# READY! SET! GO!

## YOUR PERSONAL WILDFIRE ACTION PLAN

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# Wildfire Action Plan

## Saving Lives and Property through Advance Planning

"When we can no longer change the situation, we are challenged to change ourselves"

Viktor Frankel

The Santa Barbara community, where the mountains meet the sea, is a unique natural environment. It embraces beauty at the same time as it has the potential for year round disaster. The recent wildfires are stark evidence that we need to recognize, understand and actively work to mitigate the potential of wildfire's impact to our homes and lives.

The Santa Barbara City Fire Department prides itself in providing the highest level of protection for you and your property; in planning, preparation and response to fires that occur in our community. Working with our partners in the California mutual aid system, we are able to achieve many positive outcomes while fighting fire in some of the toughest conditions that can be encountered due to our local winds, fuels and steep topography. With these factors there are still times when even our best efforts may not be enough. It is your personal understanding and involvement, that you take before and during a wildfire, that will truly make the difference.

This brochure gives you the tips and tools to successfully prepare for a wildfire. It provides guidance to you so your home has the greatest potential for survival. In addition, it will help you and your household plan ahead so that you can leave early, well ahead of a fast approaching wildfire.

Early evacuations are critical in the Santa Barbara foothills. We have a history of fires that take only minutes to turn into conflagrations. They will happen again. By following the enclosed checklists and creating your own Personal Wildfire Action Plan, you will be ready and have the peace of mind knowing you've done everything possible to ensure your households safety and your home's survival.

There are some things in our lives that we cannot change. We know our mountains will always face south, be steep, and be covered with dense chaparral. We live in our homes located in the foothills and our weather will periodically create high winds that we call Sundowners. Wildfires are part of our environment. Our challenge, and what we must do, is to change the way we understand, prepare and react to wildfires in our community. The most important person in protecting your life and property is not the firefighter, but yourself. I hope that you find this publication helpful. Through advance planning and preparation, we can all be ready for the

Fire Chief, Andrew J. DiMizio

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For more information go to our website at www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Wildland

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# Get READY - Create a Defensible Home

A defensible home is a home that has the greatest potential for surviving a wildfire. Defensible homes are those homes that are in compliance with the City of Santa Barbara, Fire Department Defensible Space Requirements (page 4 & 5) and have been constructed in accordance with the latest building construction standards for the high fire hazard area (page 6 & 7). A defensible home must be able to withstand a wildfire even if firefighter's are not there to defend it.

## What Is Defensible Space ?

Defensible space is the area around a structure that is free of flammable plants and objects. Defensible space creates a zone around the structure that provides a key point of defense from an approaching wildfire, while allowing firefighters to operate safely to help protect your structure.

Defensible space must be wide enough to prevent direct flame impingement and reduce the amount of radiant heat reaching the structure. Defensible space distances vary throughout the City of Santa Barbara, depending on the High Fire Hazard Zone where you reside and the slope of your property (please go to our website at www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Wildland or contact the Fire Department if you need further clarification).

## Building Construction

A defensible home depends on the building construction material used to build your home. New homes in the high fire hazard area are required to meet specific building construction standards. Many older homes do not meet these standards, but can be retrofitted to provide greater protection.

Your home is vulnerable from both direct flames and from flying embers. Direct flames from a wildfire can ignite your siding, roof, eaves , decks, balconies or break windows unless they are properly constructed. Flying embers can travel up to one mile ahead of a fire. Unless your home is protected, flying embers will find a weak link in your home's protection scheme.

Pages 6 and 7 provide more detail on specific construction standards and ways to retrofit existing homes.

# Steps To Create Defensible Space

1) Determine your defensible space area. This varies from 30 to 150 feet, or greater if property has significant slopes. You can check our website for specifics at www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Wildland.

2) Provide 30 feet of "Lean, Clean, and Green" landscaping. **Lean** means having a limited amount of plant material in the area. **Clean** means no accumulation of any dead material. **Green** means keeping plants in this area healthy, irrigated, and green.

