



WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT

Immediate Safety Guide for Wildfire or Earthquake

altadenafiresafe.org

Our Mission

The **Altadena Fire Safe Council** is working to reduce wildfire risk across our community through GIS-informed planning, science-based integrated vegetation management and regenerative land stewardship. We will pursue Firewise USA® neighborhood recognition by educating our community about home hardening, defensible space design, soil restoration and native plant landscaping.



Charity On Top (EIN #81-1198370) is a California-registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation and is the official fiscal sponsor for the Altadena Fire Safe Council.

Equipment & Safety Disclaimer

The products featured on this site and pdf are provided for educational and informational purposes only. Altadena Fire Safe Council is not affiliated with or endorsed by any manufacturer listed unless explicitly stated. Product specifications, availability, and performance may change without notice. Users are responsible for reviewing manufacturer instructions, safety warnings, and regulatory requirements before purchase or use. Certain equipment — including generators, fuel-powered devices, respirators, and radio communication devices — may require training, proper ventilation, or licensing.

Some radios (e.g., Baofeng UV-5R) operate on licensed frequencies regulated by the FCC. Users are responsible for obtaining any required licenses and following all federal, state, and local regulations. Improper use can result in fines, interference with emergency communications, or other penalties.

Preparedness recommendations on this site and pdf are general in nature and are not a substitute for professional advice, official emergency guidance, or manufacturer instructions. In an emergency, always follow directions from local authorities.

For more information on FCC regulations for amateur radio, visit: **FCC – Amateur Radio Service** ([fcc.gov/licensing](https://www.fcc.gov/licensing))

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Immediate Safety Guide: Wildfire and Earthquake

When disaster strikes, your first decisions matter most. Immediate safety is about protecting life first, property second. The following actions are organized by event type and priority. Reliable communication is one of the most important components of emergency preparedness. During emergencies widespread power outages and cell networks can become overloaded and electricity may be unavailable for hours or even days. The best preparedness strategy is redundancy—having several ways to receive alerts, communicate locally, and power your devices.

PART 1: Immediate Safety During a Wildfire or Earthquake When the Lights Go Out	
Essential Emergency Communication Supplies (No Electricity Required)	NOAA Weather & Emergency Radios A NOAA weather radio is one of the most important emergency tools you can own. These radios receive official alerts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, including wildfire warnings, evacuation notices, earthquake updates, and severe weather alerts. Many models also include hand cranks, solar charging, flashlights, and USB ports for charging phones, ensuring you can stay informed even when the power grid is down.
	Handheld Two-Way Radios (Walkie Talkies) When cell towers fail, two-way radios allow communication with neighbors, family members, and block captains within a few miles. These are useful for neighborhood wildfire response networks or coordinating evacuation logistics.
	Portable Power Banks A high-capacity battery bank ensures that smartphones, radios, and flashlights remain operational when the grid fails. Look for models with at least 20,000 mAh capacity, which can recharge a smartphone several times.
	Foldable Solar Panels Solar panels allow you to generate electricity when the outage lasts multiple days. Compact foldable panels can recharge phones, radios, and battery banks during daylight hours.
	Neighborhood Alert Tools If digital communications fail entirely, manual signaling tools help alert neighbors quickly, especially during wildfire evacuations.
	Recommended Emergency Communication Kit
	☐ NOAA emergency weather radio ☐ Two handheld walkie-talkies
	☐ High-capacity battery bank ☐ Foldable solar charger
	☐ Charging cables for all devices ☐ Headlamp or flashlight
	☐ Air horn for signaling neighbors ☐ Printed emergency contact list
	☐ NOAA emergency weather radio ☐ Local radio station frequencies
If the electricity goes out your ability to receive reliable information becomes critical. Immediately switch to battery-powered or hand-crank devices such as a NOAA weather radio, emergency radio, or a fully charged smartphone connected to a portable power bank. Check local emergency alerts and official notification systems for evacuation orders or safety updates. Conserve phone battery by lowering screen brightness, closing unused apps, and using text messaging instead of calls when possible. Keeping multiple backup power sources and radios in your emergency kit ensures you can stay informed and make safe decisions even when the grid is down.	

