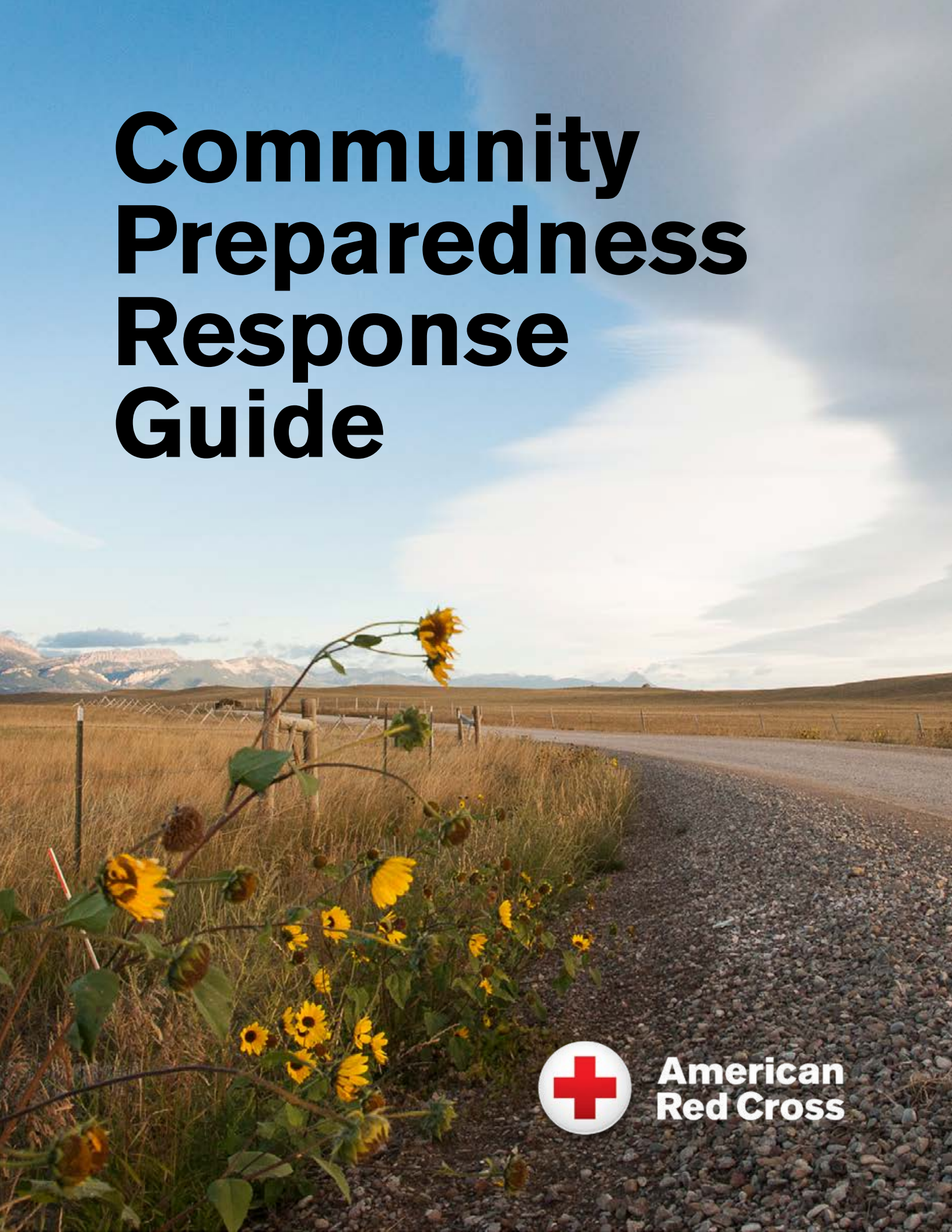
Community Preparedness Response Guide



American Red Cross

The American Red Cross Community Preparedness Response Guide

Whether it's a wildfire threatening homes, a severe winter storm, a public health emergency or a crisis no one saw coming, community leaders are often the first that people residents turn to for guidance.

Preparing for the risks you know about is essential. Preparing for the unexpected is just as important.

Welcome to the American Red Cross Community Preparedness and Response Guide. Specifically aimed at rural and frontier communities with populations of fewer than 10,000 people, this guide provides practical tools, planning resources and action steps to help local leaders strengthen preparedness, build resilience and respond effectively when emergencies occur. While it places special emphasis on the unique challenges faced by rural and frontier communities, the information can help any community become safer, stronger and better prepared for whatever comes next.

Thank you to Nicole Sirak Irwin and Hannah Zuraff for providing input for this guide, as well as the many mayors and Red Cross team members that helped support this project.

DRAFT

Welcome and How to Use This Guide

Welcome to the American Red Cross Community Preparedness Response Guide. In these 12 straightforward steps, we'll help you prepare for emergencies.

Who is this for? If you're a mayor, elected official, a community volunteer leader, or someone who's responsible for emergency management, public health, community safety or volunteer coordination, provide resources to help you for and respond to disasters.

This guide is designed to be useful for communities of every size, but will be especially relevant for rural and frontier communities with populations of fewer than 10,000 people, where there may be less infrastructure to respond to a public health or safety crisis. It provides customizable action plans, public information templates and other tools to help put plans in place before they're needed.