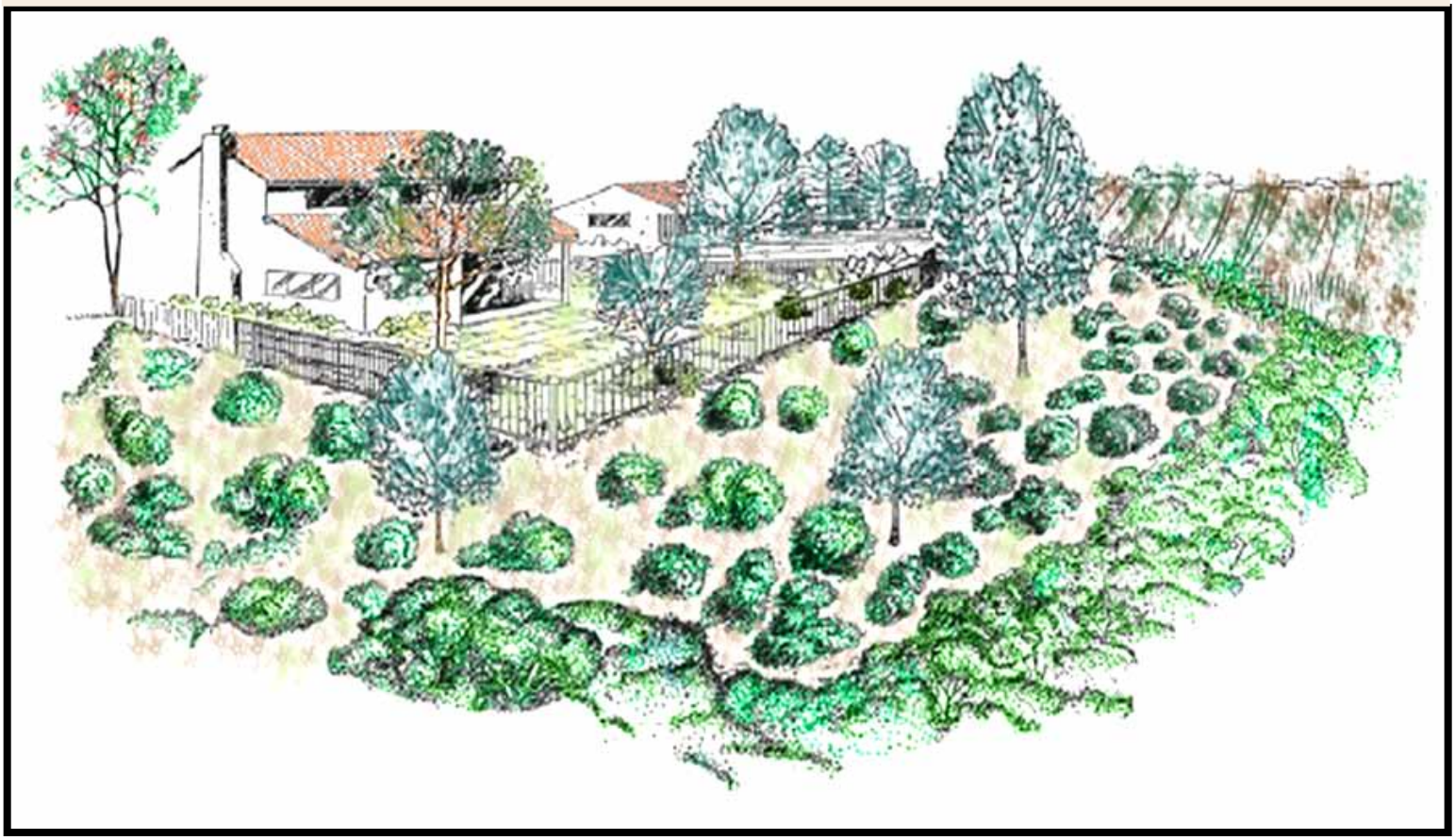
3) Remove all dead vegetation within the defensible space area. This includes dead trees and shrubs, dead branches lying on the ground or still within living plants, dried grasses, weeds, dropped needles and leaves.

4) Break up continuous dense cover of shrubs and trees. Break up by providing a separation between plants or small groupings of plants.

5) Remove "ladder fuels". Vegetation that allows fire to move from lower growing plants to tree canopies is referred to as "ladder fuel". Remove ladder fuels by providing a vertical separation of 3 times the height of the lower vegetation layer.

