

## INTRODUCTION

Fitch Mountain is one of Healdsburg's greatest natural assets, but it also presents a significant fire danger to the area. In 1995, the state of California designated it as a *High Fire Hazard Severity Zone*. To protect lives and property, the Healdsburg Fire Department, along with CAL Fire and the County of Sonoma, are working together to enhance your fire protection.



A *Mutual Threat Zone* has been established, that automatically dispatches up to 10 fire engines, along with a helicopter, air tankers and bulldozers in the event of a fire, depending on fire weather conditions. The agencies also worked on a brush removal and chipping program, construction and maintenance of fire breaks, residential fire inspections, and yearly education programs. These activities are effective, but even the most aggressive program will fail without your help. This brochure outlines the nine most effective things you can do to protect your life and property in a wildfire.

### 1. DEFENSIBLE SPACE

Sweep your roof clear of debris, cut away branches that hang over buildings, stack woodpiles away from buildings, mow dry grass or weeds at least 100 feet or more if on a slope, around your home, and cut the lowest limbs on trees at least to 6 feet, to prevent a ground fire from traveling into the tree canopy.

### 2. AN ESCAPE PLAN

Map the route from your home to a safe place off the mountain, and talk to family members about what to do in a fire. If you don't have a friend or relative to stay with, *Healdsburg Boys & Girls Club* will be a designated emergency shelter.

***To facilitate evacuation and allow access for fire apparatus in an emergency, Fitch Mountain Road could temporarily become a one-way road. If a fire starts on the south side of the mountain, you may be asked to evacuate on the north side ... and vice-versa.***

### 3. ANIMAL EVACUATION PLAN

During the 2003 fires in San Diego County, several people died while searching for pets that had been left behind. Have a plan ready to evacuate your critters.

### 4. MAKE A LIST

Work with your family to make a list of what to bring along in an evacuation. The biggest regret of most fire victims? They didn't grab photos, scrapbooks, or computer hard drives.

### 5. DON'T WAIT – EVACUATE

Immediately evacuate when advised to by police or fire personnel. Wildfires move fast, especially in a thickly-vegetated area like Fitch Mountain. The narrow roads and limited access increase the risks in a fire. ***Do not hesitate to evacuate!***

### 6. A SAFETY ZONE

If your escape route is cut off by fire, find a place to retreat that won't burn as much, such as a clearing. Although a fire may burn your home, it may offer temporary shelter as the main fire passes. If that happens, watch carefully, stay calm and leave the house once the fire front passes, but before your home becomes fully involved and you are trapped inside.

### 7. GET INVOLVED

Fire departments welcome participation from neighborhood groups and associations to develop fire safety plans and programs.

## 8. MARK YOUR HOME

Too frequently, emergency responders have trouble finding homes in rural areas, because a road or address is not clearly marked. Make sure we can find you! We recommend a sign at the base of your driveway, with reflective markings at least four inches high. We also recommend illuminated address numbers on the front of your home, clearly visible from the street.

## 9. KEEP ROADS CLEAR

The roads on Fitch Mountain are narrow and not well-suited for fire trucks. One poorly parked or disable vehicle can block access to half the mountain, preventing emergency vehicles from getting in and residents from getting out. If you see a vehicle blocking the road, ask your neighbor to move it right away. If that doesn't work, call the Healdsburg Police Department at 433-3377.

**In an emergency call 911**  
**From cell phones, call 431-3366**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

*Healdsburg Fire Department*  
431-3360 [www.cityofhealdsburg.org](http://www.cityofhealdsburg.org)  
*CAL Fire* 433-2020 [www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov)  
*Fire Safe Sonoma* 565-1152  
[www.firesafesonoma.org](http://www.firesafesonoma.org)  
[www.sparky.org](http://www.sparky.org)

## DID YOU KNOW?

The 2003 wildfires in Southern California resulted in the following:

- 24 fatalities
- 3,631 homes destroyed
- 1,169 outbuildings burned
- 739,597 acres burned
- 500-plus farms and \$40 million in agricultural products lost
- 15,631 fire personnel deployed
- \$4 billion in damages

The Governor's Report on the 2003 fires stated that fuel management (removal and thinning of brush) is one of the most effective ways to minimize wildland fire hazards. Ironically, a June 2003 report from the General Accounting Office found that 69% of all fuel management activities were stalled by legal action.

### **You are strongly encouraged to minimize fuel on your property.**

- Cut dry grass and weeds each year.
- Remove brush within 100 feet of your home and thin others.
- Replace flammable vegetation with fire resistant species.
- Remove brush 10 feet on both sides of your driveway, to improve emergency vehicle access.
- Remove all ladder fuels up to 6 feet or more, including dead and dried vegetation.

# FIRE SAFETY ON FITCH MOUNTAIN AND HIGH FIRE SEVERITY ZONES



## A Guide to Common Fire Safety Issues For High Fire Severity Residents

*Produced by CAL Fire and the  
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**WHAT YOU READ IN THIS  
PAMPHLET MAY SAVE YOUR  
LIFE AND YOUR HOME**