Your input and feedback is welcome please contact Nicole Sirk Irwin or Hannah Zuraff at (406) 499-6098.

How To Use This Guide

The toolkit is organized into 12 major sections:

1. **Welcome and How to Use This Guide** – What's inside and how to put it to work for you
2. **Risks In Our Areas** – Hazards where we live
3. **Red Cross Role and Local Contacts** – What we do in a crisis
4. **Preparedness for Residents and Visitors** – How to plan for wildfire
5. **Community-Level Preparedness Tools** – Strength in numbers through community cooperation
6. **Communication Before and During Disaster** – Media messaging to communicate to your community
7. **Supporting Visitors and Short-Term Rentals** – How to help people unfamiliar with your area during a crisis
8. **Response Coordination During Disaster** – How to coordinate among emergency responders, civic agencies, the Red Cross, and more
9. **Inclusive and Accessible Support** – Reaching those with additional needs: the elderly, disabled, non-English speakers, and others. How to report unmet needs.
10. **Recovery and Community Healing** – What to do following disaster
11. **Ready-Made Checklists and Templates** – Quick templates for easy reference
12. **Key Contacts and Resource Directory** – Who to call first when disaster strikes

Begin anywhere that's relevant, especially in areas you suspect your community might be less prepared. Each section will help put solid plans in place and find relevant Red Cross resources.

Many people know the American Red Cross for its role in collecting lifesaving blood, and that remains a vital part of our mission. But the Red Cross does far more. We help communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters such as wildfires, floods and home fires; provide first aid, CPR and other preparedness training; support members of the military and their families; and mobilize volunteers to help people in need during times of crisis.



Do you need help now?

If you need help after a disaster, contact us at **1-800-REDCROSS** or find an emergency shelter at: **redcross.org/get-help.**

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Want to host a blood drive? One of the most impactful ways a community can prepare for emergencies is by helping maintain a strong and reliable blood supply. Blood donors help ensure lifesaving blood products are available when patients need them most. What a host does:

- Provides a suitable location. A large, open space is best, so we can create separate zones for conducting confidential eligibility assessments and collecting donations.
- Publicizes the blood drive. The more people who know about your blood drive – both within your organization and in the community – the more donors you can sign up.
- Organizes a recruitment committee to recruit donors. Face-to-face requests are the most effective form of recruitment. Don't do this alone; build a team to help spread the word.
- Schedules donors for appointments. Plus, you'll do follow ups during the drive to ensure donors don't miss their appointments, and reach out afterward to say thank you.



To learn more about hosting a blood drive in your community, visit: www.redcrossblood.org/hostadrive.

Do you want to take or offer a class on lifesaving skills? In rural communities, every citizen may be called upon as a first-responder. So it's critical that people have access to basic first aid, CPR and other emergency skills. The Red Cross offers group classes to teach first aid, CPR, use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs), workplace safety and many other vital health and safety skills.

To learn more and assess which skills would benefit your community the most, visit: redcross.org/training

Do you have a loved one who has been separated from family or impacted by a disaster or conflict or know someone who has? Armed conflict, international disasters, migration and other emergencies and crises leave millions of people around the globe in urgent need of humanitarian assistance every year. As the world's largest humanitarian network, Red Cross and Red Crescent teams help reconnect separated families through the Restoring Family Links program. For more than 50 years, the American Red Cross has partnered with local Red Cross and Red Crescent societies around the world to help locate and reconnect families through this free and confidential humanitarian service, which is provided regardless of nationality, race, religion, citizenship or immigration status.
redcross.org/get-help

Are you interested in volunteering? Delivering services requires lots of people power. In fact, 90 percent of the Red Cross workforce is made up of volunteers. Volunteers in communities across our state extend our reach and respond quickly in a crisis. As a leader in your community, you're already committed to serving others. But there may be more you want to do, and you likely know others who share that same spirit of service.

Anyone with the time and willingness to help can make a critical difference when they're needed most. Plus, you get cool T-shirts and swag. Learn more about volunteering here:

