfire season, pay a quick visit to the vet and stock up.

## ***16. Pet first aid kit***

Shop for a basic kit and use it as a starting point. Then, call your veterinarian to get advice on proper support for your pet's particular needs.

## ***17. Bed/blanket***

Personal blankets and bedding will be comforting if you're staying in a hotel with hardwood floors or at a campsite, where the only option is a nylon tent atop a cold patch of earth.

## ***18. Toys/comfort items***

Does your pet have a collection of balls, squeaky toys, or feathers? Make sure to pack those favorite toys or their heated blanket to soften potential or increased anxiety.

## **Important Documents or Paperwork to Pack When Evacuating**

A strongbox is a smart addition inside any home because it'll make evacuation much easier if all essential paperwork is in one safe place. Plus, if you're ever in an emergency, there will be little room to question your preparedness.

## ***19. Wallet/purse items***

"Phone, keys, wallet." It may seem like a silly little thing to say to yourself when leaving the house, but it'll save you a lot of trouble when you have to evacuate on short notice.

**Kid-tip:** place a sealed plastic bag inside your kid's backpack with emergency contact information, plus a few dollars and coins just in case.

## ***20. Passport/SSN/birth certificate***

These documents are replaceable, but what a headache! Skip the long lines and twenty questions down the road, and make sure you've got the right originals or copies secured.

## ***21. Bank and insurance statements***

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Maintain statements with up-to-date information about your bank and insurance account numbers in your strongbox. It'll come in handy if the information is lost on other devices.

## **22. CCW**

Maintaining the necessary paperwork alongside protective devices goes hand in hand during an evacuation. So, if you got them, bring the appropriate licenses and permits, too.

## **23. Marriage certificate**

If you're married, you may want this document for posterity. Ultimately, it's just a piece of paper at the end of the day, and you can replace it. But for us, there were too many stories that led up to the day to consider leaving it behind.

## **24. Investments**

You've probably got your investment paperwork in a safe deposit box or strongbox already, but the last thing you want to misplace is an old deed or stock. Doublecheck when you have a minute.

## **Pre-Evacuation Measures Due to a Wildfire**

In the United States, wildfire evacuations are becoming more and more common. Where I live, Interstate and local highways are known to shut down entirely because the wildfires can rage so close to the roads.

Worse, wildfires exacerbate the AQI (Air Quality Index), forcing people to stay inside their homes for weeks on end dealing with mild to severe physical reactions, like headaches, itchy eyes, and nausea. Alternatively, they can try to evacuate and find fresher air hundreds of miles, if not states away.

Make a contingent emergency plan for your family

Heavy wildfire smoke affected how my family planned our pre-evacuation measures. Rather than feeling boxed in or defenseless, we made a plan to gain back some of that security. Before I get to that, look at some questions we came up with to boost the plan:

- Does everyone know what Evacuation Levels 1-3 mean?
- Where is our evacuation pack list?
- Do you have a meeting location just in case?

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- Will you be staying with your family or looking for a hotel?
- What happens if the route we choose is blocked or unsafe?
- Who is in charge of securing the pets?
- How will you get in contact if you lose your phones?

As a result, we got better acquainted with the emergency levels in our area to help fine-tune our evacuation plan and followed that up with a more detailed look into what we should pack when evacuating from a wildfire.

## **Evacuation Level 1: “Be Ready”**

If you're fortunate enough to get an initial warning, this is an opportunity for you to start making yourself aware of potential dangers. Here's what to do:

- Tune in to a local radio station.
- Research online alerts.
- Prepare people, pets, and livestock.
- If you haven't packed an evacuation bag, this is the time to assemble one.

## **Evacuation Level 2: “Be Set”**

This warning level means that you're in danger. Some people may stay in their homes until the last minute, while most are already on the move. State and local authorities suggest you take increased precautions as this may be the only notice you receive.

## **Evacuation Level 3: “Go”**

Level 3 means that the current situation is grave and that you are in imminent danger. If you haven't prepared anything, you won't have time to do so. Level 3 means you can't delay any longer, and you must leave if you want to survive.

Something to consider: one image stuck with us while glued to the local news about the Holiday Farm wildfire nearby. The report captured what looked like a regular car from the front. However, the heat from the fire had entirely melted the back end.

## **Items to Pack If You're Evacuating From a Wildfire**

When preparing to evacuate from a wildfire, don't forget to account for the smoke and ash. Government websites recommend recycling the air in your vehicle while driving through the haze, and many places suggest the following additional items to pack.

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## ***25. N95 masks***

The CDC recommends both N95 masks and P100 respirators during a wildfire and smoke-filled air occurrences, especially for at-risk individuals. N95 masks are reasonably priced and available online.

## ***26. Eye drops***

In my house, we get itchy red eyes when the Air Quality Index bursts off the charts. Using the eye drops helped tremendously but didn't relieve the issues entirely.

## ***27. Inhaler***

Those who are young, elderly, pregnant, or those already experiencing chronic lung conditions should take precautionary measures during wildfire season. Check with your doctor to learn about options available to you.

## ***28. Cash and small bills***

Paper cash kept in a waterproof bag will support any short-term emergency. Maintain a small stash for toll booths, food, fuel, and even lodging if any power grid issues prevent you from using your bank card.

**Pro-tip:** Divvy up the cash to carry portions of it in separate locations.

## ***29. Damp facial cloths***

Smoke from burning trees and leaves isn't the only thing you're breathing in the air. When houses go up in flames, a lot of toxic gases do as well. A report from the FAA suggests that a wet cloth will help absorb most water-soluble gases.

**Pro-tip:** Wet some clothes ahead of time and place them in a sealed plastic bag.

## ***30. Headache and nausea medication***

When you're dealing with 500+ AQI for days on end, the smoke permeates everything even if you don't open your doors or windows. Make sure you have enough over-the-counter medications to help any physical sensitivities or reactions.

**Pro-tip:** If you're unsure what to buy, nurse hotlines are a ready source of information.



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