

Disaster Preparedness

Tips to help you assess your risk and ways to help protect yourself

Most of us don't like to think about disastrous events, not to mention plan for them. The Shadow Creek Board Members would like to highlight issues that are important to consider prior to a disaster.

Last month's Marshall Fire is a sober reminder that wildfires are unpredictable and will move quickly. Considering our location at the foothills of a canyon, each of us lives under a year-round potential threat of natural disasters: wildfire, flash floods, and extreme weather.

The wildfire to the west of Shadow Creek several years ago and the Marshall Fire in December 2021 highlight a couple realities:

- We used to think that we should "consider some possible risks and hazards in our community". In light of recent events, we should change our mindset to "it's a matter of when the next disaster will occur and what do I need to do to survive".
- Timely notifications and communications can be a challenge.
- People may have only minutes to respond.
- Each individual must be ready as our lives may depend on vigilance and being prepared.

Preparations are key

- Develop plans to shelter in place and to evacuate.
- Prepare an emergency kit.
- Create an inventory of your belongings and review annually. Consider updating records of belongings via videos or pictures. Make sure a copy is kept outside your home, perhaps in a safety deposit box or the Cloud or with your lawyer.
- Find out if you are adequately insured. As a condo owner, you should have insurance for what the HOA does not cover. You should have insurance coverage to rebuild your interior, your personal contents, your vehicle(s), etc. Also regarding insurance: some folks are insured for temporary housing in the event they cannot return to their home.

How will you be informed of an emergency?

- Potential alert notification sources include the Fire Department, government Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Center, news sources, weather reports, Twitter or other social media, relatives, friends, and neighbors.
- Connectivity for cell phones and internet is not 100% reliable.
- The Marshall Fire revealed that the County cell phone notification system and emergency warning sirens have significant limitations and should not be your only source of information.
- Boulder County uses a third party, Everbridge, for notifying people of disasters. Check out the Everbridge Emergency Alert Program site at <https://member.everbridge.net/453003085612231/login>.

Prepare an evacuation bag / 'go bag'

- Make a list of items you would take if you had to leave in a short time (e.g., 5-10 minutes).
- Experts offer lists of suggested items to pack for an evacuation. For instance, people might have a first aid kit, drinkable water, flashlight, etc.
- Be sure to also pack/take important documents (passport, medical cards, other records), minimum of three day supply of prescriptions, glasses or contact lens, phone/computer chargers, pandemic face masks, purse/wallet with driver's license, cash and credit cards.
- The situation may arise where you are away from home when an evacuation order occurs and you are not able to access your prescriptions or important documents. In this case, access to records and phone numbers off-site are even more important to have.

Stay or evacuate

- Prepare your evacuation bag before it is needed.
- Decide in advance where you will go to meet family/friends, including an alternate location if necessary. Ask friends/relatives in advance who might be able to house you in an emergency.
- It is essential to follow the evacuation recommendations provided by local authorities or fire officials.
- If an evacuation is being considered by the local officials, depending on your physical situation, it may be advisable to leave BEFORE a mandatory evacuation is ordered to allow time to leave and minimize stress.
- Call, text, or email family, friends, neighbors and perhaps Helen or a SC board member to advise them of your whereabouts and well-being.

Assume that electrical power will be lost

- Electricity is frequently unavailable - either from the disaster itself (e.g., from high winds) or from Xcel disconnecting it for safety precautions.
- When electrical power has been lost at SC, we have seen challenges with not being able to operate the main security door system, elevators, garage doors, and even some medical support equipment.
- Residents may not have ready access to their cars for transportation due to the inability to open the garage door; however some residents may be available to manually open the doors.
- Do not use elevators during adverse conditions which might affect electrical power. A person would be stranded in a disabled elevator.
- Power outages will make gas pumps and ATMs unusable.

Some features of our Shadow Creek buildings:

- An offsite central office monitors our common areas (e.g., hallways, garages) for fire and will alert emergency personnel.
- Fire sprinklers in condo units and in common spaces must remain unobstructed to perform their emergency function.
- Fire extinguishers exist on each level of both buildings. Learn when and how to use one.
- Board and Maintenance Committee members have met with fire experts and implemented changes to reduce risk both indoors and outside.

How about your home?

- Do you have three or more smoke/fire detectors in working condition?
- It is advisable that you have your own fire extinguisher(s)...and be able to use them.
- In our area, blowing embers are the main cause of a fire spreading. Consider removing anything wooden/combustible from your deck or patio.
- Maintain clear paths for both your front and rear exits.
- Do not store anything in the back stairways or behind your back door,

What to do After a Disaster: If you think it might be safe to return home, here are some tips to help get you back on your feet.

- Wait for an all clear notice from local authorities.
- Contact friends and family to let them know your plans.
- Don't drink tap water until authorities tell you it's safe.
- Throw out any medication, food or drinks that were exposed to heat, ash, smoke or chemicals.
- Take pictures of your home's damage, inside and out.

A partnership exists between the City of Boulder Emergency Management and Boulder County.

Each has an Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Center that is an excellent resource for emergency preparations and readiness. See city and county links:

<https://www.boulderoem.com/>

<https://www.bouldercounty.org/safety/emergency/>

In closing, with no time pressure, when we are not facing an imminent threat, how do YOU know:

- that you are adequately insured?
- that you are prepared?
- what to take when you evacuate?
- how to safely exit Shadow Creek?
- when to leave? ...and to where?
- how you will piece your life back together?