PART TWO: RISK IN YOUR AREA

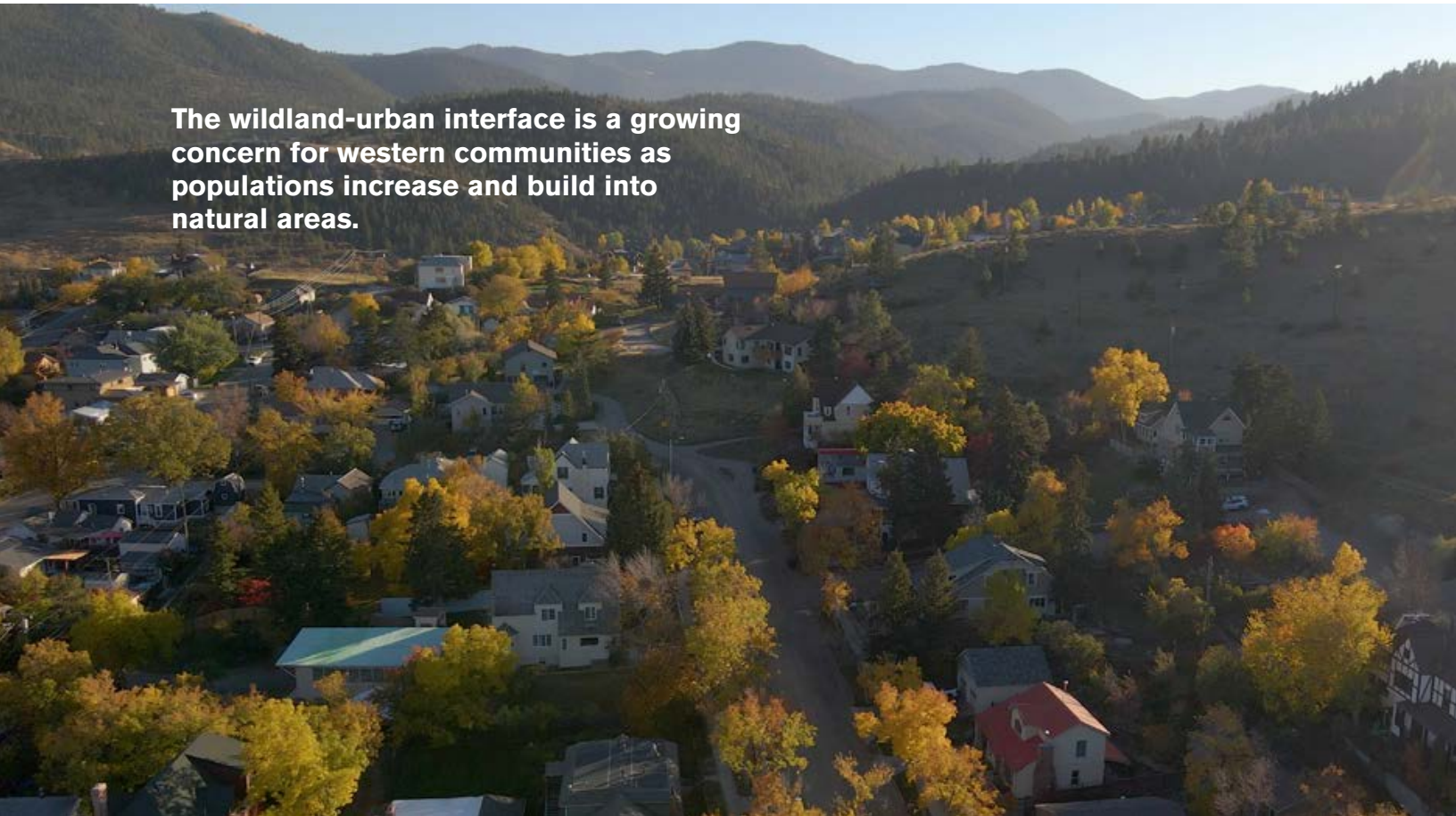
The Wildland-Urban Interface

In the western United States, communities face disaster, especially wildland fire danger not traditionally found in other areas. The nature of those dangers is also ever-evolving. The availability of open land, the desirability of owning homes on elevated, forested sites, the growth in areas adjacent to open lands, and an increasingly arid climate all contribute to an increased risk of wildland fires threatening structures and property.

These regions are collectively known as the wildland-urban interface (WUI), and have increasingly become the front lines of both firefighting activity and fire prevention. As people are moving into these areas, the WUI grows in size and complexity, and civic disaster response infrastructure. Firefighting increasingly occurs in recently-built suburbs and residential developments that are located in scenic, forested sites on elevated ground that can be ideal areas for fire to spread rapidly.

Find out if you are in a WUI area:
https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/0a1dd5e8f14a4413b5179522aa90ca6d

Experts have moved away from speaking about “fire season;” the relevant term now is “fire year” as wildland fires can occur in almost any month with severity that may not be limited by the historical safety of winter weather. Knowing where your community’s fire risk lies, now and in future years, is essential to planning successfully for it.



The wildland-urban interface is a growing concern for western communities as populations increase and build into natural areas.

PART THREE: THE RED CROSS ROLE IN PREPAREDNESS AND HOW TO GET SUPPORT DURING A CRISIS

The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors. We provide emergency services that address those displaced by disasters. Programs focus on four main areas of disaster response: shelter, food, recovery, and reunification of displaced people with those most important to them.

Shelter

Among the most basic human needs is shelter. Disasters don't end once they've escaped immediate danger. The American Red Cross can provide temporary shelter for those displaced during disasters or emergencies. Red Cross shelters are open to anyone in need. Pets are welcome, and all disaster assistance is provided free of charge. We provide safe shelter, comfort, and care without regard to personal status—ensuring that support is available to all during times of crisis. We don't require identification to enter a Red Cross shelter, just their name and where they were living before the disaster. The Red Cross is also committed to helping people with a wide range of needs, including people with disabilities and mental illnesses, whether they are children or seniors. If you need to leave your home due to a disaster or emergency, you are welcome to come to a Red Cross shelter.

All Red Cross shelters are accessible to people with disabilities. Your service animal is also welcome. Please speak with a shelter worker if your service animal is in need of food or supplies.

