

# The Safety Site

Recreational Safety takes Responsibility & Control

*This article was courtesy of yours truly, Newsletter Editor and Webmistress, Sandy Stocks.*

## WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF A HOME EVACUATION

Do you know what to do in case you have to evacuate your home (whether it be fire, flood, earthquake, transportation or commercial disasters, etc.)?

Well, it is fire season and this one hit close to home. On Friday, August 17, 2018, while housesitting for Club President, *Steve Kelly* and his realtor wife, *Mary Kelly*, I happened to glance out the window and noticed smoke, and a lot of it, just literally across the street. No one had shown up yet, but first responders were on their way to what appeared to be a brush fire. Winds were strong, going in a southeasterly direction. I immediately called Steve and Mary and they said to just get out and be safe, but if I had time, try to take their art work and their computer.

Fortunately, there was a bluegrass concert a few miles up the road at Bowers Mansion where I knew fellow Club Members, *Lynn Taylor-Wilbur* and *Cindy Lichty*, were camping. Within minutes, they were at the house and we were all loading both my vehicle and Cindy's in record time, all the while more and more emergency vehicles from Reno, Sparks and Truckee Meadows kept showing up.

While it was not my home, I felt responsible for it while the homeowners were away. Having a checklist readily available helps to control panic and enable you to leave with the valuable things you may need.

1. If you are housesitting, call the homeowners, if possible, and make them aware of the situation.
2. Have a grab-and-go kit prepared. Include essential supplies, such as water, food, and first-aid supplies.
3. Have copies of important papers. Keep these in a plastic, waterproof case. FYI, this stuff is priceless, because you may need to prove who you are and that you own your house.

Include:

- Your driver's license
- The deed to your house
- Proof of insurance
- Medical records
- Passports
- Social security cards
- A list of personal contacts

4. Safeguard pets. Make sure they are micro-chipped and have I.D. collars. Create your pet grab and go kits that include leashes, medications, meal bowls, and three days' worth of food and water. If it's not safe for you to stay, it's not safe for Fido. Make plans

to stay with friends or at a pet-friendly hotel — most emergency shelters will only accept service animals that assist people with disabilities.

5. Prep your yard. Maintain your trees and shrubs so diseased or weakened branches won't fall down and damage your property, making sure there is ample space between your property and dead brush. Remove any objects hanging on trees or your home's exterior, such as birdhouses and wind chimes — they can break off in high winds and cause serious damage. Bring inside anything that's not nailed down including lawn furniture, trashcans, toys, and garden equipment.

6. Know your utility shutoffs. Learn now how to safely shut off all utility services in your home. FEMA has tips for shutting off electricity, water, and gas. Note: To turn off gas, you may need a special wrench.

7. Stockpile sandbag materials. If you live in a flood-prone area, keep sandbags on hand or the materials to make them. It takes 100 sandbags to create a 1-foot-tall wall that's 20 feet long. If you're filling bags on the fly, two adults can create the wall in about an hour.

8. Protect windows. If you live in an area susceptible to hurricanes, install shutters that are rated to provide protection from windblown debris.

9. Button up and lock all doors and windows. Because crooks and looters take advantage of evacuations, lock all doors and windows and don't leave house keys in an obvious place, such as a mailbox. *Mary Kelly* suggested putting a Post-It note on all the *inside* of the doors for emergency personnel that says:

*"We have evacuated, your name, the current date and your contact phone number."*

10. If you are housesitting, take a piece of mail to verify to emergency personnel that you are staying at that residence and are allowed permission to re-enter the premise after safe.

Whether the order is voluntary or mandatory, if officials in your area tell you to evacuate, you should do so before things get worse. Although laws vary from area to area, you may receive a hefty fine or face a jail sentence if you don't follow a mandatory evacuation order. Failure to follow an evacuation order can place your life in danger by leaving you stranded in an area with no basic services or food and water.

When you return home after an emergency, don't use matches, lighters, or any sources of flame or spark until you're 100% certain that you don't have a natural gas leak inside your home — you'll need a gas company service technician to confirm that it's safe. Smartphone technology has made it easier to receive disaster alerts free of charge.

You'll automatically receive alerts if you have a phone capable of receiving Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and your wireless carrier participates in the program. To find out if your mobile device is capable of receiving WEA alerts, contact your mobile device carrier or visit CTIA - The Wireless Association. To sign up for regional alerts for Washoe County, go to: <https://www.washoecounty.us/em/RegionalAlerts.php>

I consider myself a fairly organized person, but was left virtually dumbfounded when considering what to take. Fortunately, Steve and Mary had a lot of these safeguards in place. It was a valuable lesson in what to do in case of a quick evacuation when

minutes may mean lives, and an easier resolution into getting your life “back to normal” when the dust settles!

*Source: Houselogic, made possible by Realtors®*