6) Keep vegetation clear along all driveways and streets. Vegetation along these areas should be pruned and thinned to a vertical height of 14 feet. All flammable vegetation to a horizontal distance of 10 feet should be removed.

**Note:** Do not plant high hazard plants such as Acacia, Cedar, Cypress, Eucalyptus, Juniper, Pine, and Pampas grass in your landscape. Special attention should be given to the use and maintenance of these high hazard plants if they already exist in your landscape. These existing plantings should be properly maintained and not allowed to be in mass plantings that could transmit fire to any structure.



# Fire Wise Landscaping Is Defensible Space

Fire wise landscaping can protect your property during a wildfire, because it creates defensible space. Fire wise landscaping is the selective removal of existing flammable plants and replacing them with fire wise plants with appropriate spacing (vertically and horizontally) around your home to resist the spread of wildfire. Fire wise landscaping uses a zone concept, each planted with a specific purpose in mind.

Zone 1 (0 to 30 feet from a structure) is the area directly adjacent to your home. This is the most important zone. Plantings in this zone should be low growing and irrigated. Use non-flammable materials for paths, patios, and mulch. Shrub plantings should be minimal in this zone and be widely spaced. Trees should be planted so that canopies are no closer than 15 feet from a structure and spaced at least 30 feet from other trees to prevent canopies from touching once fully grown.

Zone 2 (30 to 50 feet from a structure) should be maintained with a reasonably open character. Plant low growing ground covers and succulents resistant to fire. Plant shrubs so that they have adequate spacing in between individual plants, clusters of plants or other trees. Do not plant shrubs underneath the canopy of trees. Trees should be spaced at least 30 feet from other trees to prevent canopies from touching once fully grown.

Zone 3 (50 to 70 feet from a structure) should consist of plants that are low growing and woody. This area should have native and Mediterranean plantings that require only periodic irrigation. Shrubs should be planted to maintain some spacing in between individual plants or clusters of plants. Trees should be spaced at least 30 feet apart to prevent canopies from touching once fully grown.

Zone 4 (70 to 100 feet or more from a structure) is the area furthest from your home. It is a transitional area between native vegetation and the plants around your home. Focus should be on planting or maintaining native vegetation that has been thinned to reduce the plant's volume. Remove any dead material and provide spacing between plants. Any new plants, once established, should not require irrigation. During a wildfire this zone may burn, but with less vegetation it will slow the fire's path towards the home.

# Red Flag Alert Means Be Ready!

Red Flag Alert is a national program used by fire agencies in cooperation with the National Weather Service to predict weather conditions that increase the potential for large catastrophic wildfires. The National Weather Service predicts the weather conditions and issues a Red Flag "watch" or "warning". An actual "Alert" is issued by the local fire agencies.

Red Flag Alerts are issued by the local fire agencies based on specific geographic zones. There are 5 geographic zones defined within Santa Barbara County due to very different weather conditions that exist in each zone.
The City of Santa Barbara is included in the front country coastal mountain zone (Zone 1). When the City of Santa Barbara implements a Red Flag Alert the public is notified through the media, signs are posted within the high fire hazard, and all fire stations raise a symbolic red flag on flag poles.

It is important during a Red Flag Alert that you monitor your local media for information and be ready to implement your "Personal Wildfire Action Plan" presented on the following pages, to be prepared if a wildfire occurs. For more information go to:

www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Wildland

# Tour a Defensible Home

**Home Site and Yard:** Ensure you have the required defensible space around your home that meets the Fire Department requirements. Look past your property to determine the impact that a common slope or neighbor's yard will have on your property during a wildfire.

Cut dry weeds and grass before noon when temperatures are cooler to reduce the chance of sparking a fire.

Use fire wise landscaping that uses fire-resistant plants, arranged to meet the defensible space requirements.

Keep woodpiles and other combustible materials away from your home and other structures, such as garages, barns, and sheds.

Ensure that trees are far away from power lines.

**Inside your home:** Keep working fire extinguishers on hand. Install smoke alarms on each level of your home and near bedrooms. Test them monthly and change the batteries twice a year.