Full details regarding Red Cross shelters can be found here:
https://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/find-an-open-shelter.html

Food

Once people displaced by an emergency are physically safe, finding nourishment in a safe place is a priority. The Red Cross provides meals, water, and snacks to those sheltering, and accommodates the dietary needs of everyone it welcomes.

Recovery

Learn the steps to take during and after most disasters or emergencies to help ensure your family's safety. If you have had to evacuate, take steps to evaluate whether it is safe to enter when you are allowed to return home, including structural elements and utility services. Emotional recovery is also a priority. Find out about the special care you and your loved ones may need, long after the visible signs of the disaster have faded. The Red Cross can also help navigate the financial impact of disaster, from handling insurance claims to replacing vital documents that may have been lost.

Reunification

The disorientation of being separated from loved ones, friends, and other relations in a disaster undermines our ability to feel safe and respond to the immediate situation. The Red Cross provides reunification and contact services for families in the United States and territories as well as support for military families. You can help those in your community by connecting them with the Red Cross to access these services.

Learn more at https://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/contact-and-locate-loved-ones.html

Contacting the Red Cross in a Crisis

Montana: To report a disaster to our call center, blood donation, or local services by calling 1-800-1-800 RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767).. Additional resources are available online at: https://www.redcross.org/local/montana.html

Idaho and East Oregon: You can contact the American Red Cross - 24 hours a day by calling 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767).
Additional resources are available online at:
https://www.redcross.org/local/idaho.html

To activate Red Cross services before or during a crisis, call the number listed above. We'll connect you to the relevant local resources to respond to your needs. To help prepare now for future events, review information at this site to help evaluate your readiness and plan for a potential crisis. https://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services.html



Responding quickly to fire and other disasters by contacting the Red Cross will speed assistance to your community.

PART FOUR: PREPAREDNESS FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

Western states face specific challenges in response to threats from wildland fire, flooding, earthquakes and other disasters. Short-term residents and temporary visitors may also be unfamiliar in your area in an emergency due to unfamiliarity with the area or a less developed social network. The Red Cross can assist with both permanent residents and visitors in a number of ways.

"Be Red Cross Ready"

Urging the members of your community to have an emergency kit at the ready will help them respond quickly and lessen the burden on emergency services in a crisis. The Red Cross provides a number of recommended steps and skills that can serve people well in their own homes or when they're on the road, most of the items here are portable, since they're learned skills or gear that's designed to travel with you. They include:

- **Survival Kits** A good survival kit is surprisingly easy to assemble, and having one at the ready in the home means not having to think about what to take during an emergency. Simply grab the kit, and go. Learn how to make one here.
  https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/survival-kit-supplies.html

- **Planning** Providing emergency response plans for your community to follow will help families and businesses, know where to go and how to meet in an emergency, and account for every person and pet during a crisis. Learn how to create a plan here:
  https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/make-a-plan.html

- **Additional Steps** More ways your community's members can be prepared on the go include downloading Red Cross apps to mobile devices, learning CPR, building a portable first aid kit, and using preparedness checklists. We have a number of resources for these steps at:
  https://www.redcross.org/get-help.html

Wildfire Safety

While mitigating wildfire risk for communities can be accomplished with long-term planning, helping residents and visitors in a crisis remains a key priority. Communicating to your community's residents and visitors how they can be mindful and prepared during peak periods of fire danger is important:; develop communication plans to inform about the likelihood of fire impact and urge caution and vigilance when people are living, working, or recreating in the wildland-urban interface or less developed areas that are prone to sudden fire danger. We also partner with Firewise USA® a national voluntary framework administered by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) focused on residential wildfire risk reduction.

The following link provides steps for recommended supplies, staying connected, and additional preparedness information:
https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/wildfire.html

An easy resource to share community-wide and make available for visitors is our Wildfire Safety checklist. It's a one-page document that's free to print and distribute wherever you can reach people in your area.

English: https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/get-help/pdfs/wildfire/EN_Wildfire-Safety-Checklist.pdf
Spanish: https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/get-help/pdfs/home-fire/ES_Home-Fire-Safety-Checklist.pdf

Flood Safety

Flooding also represents a substantial risk for communities in our area. Seasonal runoff cycles, winter ice jams on waterways, and other structural damage can be unpredictable. Become familiar with your community's historic flood risk.

Find additional resources for flood risk preparedness here:
https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/flood.html

An additional resource to distribute to individuals and organizations in your community is the Red Cross Flood Preparedness Checklist, found here:
https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/get-help/pdfs/flood/EN_Flood-Preparedness-Checklist.pdf

Temperature Extremes and other Risks

Our region is no stranger to extremes of temperature and weather, with highs well above 100° F and lows that reach -20° or lower. These temperatures pose a threat to human life and can add to the likelihood of dangerous travel, disruption of utilities and communication services, fire, flooding, structural damage, and other issues. The Red Cross provides detailed information for responding to these and other types of emergency situations and risks.

Review this page on the Red Cross website, https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/winter-storm.html to identify the weather risks your area is likely to face and use it as a starting point for preparation.

