

Questions asked by Nevada County Residents in the Zoom Chat box, at the
Aug. 4, 2020 All-Nevada County Educational Event
with answers from Cal Fire, County OES and more.

Evacuation questions

Q: What is the best way to track where the fire is coming from so that we can evacuate in the right direction?

A: *(from Paul Cummings, OES Program Manager)* The CodeRED message will have the direction the fire is coming from and who is being evacuated. Also look at the smoke and what it's doing, and listen to the radio. *(From Jim Matthias, Cal Fire)* It's really tough to know where it's coming from. Remember there are embers blowing ahead and starting more fires out in front of where you see smoke. Just be careful. Check the news sources for information.

Q: What is the earliest alert and what alerts follow?

A: *(from Paul Cummings, OES Program Manager)* The decision to send a CodeRED alert for evacuation (either a Warning or an Order) will be made from the command center of the fire. Listen to the radio or visit reliable online news sources (such as the new County Dashboard) for further information.

Q: There are so many ways to learn about an active local fire, if I have time to check only one, which one should I check first?

A: *(from Susan Rogers, Coalition)* Personally, I'd check Yubanet.com and then turn on KVMR. *(From Paul Cummings, OES Program Manager)* Yes, that's what I would do. Yubanet usually has information within minutes, at least rudimentary information. And then I'd turn on KVMR, we'd be feeding them information. I'd make sure I have my cellphone with me and that it's charged, so that if a CodeRED alert comes, I'll get it.

Q: What traffic control and direction will there be?

A: *(from Susan Rogers, Coalition)* Law enforcement is in charge of traffic control and direction. If you leave early and are ahead of everyone, you can choose where to go (in a direction away from the fire). If the fire is close enough to you to require traffic control, you will follow the routes directed by law enforcement: county sheriff, city police, CHP.

Q: Where can we get the tags to put on our doors indicating that we have evacuated?

A: *(from Bob Long, Coalition)* Sheriff's department tags should be available at fire stations in the unincorporated county, and at the Sheriff's office at the Rood Center. You may want to call ahead to ensure your closest location still has some. For City of Grass Valley and Nevada City residents, we've been told they are working on their own tags.

Q: Where we can hear the hi-low siren example?

A: The County's YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fP8qYN8gVBU>. We also have a link to it on the Coalition website under *Education Resources: What Is Nevada County doing about wildfire preparedness?*

Q: Sounds like we should add eye protection and wool/cotton clothing layers to our evacuation go bag? Is it advisable to wet wool blankets/clothes that you might be wearing during evacuation?

A: *(from Susan Rogers, Coalition)* Eye protection is a good idea – many flaming bits of material could be flying through the air if you have to be out of your car. In an evacuation, you should be wearing only natural-fiber clothing like wool (which is difficult to ignite and has low flame velocity), cotton or linen. [See this article](https://tinyurl.com/fabricflame) (<https://tinyurl.com/fabricflame>) from the City of Phoenix with good information on fabric flammability. **Do NOT** wet your clothing or blankets. Fire could turn water into steam and cause serious burns.

Q: Are there designated evacuation staging areas in the community... NU fields, hospital, County Rood center?

A: *(from Paul Cummings, OES Program Manager)* We are not publishing shelter locations now because we don't know where a fire will be. If the Red Cross is setting up an area and it's during the pandemic, they will be looking for places (such as taking over an entire hotel or motel) where people don't have to be all in one room. Our office is working with the Red Cross to identify locations. During an event, listen to law enforcement and to the radio for instructions.

Q: Where will we stage farm animals? The pandemic has closed Fairgrounds. Should I move my animals, or leave them in the pasture or near the house?

A: *(from Paul Cummings, OES Program Manager)* We have permission from the State to use the Fairgrounds if needed. We could also use the Penn Valley rodeo grounds for animals. *(From Jim Mathias and Matt Wallen, Cal Fire)* The best thing is to get them out ahead of time, but if you can't, use your best judgment about the safest place possible. There is no perfect answer. Do NOT let them run free, as they could obstruct traffic, cause serious problems for cars and be injured or killed by fast-moving evacuating vehicles.

Q: If we evacuate, do we open our electronic gate or let fire department open it?

A: *(from Donn Thane, Fire Safe Council)* When I'm doing advisory visits, I recommend homeowners keep the gate open if they evacuate. Engines from out of the area may be trying to save your place and do not have local codes for gates. *(from Bob Long, Coalition)* On a padlocked wire gate, they may use bolt cutters to gain access. If it's a heavy-duty electronic gate, they will NOT risk damage to their fire engine just to save your house.

