

PORTAL - PARADISE EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN

The following is a summary of what homeowners should do to prepare for an emergency evacuation. It was written for fire emergencies, but most of it would apply to flood threats or a hazardous-material spill up Cave Creek Canyon. It applies primarily to residents in the wildland-urban interface, i.e. the 50-60 homes in Portal and Paradise that are situated in riparian areas or adjacent pinyon-juniper hillside vegetation.

I. HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO EVACUATE?

You will be contacted in person or by phone by someone from the Cochise County Sheriff's Office, the US Forest Service, Portal Rescue or another agency.

You should be familiar with the 3 levels of evacuation readiness by the end of this document. Keep in touch and stay informed. There is a website under development, but in the meantime, watch for updates from Portal Rescue at the Post Office and Portal Store. Paradise residents should check for updates at the Portal Post Office or by phone with Portal Rescue.

II. THE THREE LEVELS OF EVACUATION READINESS:

Portal and Paradise Area residents should expect three possible stages of an evacuation:

1. Evacuation Watch - Will be in effect when fire danger is extreme. A National Forest closure may be in effect. May exist for weeks or months.

2. Evacuation Warning -- Will occur when a fire or other threat is imminent, moving toward occupied area, and resources are mobilized to fight it. May last a few hours to days.

3. Mandatory Evacuation -- Will occur when emergency officials order people to leave ahead of an advancing fire or other threat.

III. WHAT TO DO TO PREPARE FOR AN EVACUATION

DURING AN EVACUATION WATCH:

Prepare your home for the possibility that you may have to leave it rather than stay to protect it during a wildfire. In addition, be preparing items to take with you by knowing where these things are and by preparing to load them into the car.

Protect your home. Check gutters and lee (downwind) side of structures for leaves. Burning firebrands and embers will be carried to and drop into the same places that dry leaves accumulate against buildings. Rake under open decks, walkways and wheelchair ramps; enclose with metal screening. Check gutters for dry leaves and pine needles. Leave hoses coiled near hose bibs, several feet from the walls and disconnected. Rake around the base of wooden power poles. Remember: no power means no water!

Bring things indoors. Lawn furniture, trash cans, toys, garden equipment, hanging plants, and other lightweight objects can fly around in fire-generated wind.

Look for potential hazards. Dead limbs overhead can break off and block driveways, or fly onto power lines, roof or windows in high winds. Remove and drag them away from the house.

Learn how to turn off electricity and water. Refresh your memory of how to turn off electricity at the main fuse or breaker, and how to turn off water at the main valve. Dig to clear underground valve boxes.

Learn how to turn off propane gas at the tank. Rake around propane tank, removing grass and leaves to 15 feet away. Propane tanks often become dislodged in floods. Gasoline tanks on metal stands should be checked for clearance from flammable materials; secure hose well above ground. Move flammable liquids and portable propane tanks away to open areas safe from fire.

Prepare to move objects that may get damaged by wind, heat or water to safer areas of your home. If there is time when you are ordered to evacuate, after packing and other preparations are done, move television sets, computers, stereo and electronic equipment, firearms, and easily moveable appliances like a microwave oven off the floor and away from windows. Wrap them in sheets, wool blankets or rugs, or burlap. Put ammunition into refrigerator or pack it for transport out.

Prepare a crate for each pet. Get animal used to crate and write your and animal's name on crate. Tape leash and a zip lock bag to crate with animal health records (needed if you have to kennel your pet).

DURING AN EVACUATION WARNING:

Gather essential supplies and papers.

Turn off automatic irrigation systems to ensure you have a full pressure tank of water should you lose electricity. Water manually, and sparingly.

Keep gas tank topped off on vehicle you will use. If you own a roadworthy RV plan to bring it Move other vehicles and travel trailers to a safe, open area where they won't bum or block fire vehicles.

You will need the following supplies when you leave your home; put them all together in a duffle bag or other large container in advance:

- Flashlight with plenty of extra batteries
- Battery-powered radio with extra batteries
- First aid kit & prescription medications in their original bottle, plus copies of the prescriptions
- Eyeglasses (with a copy of the prescription) and hearing aids
- Water (at least one gallon per person is recommended, more is better)
- Foods that do not require refrigeration or cooking
- Items that infants and elderly household members may require
- Medical equipment and devices, such as dentures, crutches, prostheses, etc

- Change of clothes for each household member
- Washing kit, soap, towel
- Sleeping bag or bedroll and pillow for each household member
- Checkbook, cash, and credit cards
- Map of the area – Arizona & New Mexico
- Cell phone, batteries, charger and outlet strip
- Cochise County phone book
- Pet supplies, medicines, food, dishes and medical records

Important papers to take with you:

- Driver's license and/or passport, Social Security card, birth and marriage certificates
- Proof of residence (deed or lease)
- Insurance policies and vehicle titles
- Stocks, bonds, and other negotiable certificates
- Wills, deeds, and copies of recent tax returns
- Computer backup disks or consider bringing the CPU itself (the box, minus monitor and keyboard) if you have important records on the computer.
- Family photographs are often the only thing that fire survivors wish they'd brought along; consider packing these too.

IV. WHEN ORDERED TO EVACUATE, close all windows, turn off water and power except to pump & tank if possible, turn off propane, load vehicle with the above and go. Time may be very short, so prepare.

If you have only moments before leaving, grab these things and go

1. Medical supplies: prescription medications and denture.
2. Flashlight, batteries, radio, first aid kit, bottled water (1 gallon/person & per pet).
3. Clothing and bedding: a change of clothes and a sleeping bag or bedroll, sleeping pad and pillow for each household member
4. Car keys and keys to the place you may be going (friend's or relative's home)
5. Pets, crates and pet supplies (food, dishes, leashes, medicine and pet's medical records)

V. WHERE DO WE GO WHEN WE ARE TOLD TO EVACUATE?

You will receive instructions when you are ordered to evacuate, but you can help by taking an active role and planning ahead for your own needs. Portal residents should contact a friend or relative who lives roughly down canyon (east) of the Portal Store and arrange accommodations. Paradise residents may do the same, or plan for accommodations in the direction of San Simon.

Evacuees without pre-arranged accommodations will be directed where to go, which

will be most likely to Rodeo or San Simon. Space at the Rodeo Community Center will be used first to house evacuees from the Southwest Research Station and residents up-canyon from the Portal Ranger Station. Other Portal residents may be housed there, depending on space and the needs of the individuals. Other space may be available at the Rodeo Tavern and the Catholic Church. You may be directed even farther afield, to motels in Road Forks, Lordsburg, and Douglas.

The Portal Rescue Fire station will most likely NOT be used to house evacuees as it may be in use as a command center. Parking is very limited there.

VI. PLAN AHEAD BEFORE AN EVACUATION!

Make a visual or written record of all of your household possessions. Record model and serial numbers.

This list could help you prove the value of what you owned if those possessions are damaged or destroyed, and can assist you to claim deductions on taxes. Photographs or video all items in the home. Photograph or scan documents listed above. Store a copy of the records somewhere away from home, such as in a safe deposit box.

VII. PREPARE MENTALLY - VISUALIZE THE PROCESS AND CONDITIONS OF AN EVACUATION

Doing the 'mental homework' will help you stay calm in an emergency situation. Expect it to be chaotic and for you to feel frustrated at the lack of information coming from emergency responders. This is to be expected; you can help by helping and reassuring others who are in this with you.