Ready-to-Use QR codes and Links

The less typing and Googling needed during an emergency, the better. Including durable QR codes or short links in your communications efforts that link people to emergency apps, up-to-date disaster information, and other services will help save time and confusion, especially for visitors unfamiliar with your area.

QR codes can easily be generated to point toward specific online resources relevant to your community's emergency services, information outlets, and other key assets.



Extreme weather can make travel hazardous, but its impacts on infrastructure, communications, and access to emergency services pose equally dangerous risks.

American Red Cross Apps

Apple App Store
https://apps.apple.com/us/iphone/search?term=red%20cross



The Apple and Android Red Cross apps provide a variety of uses, from blood donation, first aid, volunteer resources, severe weather alerts, veterans' resources, child care, pet first aid, swimming instruction information, and other subjects.

Android App Store
https://play.google.com/store/search?q=red%20cross&c=apps&utm_source=na_Med



Local Fire Information

Providing links to your nearest official fire information agency or resource will help visitors as well as residents quickly find the most accurate, up-to-date information possible.

Ready Set Go! Evacuation Guides

Idaho Ready Set Go!
https://www.idl.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/05/Idaho-Personal-Wildland-Fire-Action-Guide.pdf



Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
https://dnrc.mt.gov/Forestry/Wildfire/fire-prevention-and-preparedness



Education

Children can be involved in preparing for their own safety. The Red Cross provides a great resource available to community planners, schools, and parents: Pedro the Penguin. Our Prepare with Pedro! Video series is just one of a series of efforts the Red Cross has developed to teach children and adolescents how to prepare for and respond in emergencies. Partnering with schools, church groups, and other civic organizations in your community to distribute these tools can greatly enhance preparedness in your area by arming its youngest citizens with good information.

Learn more about our youth education materials here:
https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/teaching-kids-about-emergency-preparedness.html



Who better to help kids learn how to stay cool in a crisis than Pedro the Penguin and Smokey the Bear?

PART FIVE: COMMUNITY-LEVEL PREPAREDNESS TOOLS

Many resources exist to help residents prepare for disasters.

Defensible Space

Key areas to focus on for wildfire preparation include defining and creating defensible space around homes and other structures, evacuation planning for individuals and communities, evacuation planning drills, and other measures that will reduce risk. A good first step is to have homeowners assess risks to their property:

In Montana, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation offers a home wildfire risk assessment, which can be applied for here:
https://dnrc.mt.gov/Forestry/Resources/request-a-site-visit?fbclid=IwY2xjawRnLHpleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFHYmtGNXFIRWhEQU5XbXd5c3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHjT0n5fyi6phl9Yt1YCVcNSEZw8Yb-1EJCTlQKC5-CrCf3iVzWq0a0wTAQhN_aem_gu7oL8047iHM71V9zl4m3g

Idaho Firewise offers numerous resources for making your home and surroundings more defensible in the face of wildfire:
https://idahofirewise.org/

Develop Content for Community Events

Your community's existing events can be great opportunities for sharing information and resources for disaster preparedness and action plans. County fairs, sporting events, town halls, and school and church functions are all ideal for making emergency planning information available. But think bigger: dedicated community events centered on wildfire and disaster planning can be educational as well as fun for your citizens. Be creative about helping your community prepare, and they'll have less need to invent solutions on the fly when danger arises.

Reach out to your local chapter to get Red Cross to speak and provide information.
https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies.html

PART SIX: COMMUNICATION BEFORE AND DURING WILDFIRE

Prepare Messages In Advance

Having a clear communication plan in place, even a basic one, will help your community hit the ground running in a crisis. Know the lifecycle of recurring wildfire or other disaster risks and get the word out in advance. Your messaging should include timing of anticipated risks, their severity, and actions citizens should take. Though you should partner with communications and media professionals if needed, the following guidelines will provide some first steps.

Pre-Season Messaging

Before traditional fire season begins in your area, focus on messaging that champions preventative measures including increasing defensible space around structures, building emergency kits, and having an action plan for families, businesses, and other groups.

Active Fire Season

If active fires or other disasters are threatening your community, connect people to the best and most current information available. Work with your county sheriff and first-responding agencies to share their information with the public, use trusted weather forecasting and emergency agency bulletins to counter inaccurate reports of the developing situation, and give residents and citizens key takeaways such as risk severity, when should they evacuate, where they go for shelter, and other needs. Update this information through news and social media as often as you're able, and point the public toward the most reliable news sources possible.

Recovery Following a Disaster

To help people return home, or to find interim shelter, food, medical assistance, and other resources, help Red Cross and other relief agencies share information. Provide clear guidance telling the public where it can go to be safe, receive medical assistance, fill prescriptions, get meals, and reconnect with loved ones. Provide accurate information about residential and commercial areas that may be dangerous to re-enter, and post any information from law enforcement and other government entities about restrictions around such areas.



For many, surviving a disaster is only the start. Recovery can be a long process that begins as soon as everyone reaches safety, but which may take months or years.

