



Public awareness and public education for disaster risk reduction: key messages

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Strategy 2020 voices the collective determination of the IFRC to move forward in tackling the major challenges that confront humanity in the next decade. Informed by the needs and vulnerabilities of the diverse communities with whom we work, as well as the basic rights and freedoms to which all are entitled, this strategy seeks to benefit all who look to Red Cross Red Crescent to help to build a more humane, dignified and peaceful world.

Over the next ten years, the collective focus of the IFRC will be on achieving the following strategic aims:

1. **Save lives, protect livelihoods and strengthen recovery from disasters and crises**
2. **Enable healthy and safe living**
3. **Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace**

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B.

Key hazard-specific messages

This section is divided into key messages for six specific types of hazard:

- **drought**
- **earthquakes**
- **floods**
- **pandemics**
- **tropical cyclones**
- **wildfires.**

These are intended to supplement the general key messages provided in Section A.



Key messages for WILDFIRES

Please note that the foundation messages are contained in *Key Messages for All-Hazards Household and Family Disaster Planning*. Separate messages are also available for earthquakes, floods, pandemics, tropical cyclones, and wildfires.

Like all fires, a wildfire (also known as a forest fire, brushfire or bushfire) requires three ingredients: oxygen, heat and fuel. A wildfire is a large, uncontrolled and potentially destructive fire that spreads quickly and may change direction or jump across gaps. Wildfires can affect rural and urban areas, and can start in just seconds, sparked by a range of natural causes (for example, lightning) or human carelessness (such as a discarded cigarette). The spread of wildfires depends on the topography, the fuel available, and the weather. Dry vegetation and abundant or uncleared dead wood are an enormous source of deadly fuel. A small fire can become a rapidly spreading inferno in a matter of minutes – particularly in windy conditions.

Although they can have some ecologically beneficial effects on forest and wilderness areas, wildfires can cause extensive damage. The impacts include death, injury and property damage, loss of shelter and livelihood, disruption of lifeline infrastructure and destruction of community. They may also result in adverse environmental consequences, such as loss of wild habitats, threats to biodiversity, land degradation and increased risk of erosion. Meanwhile, the chemicals used to fight the fires can pollute natural water sources.

ASSESS AND PLAN

KEY MESSAGES	CONTEXT-SPECIFIC DETAILS
Regularly inspect your home and property for fire hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about the risks and potential impacts of severe tropical storms that can impact your location (especially winds, storm surge and flooding).
Report hazardous conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If evacuation is necessary, work with your network to determine various transportation options. If you do not know the different options, ask your local emergency manager about plans for people without private vehicles, or for anyone requiring assistance. Make sure everyone in your household knows where to go if they have to leave the area.
Make your property for fire teams to easily find and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with your community to identify safe local cyclone shelter locations for anyone who will need them. Make sure each household member knows the location and route to the agreed shelter.

MITIGATE RISKS: physical or environmental

KEY MESSAGES	CONTEXT-SPECIFIC DETAILS
Prevent wildfires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never discard cigarette butts on the ground. • Never leave an outside fire unattended. • Always ensure that campfires are completely extinguished after use. • Clear outdoor areas of broken glass which can reflect sunlight and start a fire. • Dispose of glass bottles in closed recycling bins.
Select a safe location for your building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on level ground. Fire spreads more rapidly even on minor slopes. • Set single-storey structures at least 10m (30ft) from any ridge or cliff. For taller buildings, increase the distance. • Ensure that there is enough distance between buildings, following local or international standards (see Sphere standards for emergency shelter).
Design, build and maintain your structures with wildfires in mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant low-flammability landscaping to reduce fuel for a wildfire. • Design and construct buildings to limit their flammability. • Use fire-resistant or non-combustible building materials whenever possible. • For roofing, use terracotta, clay, metal, slate, cement, or asphalt (Class A), tiles. • For exterior walls, use stucco or masonry rather than vinyl or wood. • Treat wood or combustible materials with fire retardant. • Use only thick, tempered safety glass in large windows and sliding glass doors. • Install electrical lines underground if possible. • Install and maintain a lightning rod. • Install spark arrestors in chimneys to prevent large particles from escaping and starting a fire. • Provide at least two ground-level doors, for easy and safe exit, and two means of escape from each room (doors or windows).
Clear flammable materials away from your property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly clean roofs and gutters, removing twigs, dead leaves, needles and other debris. • Remove all dead wood and dense vegetation within at least 7m (30ft) around your home. • Prune trees and shrubs so that the lowest limbs are 2–3m (6–10ft) from the ground. • Dispose of cuttings and debris. • Avoid using wooden lawn furniture.
Maintain water sources for fire fighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an irrigation system. • Identify and maintain outside water sources such as ponds, cisterns, wells, swimming pools and hydrants. • Keep hoses long enough to reach any part of any buildings. • Create a separate pump hydrant or use swimming-pool circulation pumps for dowsing properties. • Install freeze-proof exterior water outlets on two sides of the home and additional outlets 15m (50ft) from home for fire fighters to use.
Take precautions with flammable materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid open burning, especially during fire season. • Site above-ground propane tanks at least 9m (30ft) from buildings. • Dispose of ashes in a metal bucket, saturate them in water for two days, then bury them in mineral soil.

