

The "Wildfire Sense: A Guide to Protecting Your Home and Family" underscores the critical need for preparedness among homeowners in wildfire-prone areas, particularly as wildfire seasons lengthen. Homeowners are encouraged to take proactive steps to mitigate fire risks, such as creating and maintaining a defensible space around their homes by removing brush and combustible materials, in accordance with local regulations. This defensible space must be preserved year-round, and professional assistance should be sought if necessary. The guide details actions to undertake before and after a wildfire, including mandatory evacuation when ordered and awareness of smoke exposure following a wildfire.

Homeowners are advised to assess their household needs, compile an inventory of belongings, and establish a family communication plan. Emergency kits should be prepared, containing a three-day supply of food and water, important documents, and pet supplies, and kept readily accessible. The guide emphasizes the importance of maintaining a home inventory to document possessions, which can streamline the insurance claim process after a disaster. It also encourages building a support system with family, friends, and neighbors to aid during emergencies, discussing evacuation plans, and ensuring that all household members, including those with special needs, are included in the planning.

For caregivers of individuals with memory impairment, the document highlights the necessity of advance planning, as caregivers must remain composed to help their loved ones manage anxiety during emergencies. It is crucial to have a clear evacuation plan, as individuals with dementia may not be able to assist in evacuation efforts and may resist leaving. The guide outlines evacuation steps, such as listening to emergency channels, preparing emergency supplies, and securing the home, and advises caregivers to register for community warning systems and download relevant mobile apps for updates.

Post-wildfire, the document addresses health risks associated with smoke exposure, particularly for

vulnerable populations like older adults and those with pre-existing health conditions. It provides guidance on maintaining air quality and preparing for potential flooding, erosion, and water quality issues that may arise after wildfires. Caregivers are encouraged to document property damage for insurance claims and seek mental health support if necessary.

The document also offers resources for homeowners needing assistance with wildfire preparedness, including local organizations that can help with tasks like brush removal. It emphasizes the importance of having a diverse support network and a designated substitute caregiver, as well as preparing a disaster kit with essential supplies and comforting items for loved ones. Regular evaluations of the preparedness plan are recommended to ensure its effectiveness as circumstances change.

Additionally, the document provides various resources aimed at helping individuals, particularly caregivers, prepare for natural disasters, focusing on wildfire prevention and recovery. It includes guidebooks such as "The Calm Before the Storm," which aids caregivers in disaster planning, and "Fire Sense," which stresses ongoing fire safety measures in the home. "Keeping Your Home at Its Best" offers maintenance tips and advice on smart home technologies. The document lists agencies and organizations that provide support and information related to wildfires, including the CDC, Ready.gov, and CAL FIRE, and highlights the importance of consulting professionals for personalized advice. The Hartford's Center for Mature Market Excellence, with over 35 years of experience addressing the needs of individuals over 50, is mentioned as a partner in research and public education on safety and independence. For further resources, readers are directed to visit The Hartford's website.