Radio Resources

Broadcast radio remains the most reliable communication medium during a crisis. Anyone with a working vehicle or battery-powered radio can receive information, even when cell phone reception is poor or disrupted. The Red Cross website provides free-to-use radio scripts and pre-recorded PSAs to help get started, but during a crisis you'll be best served by working directly with local radio stations to provide live or timely updates on air. View the Red Cross sample media page here: https://www.redcross.org/about-us/news-and-events/media-resources/public-service-advertising.html?srsltid=AU7gw4WiPHa6U430zYbZGUnEbfC-zwGaXTyY7haD3odcOOWgHNO30I65

One way to partner with local radio outlets is to develop a "Wildfire Watch" update schedule. These can be short, pre-recorded messages and provide up-to-date messaging during a fire. Establish a plan with your radio stations to record a standard intro for these updates that people will know to listen for, and know your contacts at local stations so that you can phone in with updates during an emergency.

Social Media

Social media will likely be the first place the public will turn to and share news of a fire or other disaster, and it can be an ideal place to publish preparedness information, evacuation plans, and shelter information. But use caution that you only share reliable information that doesn't conflict with official emergency entities messaging. Post air quality updates, and health recommendations, and sharing locations and information about shelters, emergency medical services, and other info will be vital both before and during a fire. And though your messaging should emphasize personal preparedness, especially in rural areas where emergency response can be slow or disrupted, remember that the easiest and most reliable contact for people to know in a crisis is 911.

Use and share hashtags for your local fire districts, state fire agencies, weather outlets, and the Red Cross so that the public can easily link to reliable information as a crisis develops. In many communities, your resources will be stretched between communicating with the public and performing on-the-ground assistance. Social media excels at sharing information quickly.

Montana Red Cross
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/MontanaRedCross/
X: @MontanaRedCross

Idaho East Oregon Red Cross
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/RedCrossIdaho/
X: @RedCrossIdaho

Idaho, Montana, E. Oregon Region
Instagram: @idaho.montana.redcross
LinkedIn: @red-cross-of-idaho-and-montana

National Red Cross
Facebook: @redcross
Instagram: @americanredcross
X: @redcross
LinkedIn: @american-red-cross





PART SEVEN: SUPPORTING VISITORS AND SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Visitors to your community may be unfamiliar with the area, inadequate preparation for weather and road conditions, and a simple lack of connections to the community. Helping people visiting, vacationing, or staying in your community know what to do during an emergency can be enhanced with a few reliable steps.

Post “Wildfire Watch” info sheets where visitors are likely to see it, including Airbnb and VRBO rentals, hotel rooms and lobbies, visitor centers and other common gathering places. The Red Cross preparedness one-sheet provides a good starting point, but it’s best to include emergency contact numbers for the owner or manager of rental properties, and a short list of what to do when people only have minutes to evacuate.

Provide templates for language for rental check-ins at hotels, Airbnb/VRBO rentals, and elsewhere. This language can help desk clerks and other hosts mention local alert systems, evacuation routes, burning and campfire restrictions, and other information that will help visitors avoid starting a fire as well as staying safe during one.

Create signs and materials for visitor centers, trailheads, and campgrounds. As with rental properties and hotels, your visitors will be easy to reach in the places they’ve come to recreate at. Posting fire danger and other disaster information at visitor centers, hiking trailheads, fishing access sites, campgrounds, and public land access points will help visitors be mindful of their own risk for starting fires as well as actions they should take if a fire happens.



Be where your visitors are. Trailheads, campgrounds, and other tourist-friendly areas are good places for emergency information signage.

PART EIGHT: PRE-DISASTER COMMUNICATION

Know Your Role, and Everyone Else's

Pre-disaster communication is an important resiliency factor. Roles and responsibilities should be discussed and reinforced continually, with clear lines between related agencies, chains of command with agencies, and close communication year-round between agencies to develop strong, systems of operating.

Civic Leadership

You may be the mayor or a city council member in your community, or serve in another role in municipal or county government. Your community's charter should outline your responsibilities and duties, as well as your place in the city's chain of command. Knowing your role and responsibilities is key to executing them properly when it matters most. Scheduling meetings with first-response, law enforcement, and other key agencies at regular intervals will help your civic leadership know its own role in disaster preparedness and response, and will strengthen personal relationships with key individuals within them.

Fire Department and Emergency Response Management

If you work in one of these roles, or work closely with those in them, it's critical to know who in the community is tasked with overall direction of crisis response. Fire and EMS agencies work with great autonomy during "normal" small-scale emergencies, but community-wide threats such as wildfires, floods, earthquakes and other large disasters require deeper coordination between emergency services and civic leaders. Use regularly-scheduled meetings between all community stakeholders to identify and resolve inefficiencies, redundancies, or any potential conflicts before your ability to respond is tested in a crisis.

Red Cross and Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) Partners

When your civic, law enforcement, and emergency response leadership is meeting, invite Red Cross to the table as well. The Red Cross will be instrumental in providing disaster assistance and relief due to its well-established infrastructure, and other VOAD groups will as well. Flood-preparedness groups, civil defense volunteers, and even organizations such as 4-H and water districts can play a role. Be creative in using existing organizations to strengthen your disaster preparedness and response, and make sure their voices are heard when you're developing your plan.

How to Coordinate Among Agencies

Incident command training will provide a great deal of guidance in coordinating emergency efforts during a disaster. Seek out training to strengthen your capabilities and learn chains of command, lines of communication, and other necessary resources to prepare for emergencies.