Q: We have a pool. If we're evacuating, where should I put a sign letting the fire fighters know that so they can use the water? (see answer to next question)

**Q: Where is best location to leave a note on water sources for fire crews?
Where are they most likely to find the note?**

A: *(from Bob Long, Coalition)* Leave a note on your address sign or on the front door, whatever faces the access side of the house. Front door is great. Be sure it is well-fastened, because the fire brings with it strong winds. *(From Jim Matthias, Cal Fire)* Don't spend a lot of time writing a note if you are supposed to evacuate. We'll find the water. *(from Susan Rogers, Coalition)* Type and print it out now, in big bold font. Tack it to the inside of a closet door near the front door and put some tape with it so you can grab it, tape down all four edges on the front door, and run.

Q: How do you get extra meds to have in your Go bag? Insurance limits how much you can get each month.

A: *(from Susan Rogers, Coalition)* Contact your insurance company and ask if they will permit an extra Rx of one or two weeks worth. Explain it's for a wildfire evacuation bag. This is just my idea — we have not heard anyone talk about how to solve this but we all know it's an issue. Another option is to attach, to the outside of your Go bag, a list in large type font showing the items you need to add at the last minute when running out the door (keys, wallet, computer backup drive, meds, etc.) BUT, if you are away from the house when the fire comes and you don't have your Go Bag with you in your car, you won't have the things you need. Lesson: be sure to keep with you at all times a list of all your medications *and the pharmacies where you get them filled.*

Q: I'm confused about adding food to a Go Bag, as shown in the video. Food is available once we leave Nevada County. Same with the mask/sanitizer.

A: *(from Susan Rogers, Coalition)* This is a personal judgment call that each person needs to make. Consider how long you may be on the road, who will be with you, and if you need snacks to keep them happy. If you are caught in a hours-long line of cars inching its way down (or up) Highway 49 or 20, you'll be happy to have food and water in your car. Wherever you end up, there may be hundreds of hungry people looking for something to eat.

During the pandemic, an extra mask is a good idea since you or a passenger may easily lose yours in a highly stressful evacuation situation. Sanitizer is just a good idea since you don't know what the standards will be wherever you end up.

Questions for the County:

Q: The new County Emergency Dashboard is important. How do we access it?

A: *(from Bob Long, Coalition)* Go to <http://www.readynevadacounty.org/dashboard>. Also see the next question about putting the Dashboard on your cellphone.

Q: Can we get the County dashboard on our cell phone?

A: *(from Jeff Peach, Coalition)* On the dashboard, there is a side-panel pull out on the left edge (click on the thin white vertical bar), which will show you a QR code that takes you to a phone-optimized version.

Q: Is it possible to get a new Password set up in Code Red... for those of us who signed up initially and may have misplaced it?

A: *(from Susan Rogers, Coalition)* Call 211 Connecting Point (dial 2-1-1 on your phone) and ask for their help. They can give you the CodeRED Support phone number.

Q: How can we contact people in the Office of Emergency Services?

A: Jenn Tamo, Senior Administrative Analyst, County of Nevada Office of Emergency Services
950 Maidu Ave | Nevada City, CA 95959, Cell: (530) 557-5118, Jenn.Tamo@co.nevada.ca.us

Paul Cummings, Program Manager, Nevada County Office of Emergency Services
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Landscaping questions – answers from Sheri Brown Dion

Q: If we keep Heavenly Bamboo green and watered, is that okay for 5 feet or greater from the house?

A: Yes, but you also need to constantly remove dead material, remove leaf litter and thin stems to rejuvenate annually. Unpruned clumps typically are bare at the base and become top-heavy. To prevent this, choose one or more of the oldest stems that are mostly bare and cut to the ground. This will encourage new growth from the base. Prune in winter or early spring. The variety “Dwarf nandina” needs little pruning.

Q: We need a list of fire-resistant, deer-resistant and drought-tolerant plants.

A: I have not found a public/commercial list specific to our area (or any area) that lists *all* of the criteria people are looking for. The Marin Fire Safe plant list that I used to refer people to has been taken down from their website, which says “check back Spring 2021. Information on general deer resistance, watering and light requirements specific to our region and maintenance tips can be found at these two nursery sites: <https://www.monrovia.com> and <https://www.anniesannuals.com>. Lavender is on many fire-resistant plant lists, but I would use caution. Lavender can retain a lot of dead material underneath. You must be sure you clean out dead material and cut it back in late winter before new spring growth to reduce annual build-up.

Both “low-maintenance” and “deer-resistant” are relative issues. What the deer don't touch in my neighborhood, they may devour in yours. If they are hungry or thirsty enough, they may eat it. Likewise, just as all plants will burn, all plants need maintenance. It's all relative.

Other Questions

Q: Where can we get a hand-crank radio?

A: *(from Susan Rogers, Coalition)* You can buy one, if not at local hardware store, then look online.

(From another attendee) You can often get a crank radio that includes a USB charger by contributing to public radio. Do good and improve your Go Bag! [This answer probably refers to KVMR, which in 2019 offered crank radios as a premium for becoming a donor. We don't know if they plan to do this again.]