**Address:** Make sure your address is clearly visible from the road.

**Garage:** Have a fire extinguisher and tools such as a shovel, rake, bucket, and hoe available for fire emergencies.

Install a solid door with self-closing hinges between living areas and the garage. Install weather stripping around and under the doors to prevent ember intrusion.

Store combustibles and flammable liquids away from ignition sources.

**Driveways and Access Roads:** Driveways should be designed to allow fire and emergency vehicles and equipment to reach your house.

Access roads should have 10-foot clearance on either side of the traveled section of the roadway and should allow for two-way traffic.

Ensure that all gates open inward and are wide enough to accommodate emergency equipment.

Trim trees and shrubs overhanging the road and your driveway to a vertical distance of 14 feet to allow emergency vehicle access.

**Fences:** Fencing should be non-combustible to prevent fire from burning into your home during a wildfire

**Roof:** Your roof is the most vulnerable part of your home because it can easily catch fire from wind-blown embers.

Roof coverings should be constructed using Class A roofing or non-combustible fire retardant materials, such as composition, metal or tile. Block any spaces between roof decking and covering to prevent ember intrusion.

Keep your roof and gutter clear of all vegetative debris.

Cut back any tree branches within 10 feet of your roof eaves.

**Eaves:** Box eaves in with non-flammable materials to prevent accumulation of embers.

**Rain Gutters:** Screen or enclose rain gutters to prevent the accumulation of plant debris.

**Vents:** Vents are particularly vulnerable to flying embers. Cover all vent openings with 1/8 inch wire mesh or approved vents that resist ember intrusion. Do not use fiberglass or plastic mesh, it can melt and burn.

Attic vents in eaves or cornices should be baffled or otherwise protected to prevent ember intrusion (mesh is not enough).

**Water Supply:** Have multiple garden hoses long enough to reach any area of your home and any other structures on your property.

If you have a pool or well, consider a pump.

**Windows:** Install dual-paned windows with an exterior pane of tempered glass. The window frame should be a non-flammable to reduce the chance of breakage during a wildfire.

Single-paned and large windows are particularly vulnerable.

Limit the size and number of windows in your home that face large areas of vegetation.

**Siding:** Siding materials should be constructed of non-flammable materials, such as stucco, brick, masonry, or cement.

Be sure to extend materials from foundation to roof.

**Chimney:** Cover your chimney outlet with an approved spark arrestor or non-flammable screen of 1⁄8-inch wire mesh or smaller to prevent embers from escaping and igniting a fire.

Ensure that tree branches are cut back at least 10 feet from the chimney.

**Deck/Patio:** Use heavy timber or non-flammable construction material for decks and patios.

Enclose undersides of balconies and decks with fire-resistant materials to prevent embers from blowing underneath, lodging and starting a fire.

Keep your deck clear of combustible items, such as baskets, dried flower arrangements and other debris.

The decking surface must be ignition resistant if it's

# Create A Personal Wildfire Action Plan

A Personal Wildfire Action Plan must be prepared with all members of your household well in advance of a fire.

Use the following checklists to help you prepare your Personal Wildfire Action Plan.

Each household's plan will be different, depending on your situation.

Once your plan is finished, rehearse it regularly with your household. Keep it in a safe and accessible place for quick implementation.

## Get SET - Prepare Your Family

- ☐ **Create a Wildfire Action Plan that includes** meeting locations and communication plans. Rehearse it regularly. Include in your plan the evacuation of large animals, such as horses.
- ☐ Have fire extinguishers on hand and train your household how to use them.
- ☐ Ensure that your household knows where your gas, electric and water main shut-off controls are and how to use them.
- ☐ Plan several different escape routes.
- ☐ Designate an emergency meeting location outside of the fire hazard area.
- ☐ Assemble a disaster supply kit. Go to www.fema.gov/areyouready/assemble_disaster_supplies_kit.shtm for information on how to assemble a kit .
- ☐ Appoint an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact so that you can communicate with household members who have relocated.
- ☐ Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers posted near your phone and in your disaster supply kit.
- ☐ Keep an extra disaster supply kit in your car in the event you can not get to your home because of fire.
- ☐ Have a portable radio or scanner so that you can stay updated on the fire.