Communicate expectations. Know what the Red Cross and other partners can and can't provide. Discuss how and when to hand off responsibilities from one entity to another and provide clear guidance.

Develop evacuation and shelter information templates. Make information available as printable PDFs, social media posts, radio announcements, and flyers so that the public better understands how their community's disaster response team will act during an emergency, and who individuals should seek out in a crisis.



PART NINE: INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE SUPPORT

Providing for more vulnerable members of your community during an emergency may require additional planning and resources. It's critical to make these considerations so that every individual has access to safety during a crisis. Identifying and connecting with these populations is a key first step in ensuring their safety if the need arises. Identify trusted partners and informed sources pre-disaster to draw on the expertise of these groups.

Identify Underserved Groups

Knowing who needs additional support is a key first step. Those who may need additional resources include older adults, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, non-English speakers, and those living in under-resourced communities. Unmet needs and underserved groups will come to emergency responders' attention as disasters occur; have a plan for accommodating those needs as they arise.

Reaching These Individuals

Resources for identifying and connecting with people in these groups include senior centers, retirement communities, post offices, health centers, government agencies, and social services entities. Additionally, word of mouth is a valuable means of identifying those who may need more support. Enlist your broader population to identify those with additional needs and engage them to provide support.



Language Access

For non-English speakers, the vision-impaired, and hard-of-hearing, receiving your message means facing additional barriers. Providing disaster information in alternative accessible formats and languages other than English may be necessary to guarantee that these individuals have the information they need. Online translation services can assist in providing alternative-language versions of your communications efforts. Work to identify obvious non-English-speaking populations in your community and work to provide information in their native languages. For those with vision or hearing impairments, adaptive technologies they already use may bridge barriers to communication, but be prepared to use multiple messaging channels to reach them.

Additional governmental and civic resources may also be available to provide foreign-language and adaptive technology access. Consult with federal, state, and county agencies to learn what's available in your area for broadcast TV and radio as well as online resources.

Pets and Livestock

In an emergency, your pets will be even more dependent on you for their safety and well-being. Your family's disaster plans must include your furry family members too. Learn what to do to keep your beloved pets safe. If it's not safe for you to stay in your home during an emergency, it's not safe for your pets either. Include supplies for your pet in your emergency kit, or assemble an emergency kit for your pet. Make an evacuation plan for you and your pets. Hotels and shelters may not accept animal guests, other than service animals. Your pet's emergency kit should include:

- Sturdy leashes, harnesses and/or carriers to transport pets safely and ensure that they can't escape.
- Food, drinking water, bowls, cat litter/pan and a manual can opener if your pet eats canned food.
- Medications and copies of medical records stored in a waterproof container.
- A first aid kit.
- Current photos of you with your pet(s) in case they get lost. Since many pets look alike, this will help to eliminate mistaken identity and confusion.
- Information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems, and the name and number of your veterinarian in case you have to foster or board your pets.
- Pet beds and toys, if easily transportable.

For livestock, evacuation ahead of danger can be a larger issue. Urge livestock owners to consider backup sites to move their stock to if a crisis threatens. For farmers and ranchers, this may be by moving stock to another property. Inevitably it may not be possible to move large herds in a disaster situation, and human life and safety should be the priority. Coordinating in advance with county extension offices, fellow farmers and ranchers, veterinary services and other entities capable of housing stock can mitigate the risk to animals if sufficient time is allowed to care for them.



Livestock require additional resources in an emergency. Plan ahead to be able to move, feed and water them ahead of disaster.

PART TEN: RECOVERY AND HEALING

Each type of disaster brings its own unique challenges, but the steps listed here are applicable to many different situations. Provide the following information through your communications channels, and observe them yourself when it doesn't conflict with your leadership role.

Check the area around you for safety and listen for instructions on local radio or television stations about safe places to go. Have injuries treated by a medical professional.

Some natural hazards may recur over the next several days. Severe storms can be followed by new storms, and earthquakes can have aftershocks. Take all safety precautions if the hazard strikes again.

Avoid using the telephone (cellular or landlines) if a large number of homes in your area have been affected by a disaster. Emergency responders need to have the telephone lines available to coordinate their response. Immediately after the disaster time, only use the telephone to report life-threatening conditions or call your out-of-town emergency contact.

Remain calm. Pace yourself. You may find yourself in the position of taking charge of other people. Listen carefully to what people are telling you. Deal with urgent situations first.

Return to your home only when local authorities say it is safe to do so. Bring a photo ID, because local authorities may only permit people who live in the disaster zone back into the area. Except in extreme emergencies (or unless told to do so by emergency officials), avoid driving immediately after the disaster. Keep roads clear for rescue and emergency vehicles. If you must drive, do not drive on roads covered with water. They could be damaged or eroded. Additionally, vehicles can begin to float in as little as six inches of water.

If the disaster was widespread, listen to your radio or local television station for instructions from authorities. Information may change rapidly after a widespread disaster, so tune in regularly for updates. If the power is still out, listen to a battery-powered radio, television or car radio.
If the area was flooded, warn children to stay away from storm drains, culverts and ditches. Children can get caught and injured in these areas.



