Humans have great ability to adapt to the changing circumstances in the environment, including life extreme events during wildfires. In a wildfire, we are probably first alerted by seeing the smokes and flames at a distance. As the fire spreads closer to us, we gradually start smelling the smokes and seeing the flame approaching rapidly, exponentially increasing our sensitivity and reactivity to it – we instinctively feel that we are in danger and escape. These stimuli that represent the changing circumstances in the environment evoke “internal states” in the brain, such as fear and arousal. These “internal states” have great influence on how people behave and make decisions. In this case, to just name a few, how to best evacuate, what to bring with during evacuation, what about the pets, and how to keep the property safe after the evacuation? While thinking about how to react during wildfires, being alerted to escape comes with a cost – the fear and arousal that we feel are our opponent to optimize these decisions. It is extremely difficult to make the best decision within such a short amount of time under such circumstances, not even mention to execute them right. Therefore, to best help you, your family, and your properties to stay safe during and survive during wildfires, it is necessary to think about how to react before the fire occurs and prepare accordingly. Here, I am providing specific measures to be taken before the fire occurs and during the fire.

Before the fire occurs - an alert is announced by the local community or government AND before an evacuation order is made:

Core Idea:

* Start reacting ASAP even if there is just a precautionary alert because wildfires rapidly change direction and spread much faster than you can run.

Reactive Measures:

1. Sign up for live updates on local wildfire warning system alert and/or public warning systems, including The Emergency Alert System and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio.

2. Make an emergency plan for your family: at least 2 evacuation routes, customize the go-kit for everyone in the family (including pets), a meeting location for unexpected evacuation.

3. Go-kits: include N95 masks, nonperishable food, water, necessary medications, maps for evacuation routes, first-aid kit, flashlight with extra batteries, personal necessities (eyewear, cell phone, chargers, etc.), important documents (ID, passports, etc.), credit cards & cash, pet food. Add to this list on an individual basis.

4. Put the go-kit in your vehicle or the medium you plan for evacuation.

5. if plan to evacuate with your vehicle, make sure it is fueled up.

5. Gather all family members and announce the plan for evacuation.

6. Protect your property: keep all windows and doors closed (minimize air filtering in from the outside), turn on portable air purifiers, and connect water hoses.

During the fire - an evacuation order is made OR if you feel you are in danger, whichever comes first:

Core Idea:

* If you have prepared accordingly, either based on the above suggestions or other sources, leave immediately according to your preparation.
* If you have not prepared, do not “prepare” or pack up any valuable belongings but leave immediately.

Reactive Measures:

1. Wear a N95 mask properly (instruction attached).

A person wearing a mask

Description automatically generated

2. Gather everyone in the family to evacuate or announce evacuation to make sure everyone starts reacting accordingly to the plan.

3. If evacuate with a vehicle, close all car windows & turn on air recirculation.

4. Close the door after leaving the property (close all other doors and windows if time permits).

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