# As the Fire Approaches

- ☐ Alert your household and neighbors.
- ☐ Dress in long sleeves and long pants made of natural fibers. Wear work boots. Have goggles and a dry bandana or particle mask handy.
- ☐ Ensure you have your disaster supplies kit on hand. Including such items as a battery-powered radio, spare batteries, emergency contact numbers, and ample drinking water.
- ☐ Stay tuned to your TV or local radio stations for updates, or check the Fire Department website at www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Fire.
- ☐ Remain close to your house, drink plenty of water and keep an eye on household members.
- ☐ Keep animals secured in apropriate carriers so you can find them when you need to evacuate.

### OUTDOOR CHECKLIST

- ☐ Gather up flammable items from the exterior of the house and bring them inside (e.g., patio furniture, children's toys, doormats, etc.) or place them in your pool.
- ☐ Turn off propane tanks.
- ☐ Connect garden hoses to outside taps.
- ☐ Don't leave sprinklers on or water running - they can waste critical water pressure.
- ☐ Leave exterior lights on.
- ☐ Back your car into the garage to safely exit if you are evacuated. Shut car doors and roll up windows.
- ☐ Have a ladder available.
- ☐ Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.

### INDOOR CHECKLIST

- ☐ Shut all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked.
- ☐ Remove flammable window shades and/or curtains and close metal shutters.
- ☐ Move flammable furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- ☐ Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights.
- ☐ Keep your lights on so firefighters can see your house under smoky conditions.
- ☐ Shut off the air conditioning.

### IF YOU ARE TRAPPED: SURVIVAL TIPS

- ☐ Shelter away from outside walls.
- ☐ Patrol inside your home for spot fires and extinguish them.
- ☐ Wear long sleeves and long pants made of natural fibers such as cotton.
- ☐ Stay hydrated.
- ☐ Ensure you can exit the home if it catches fire (remember if it's hot inside the house it is four to five times hotter outside).
- ☐ After the fire has passed, check your roof and extinguish any fires, sparks or embers.
- ☐ Check inside the attic for hidden embers.
- ☐ Patrol your property and extinguish small fires.
- ☐ If there are fires that you cannot extinguish with a small amount of water or in a short period of time call 9-1-1.

# Six "P's" To Remember

Keep the six "P's" ready, in case an immediate evacuation is required:

- ❑ People and pets
- ❑ Papers, phone numbers, and important documents
- ❑ Prescriptions, vitamins, and eyeglasses
- ❑ Pictures and irreplaceable memorabilia
- ❑ Personal computers (information on hard drive and disks)
- ❑ "Plastic" (credit cards, ATM cards) and cash

# GO Early

By leaving early, you will give your household the best chance of surviving a wildfire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job.

Use this section and previous tips and tools to develop your own Personal Wildfire Action Plan

## WHEN TO GO

- ❑ Leave early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke, or road congestion.
- ❑ Don't wait to be told by authorities to leave. In an intense wildfire, there may not be time to knock on every door.
- ❑ If you are advised to leave, don't hesitate!
- ❑ If a Red Flag Alert is issued, leave early if possible.
- ❑ Evaluate possible fire situations with your household and determine at what point you will go.

## WHERE TO GO

- ❑ Leave to a predetermined emergency meeting location. This location should be located well outside of the fire risk area. Consider a friend or relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, a hotel, etc.
- ❑ Contact your out of area friend or relative and make them aware of your location.

## HOW TO GET THERE

- ❑ Determine routes of travel to get to your emergency meeting location.
- ❑ Make sure you develop more than one route of travel, in case one route is blocked by the fire or by emergency vehicles and equipment.
- ❑ Choose a route of travel well away from the fire.

## WHAT TO TAKE

- ❑ Take your disaster supply kit and your six "P's" items as outlined on page 9.
- ❑ Take all animals with you and make sure they are safely secured so they do not escape.
- ❑ Determine any additional items that are important for you to take.
- ❑ Organize your household members.

Write up your Personal Wildfire Action Plan and post it in a location where every member of your household can see it. Rehearse it with your household.

# Personal Wildfire Action Plan

During high fire hazard days or during a Red Flag Alert in your area, monitor your local media for information on brush fires and be ready to implement your plan.
Hot, dry, and windy conditions create the perfect environment for a wildfire.