Make use of Multi Agency Resource Centers (MARCs) and Other Long-Term Recovery Groups

Many groups are available to address various aspects of disaster recovery. Often, these are located within state and federal government agencies but may also include related advocacy and interest groups. In Montana, for example, a wide range of MARC services are offered through state, federal, nonprofit, and advocacy groups.

A list of them is available here:
https://des.mt.gov/recovery/MARC

Identifying and making contact with relevant MARCs before an emergency occurs can help speed assistance from them when needed.

MARCs can provide a number of resources and services, including:

Assistance with Coordination: Consolidating disaster relief services alleviates the need for redundant locations and resources in an emergency

Support Ahead of a Disaster Declaration: This can be useful when a formal federal or FEMA declarations have not been issued or while waiting for a disaster centers to open.

Confidentiality: Intake verification systems that protect privacy of those affected and help provide assistance in a dignified and safe manner.

Participating Agencies

American Red Cross: We oversee general site coordination, emergency lodging, food, and initial casework.

The Salvation Army: The Salvation Army provides emotional and spiritual care along with some cleanup supplies and material relief.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or State/Local Emergency Management: These agencies register survivors for federal or state disaster aid.

Local and State Departments: Connects residents with workforce services, health guidance, veterans' affairs, motor vehicle and document replacement, and insurance support.

Nonprofit and Faith-Based Organizations: These groups often provide local financial grants, clothing, long-term recovery counseling, and other services

PART ELEVEN: READY-MADE CHECKLISTS AND TEMPLATES

We've discussed the importance of checklists earlier, and their value is hard to overstate. Think of them the way you'd use a checklist to plan a family vacation: who's going, what clothes will you need, what food and drinks are you bringing, whose prescriptions will have to be included, who will check on the house while you're away. Emergency preparedness checklists fulfill the same function, reducing the number of things you'll have to keep in your head that you can't afford to forget. Building checklists for various roles and situations will help greatly when time to think is suddenly short.

Resources for a number of disaster checklists are available at:
https://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services.html

A few checklists you may wish to develop in addition to these resources are a **Mayor's Pre-Season Wildfire Checklist**, a **Community Volunteer Wildfire Checklist**, and a **First 24 Hours Checklist**. Consult our checklists as a starting point, but develop these in cooperation with your community's emergency response agencies and related partners.

Checklists for Residents and Visitors

Help those who live in your area full time, as well as visitors who aren't familiar with your area, by providing printable handouts featuring easy-to use checklists. Our Red Cross home fire preparedness checklist is a good start:
https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/get-help/pdfs/home-fire/EN_Home-Fire-Safety-Checklist.pdf

Our Emergency Preparedness Checklist focuses on pre-planning for emergencies but can be adapted to help visitors here for the short term as well:
https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/Chapters/Division_1_-_Media/Denver/Denver_-_PDFs/EmergencyPreparednessChecklist.pdf'

The Red Cross mobile Apps listed in Part Four are also a great resource to point people toward, and using social media and radio to recommend the checklists above can also be effective before and during an emergency.

PART TWELVE: KEY CONTACTS AND RESOURCE DIRECTORY

FEMA

The Federal Emergency Management Agency provides a number of contacts an resources to provide response an emergency. https://www.fema.gov/about/contact

Local and State Emergency Management Contacts

Montana: https://des.mt.gov/DES/Local-DES-Contacts1

Idaho: https://ioem.idaho.gov/about/contact/agency-contacts/

Eastern Oregon: https://www.oregon.gov/oem/emops/pages/oers.aspx

Fire Districts

Montana: https://mwra-mtdnrc.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/rural-fire-districts/explore?location=46.725201%2C-111.359094%2C6

Idaho: https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=db780fd5b47c446e9d9cfb3f15018cbd#overview

Eastern Oregon: https://geohub.oregon.gov/datasets/oregon-geo::structural-fire-districts/about

Red Cross Chapters

Montana: https://www.redcross.org/local/montana/about-us/locations.html?srsltid=AU7gw4VpMjIA0jIs7gvwDcu49_JZJIBhJ8DsCiNH89sGherVup0_bcQy

Idaho and Eastern Oregon: https://www.redcross.org/local/idaho/about-us/locations.html?srsltid=AU7gw4UexOEC-dwv3iT6fDU7xe810vzc7j2NQlHqkyO4g0DWY6Cco44A

Nationwide Resources

The American Red Cross: https://www.redcross.org/

The Federal Emergency Management Agency: https://www.fema.gov/

The United State Fire Administration Wildfire and the Wildland Fire Interface: https://www.usfa.fema.gov/wui/

National Fire Protection Association: https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/wildfire/firewise-usa

Ready Set Go! https://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/resources/resource/ready-set-go-program

Thank you.

Preparing your community for the threat of wildfire and other disasters is one of the most important tasks you'll have as a civic leader. Prioritizing safety, planning for potential emergencies, coordinating with other agencies and individuals, and working calmly and deliberately during a crisis will help protect life and property should the need arise. Your continued efforts to improve disaster response in your community will benefit everyone in your area of responsibility. Thank you for partnering with the American Red Cross.