PREPARE TO RESPOND: develop skills and store provisions

KEY MESSAGES	CONTEXT-SPECIFIC DETAILS
Plan and practise two ways out of your neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan a secondary way out in case your primary escape route is blocked.
Monitor conditions, stay informed, listen to the radio and follow instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to local radio and television regularly for updated information and instructions. Stay in touch with neighbours if possible.
Respond to early warnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay alert for emergency warnings and respond to them immediately. Know the alarm system that will be used, and practise your response. If you are advised to evacuate, leave immediately. Take your pets or service animals with you. Call your out-of-area contact to notify them where you will be going.
Leave if you think you should, or if authorities tell you to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are advised to evacuate, or if you think you are in danger, evacuate immediately. The fire may move too fast for officials to issue evacuation orders. If you are not trained and equipped to fight a wildfire, don't risk your life. Leave right away: delay could be deadly. Make sure all fire tools are outside and easy to access.
Protect your animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you have livestock or horses, sweep hay and other combustible feed away from the barn or stable. Close windows and doors to prevent embers from entering buildings. Consider opening barn doors and corrals to let animals escape.
Confine pets and service animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confine pets and service animals to one room. If you are evacuating with animals, leave early.
Keep your vehicle fuel tank full and ready to go	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face your vehicle in the direction of escape. Shut your car doors and close the windows. Have your key ready, or leave it in the ignition.
Wear protective clothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear sturdy shoes, long cotton or woollen trousers/pants, long-sleeved shirts and gloves. Carry a damp handkerchief to protect your face. Carry wet towels to cover your head or bare skin or to wrap your feet, in case you need to run through small area of fire.
Prepare your home for a fire, if you have time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shut off the gas at the meter. Close the valves on propane tanks. Open fireplace dampers. Close windows, vents, doors, blinds and non-combustible window coverings. Use wet cloths to block any other openings. Remove lightweight or combustible window coverings. Move combustible furniture to the centre of the home away from windows and doors. Place in a pool or pond any valuables that will not be damaged by water. Remove combustible items from around the home. Connect hoses to outside taps. Gather your fire tools.

B. Key messages for wildfires

<p>If your area has a 'stay or go' policy, and if you are trained, you may decide to stay</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you plan to stay, make sure that you keep and know how to use fire suppression tools, including a rake, an axe, a handsaw or chainsaw, a bucket, a shovel, a ladder and sand buckets. • You may have to fight small fires before professional help arrives. • Remember that normal water pressure may not be available to you.
<p>If you are trapped by fire, crouch in a pond, river or pool</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is no body of water nearby, look for shelter in a cleared area among a bed of rocks. Lie flat, face down and cover you body with soil. Breathe air close to the ground. • You cannot outrun a fire.
<p>After a wildfire be aware of hazards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look out for smouldering hot spots or items, and be alert to the possibility of re-ignition. • Beware of hazards such as burnt trees and power poles or fallen wires and ash pits. • Seek permission before re-entering the area. • Check for damage and stay out of damaged buildings.
<p>After a wildfire, take precautions while cleaning your property</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize health risks from hazardous materials such as toxic fumes from substances in garden sheds or garages, burnt asbestos and fine dust particles. Hold a damp cloth over your face to minimize and filter air-borne particles. • Keep children away from clean-up sites. • Minimize the health risks from breathing dust particles by wetting any debris, and using a two-strap dust particulate mask, coveralls, leather gloves, and heavy-soled shoes during clean-up. • Use rubber gloves when cleaning. • Check for assistance when cleaning up and disposing of hazardous materials.

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The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

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