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PART 2: Immediate Safety During a Wildfire	
Wildfires present two primary dangers: fire spread and smoke inhalation . Even if flames are not visible, smoke can be life-threatening.	
Monitor Official Alerts Immediately	☐ Check emergency notifications and evacuation orders.
	☐ Follow local fire department and emergency management updates.
	☐ Do not rely solely on social media rumors.
	If a mandatory evacuation order is issued — leave immediately.
If You Are Ordered to Shelter in Place: Secure the Structure and Prepare for Rapid Evacuation	☐ Close and lock all windows and exterior doors.
	☐ Close fireplace dampers.
	☐ Turn HVAC systems to “recirculate.”
	☐ Keep car fueled and parked facing outward.
	☐ Place go-bags near the exit.
	☐ Keep shoes and flashlights accessible.
Protect Your Air Smoke inhalation can cause respiratory distress and eye and throat irritation	☐ Designate one room as a clean air room.
	☐ Run HEPA air purifier continuously.
	☐ Avoid burning candles or cooking with gas.
	☐ Wear N95/P100 mask if indoor air declines.
If Fire Approaches Your Property	☐ Call emergency services immediately.
	☐ Leave if safe evacuation is still possible.
	☐ Do NOT attempt to fight large advancing flames.
	☐ Put pets in their crates to keep them safe during evacuation
Lives are always more valuable than possessions.	

PART 3: Immediate Safety During an Earthquake	
Earthquakes happen without warning. The first 60 seconds are critical.	
During Shaking: Drop, Cover, Hold On	☐ Drop to hands and knees.
	☐ Cover your head and neck under sturdy furniture.
	☐ Hold On until shaking stops.
	☐ DO NOT: run outside during shaking.
	☐ DO NOT: stand in doorways (modern structures do not require this).
	☐ DO NOT: use elevators.
	☐ IF IN BED: stay there.
	☐ IF IN BED: cover your head with a pillow.
Immediately After Shaking Stops	Check for Injuries
	☐ Treat bleeding immediately.
	☐ Use first aid supplies if needed.
	☐ Call emergency services for severe injury.
	Check for Hazards
	☐ Look for sparks or exposed wiring.
	☐ If safe, turn off the power at the panel.
	☐ Stay away from fallen or hanging wires. Report immediately.
	☐ Do not touch wet or damaged electrical equipment.
	☐ Watch for structural damage.
	☐ Extinguish small fires if safe.
	☐ Smell for gas leaks.
	☐ IF YOU SMELL GAS: Turn off gas supply (if trained)
	☐ IF YOU SMELL GAS: Do NOT use matches or turn on lights.
	☐ IF YOU SMELL GAS: Leave the building and call authorities.
Prepare for Aftershocks Aftershocks can occur minutes or days later.	☐ Stay away from damaged areas.
	☐ Keep shoes on to avoid debris injuries.
	☐ Keep flashlight nearby.
	☐ Avoid re-entering heavily damaged structures.

PART 3: Immediate Safety During an Earthquake (cont.)

If Utilities Are Down	☐ Use battery-powered lighting only.
	☐ Keep refrigerator closed.
	☐ Conserve phone battery, use battery backup sparingly.
	☐ Listen to emergency radio for instructions.
	☐ Never use: Propane heaters indoors
	☐ Never use: Charcoal grills indoors
	☐ Never use: Gas generators inside or in garages
	Carbon monoxide is silent and deadly.
Universal Immediate Priorities (Wildfire or Earthquake)	
1. Protect Life	☐ Ensure everyone is accounted for.
	☐ Assist children, the elderly, and pets.
2. Eliminate Immediate Hazards	☐ Fire
	☐ Gas Leaks
	☐ Structural Collapse
	☐ Toxic Air
2. Prepare for Escalation	☐ Stay informed.
	☐ Keep evacuation route clear.
	☐ Have essential supplies accessible.

