

# Ready, Set, Go!

for Law Enforcement



In the event of a wildland fire that leads to evacuations or traffic control, **your role as a law enforcement official is critical**. The Ready, Set, Go! Program seeks to assist you with preparing for your responsibilities in evacuation with the following recommendations:

## *Ready* - Understand & Address the Wildland Fire Threat

### Basic fire behavior

#### **Radiant heat**

This occurs most often when homes are close to each other causing house-to-house ignition.

#### **Convected heat**

Hot air/smoke travels upwards which causes smoke and heat to impact houses at the top of a hill or canyon; this could put officers in such an area at risk.

#### **Flying embers**

Embers may travel long distances ahead of the flames causing spot fires and rapid spread. Officers must be on the lookout for spot fires, particularly along escape routes.

### Arson investigations

Arson is one of the most difficult crimes to prosecute. Usually to convince a jury, the evidence must show the defendant at the scene of the crime initiating the fire. Crime scene preservation and witness interviews are paramount for success, as with other types of crime. The difficulty in these cases is the physical evidence is very delicate and fleeting.

### Basic ICS and how law enforcement fits in

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a modular organization system that can be scaled as needed to fit the incident demands. The first-in officer (fire or law enforcement) becomes the initial incident commander (IC) until relieved by a higher qualified person. The IC sets the stage to establish command and tactics. The law enforcement discipline can become a Law Branch working for the Operations Sections Chief or become part of Unified Command depending upon the incident dynamics. It is also important to understand local evacuation terminology and procedures. A successful organization cross trains with all incident partners before an actual incident.



An important concept to implement during any wildfire operation is known as **LCES**. This stands for:

**Lookouts    Communications    Escape Routes    Safety Zones**



# Set

## - Establish situational awareness for yourself and your community

### **Be aware of pending weather situations**

During warm and dry conditions, designations such as Red Flag days indicate there will be low humidity and higher winds that will accelerate fire spread, if a fire starts.



### **Basic PPE (masks, water, goggles)**

Is your vehicle fueled up in case you are sent to a remote area? Do you have a simple bandana and goggles? Are you hydrated? You should expect to be alone and self-dependent while performing traffic control or evacuations. Remember, your vehicle may provide temporary protection from the fire (typically shelter from ember is not the issue, it is from brief periods of intense heat.)

### **What to do if first on-scene**

If you are first on scene of a wildfire, report the fire, always ensure life safety (yours and the public), protect the area where the fire started and note people and fire conditions for the investigation, use your Body Worn Camera to document the scene. Order appropriate resources and establish traffic control.

### **Ensure communications and an overwatch**

Do not rely on communications as cell towers often lose power. Your mobile radio is your best option, but learn what frequencies you should monitor and transmit on if

needed. It is important that the incident establish a law safety officer or overwatch that can relay changing conditions to law enforcement resources from the incident.

### **Know your area**

Drive your assigned area and become familiar with road conditions. Note dead-end roads and look for primary and secondary escape routes because smoke may greatly reduce visibility, hampering your ability to escape safely.

Some communities have identified people with special needs in the area. They may require additional evacuation direction or assistance.

Some agencies have developed procedures for tagging/flagging addresses to indicate if the property is vacant or the owner is staying. This procedure helps to focus rescue efforts if the fire impacts that area. Learn your local procedures.

### **Public updates**

The public is hungry for information. Law enforcement and fire organizations are trusted entities to convey the urgency of the situation, so stay informed and provide factual information as approved by the IC. Keep updated on evacuation zones and where mass care facilities are located. Tell the public to be ready to go!

# Go!

## - Facilitate evacuation of the public

### **Evacuation**

As a wildfire is being controlled, residents will want to re-enter their property. Use your involvement in the ICS to develop a re-entry plan that will ensure the public's safety prior to allowing public entry.

### **Get out now!**

Understand the difference between a general (public) evacuation order where you may assist residents and an order for you to abandon evacuation efforts. Be sure to follow your local jurisdictions evacuation procedures. If you find conditions untenable, GO now! Once out of the hazard zone; reassess yourself, your vehicle and ensure the safety of the public.

### **What to do if caught in the fire?**

Flying embers may cause spot fires ahead of your location trapping you. You may also become disorientated by smoke conditions which can also affect your breathing and visibility. Driving through fire/smoke may not be viable so consider your options. Communicate your situation/location and if you cannot escape, consider sheltering in place until the fire front passes. Your vehicle or a non-flammable structure may be your safe refuge. Keep your vehicle running with the air conditioning on in recirculate mode, as it may not restart. Turn on overhead lights when driving through smoke.



**Learn more about wildland preparedness!**

Visit [www.wildlandfireRSG.org](http://www.wildlandfireRSG.org) or [www.iafc.org/wildland](http://www.iafc.org/wildland)

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