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## Fire Safe Occidental September 7, 2020 Newsletter



### Some good news before digging in....

Fire Safe Occidental was recently awarded a \$15,000 grant to ensure ALL area residents have green reflective address signs. This will improve fire and emergency responders to get to any of us in need. If you currently do not have one, please make sure you are on our list by contacting your neighborhood leader.

After learning how firefighters often get foot infections from long days in hot conditions, Fire Safe Occidental got Bombas to donate 500 silver-socks that inhibit infections for us to gift firefighters as a **thank you for their recent efforts**. We have been delivering them all week to local fire stations from Bodega to Guerneville and Goldridge to Forestville and all our surrounding areas.

## What have we learned?

The past few weeks have been frightful reminders that preparation is key to saving lives and property. In this newsletter, Fire Safe Occidental reviews some of the lessons learned over the past few years of fires, evacuations, even power outages--lessons gathered from you, our neighbors.

**1. When or if to evacuate?** People have different levels of risk tolerance--even within families. Since trauma from fire threats can last long past the evacuation, we recommend going with the needs of the person who feels most nervous or threatened. This may result in leaving early, before an evacuation is officially called.

**2. Understanding which areas are being evacuated has been confusing.** Although not perfect, the new County Zone designations can help you plan for a warning stage or a mandatory stage, as needed. If you do not know your Zone code you can find it by expanding this map to street level: [SoCo Incident Area Map with Zone Codes](#).

Memorize your zone code or write it on your "Go list".

**3. Planning for pets & large animals?** Dealing with pets and large animals can be difficult and time-consuming. Be sure you have Go-bag necessities for your pets, and allow plenty of time to round the animals up and put them into your vehicle/trailer. More information and an open meeting with experts coming soon, so stay tuned.

**4. Have you planned options on where you will go?** If you need to make a hotel/motel reservation, call before you leave. Most places within an hour or more away will be booked up by the time you arrive. Camping equipment may come in handy. The people who were least impacted by traffic and multiple sequential evacuations were those who went to the coast, especially in situations when you can go north, where you are more likely to find campsites available.

**5. Check in with your neighbors and a contact out of the area.** Before evacuating, if possible, let other people know where you are heading and learn where others are going. Coordination is key to an easier time away.

**6. Expect traffic or leave early.** Traffic jams are most likely on all major streets through Sebastopol, and throughout Santa Rosa where streets lead to the 101 on-ramps. Traffic can be slow on all major routes into Petaluma from the north and west. While zone designations may help stagger the traffic flow problems, your best solution is to leave early rather than wait.

**7. Information is ridiculously hard to find sometimes.** It is important to know where to find information, before you need it.

a. Stay actively informed. SoCo and Nixle Alerts are critical but don't only depend on getting the alerts. Not all areas receive equally good reception from all sources. Know the alert signals and use all possible redundancy to be sure you are aware of

any problem. (Unfortunately, the test proposed for September 3rd was rescheduled due to the fires.)

b. The best source of current local news was radio station KSRO: 1350 AM, 103.5 FM. Again, this year, the radio station was the best source of information. A battery-powered radio is highly recommended.

c. Lynda Hopkins put out regular updates with detailed information that was very useful.

d. If you still have one, you may want to keep your land-line phone that isn't dependent on wi-fi. Cell phone towers do not have adequate back-up power for an extended power outage.

e. For other info sources, see links below.

**8. Trying to do everything once the threat of fire is upon you isn't possible; have a regular routine to keep your home as defensible as possible.** It's vital to keep leaves and debris cleared away from your gutters, remove flammable objects from around your home, and know where you will move last minute things like outdoor furniture cushions. Have a regular outside cleaning routine all summer and into the fall. The more home hardening you have done, the less you will stress about leaving your home during an evacuation.

**9. Little things make a big difference.** Keep your car's gas tank filled or electrical charge full during fire season. Make sure that you know how to open your garage door and gates manually. And all through fire season park facing out so you don't

have to navigate backing up in the dark or in smoke, or even just while under the stress of evacuating.

**10. Conserve water for firefighting.** You may want to saturate the area around your home, but turn off the water before evacuating. Water needs to be conserved for firefighting.

Lastly, here are some excellent sources of maps for evacuation and fire locations are:

- [SoCo Fire Incident & Evacuation Areas](#)
- [State Level Fire Incidents](#)
- [FIRMS - Fire Information for Resource Management System](#)

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## Two Reminders

1. You can get a FREE property assessment from Fire Safe Sonoma to get good tips on the most effective ways to keep your home from igniting in a fire. Many Occidental residents have given FSO positive feedback from these. Contact [Firesafe.sonoma.org@gmail.com](mailto:Firesafe.sonoma.org@gmail.com) to apply.

2. Continue improving your defensible space! Sonoma County will be back in our area for FREE chipping at the end of September/beginning of October. Learn more at [PERMIT SONOMA - Chipper Program Guidelines](#). Once you have submitted the address of your piles to the county, please send your info to [carolynsell@gmail.com](mailto:carolynsell@gmail.com) so we can ensure that everyone's piles get chipped.

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**Make sure you sign up for these important notification services:**



[SoCo Alert Signup](#)



[NIXLE Signup](#)

## **Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) - No registration required**

Urgent alerts sent as text-like messages to your mobile phone based on your location (you will only receive notification if you are in the area of the emergency). WEAs have three alert categories-- Imminent Threat, AMBER, Presidential. This system of the Federal Communications Commission works exclusively by sending a text message to your cell phone, much like an Amber Alert. A WEA message is accompanied by a special warning tone. To activate this alert, make sure your cell phone settings are set up to accept these emergency and public safety alerts.

[WEA FCC Information](#)

**Our recommended NOAA Weather Radio**



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