## Your Plan

When to go: _____

_____

Where to go: _____

_____

How to get there: _____

_____

What to take: ☐ Insurance Papers ☐ Photos ☐ Prescriptions ☐ Important Documents ☐ "Plastic"/Cash

_____

Who to tell (before and after): _____

## Important Phone Numbers

Emergency: _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

School: _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

Household Members: _____ _____ _____

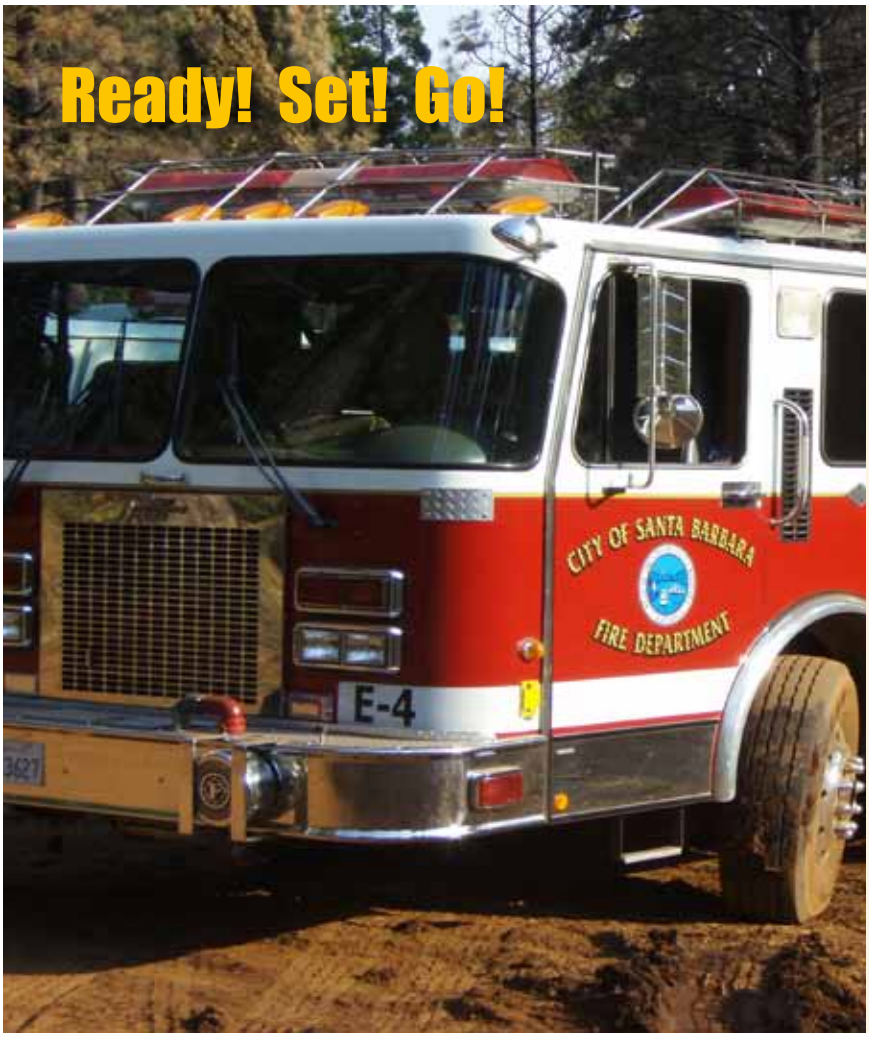
_____ _____ _____

Friends: _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

Animal Shelter: _____

**City of Santa Barbara, Fire Department**
If you have an emergency, call **911**
Office: **805-965-5254**
Web site: **www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Fire**




## Additional Resources On The Web

City of Santa Barbara Fire Department
http://www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Wildland

American Red Cross
http://www.redcross.org

Federal Emergency Management Agency
http://www.fema.gov/

Firewise Communities
http://www.firewise.org

California Fire Safe Council
http://www.firesafecouncil.org

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection - CAL FIRE
http://www.fire.ca.gov

California Department of Insurance
http://www.insurance.ca.gov

National Fire Protection Association
http://www.nfpa.org

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