

Tips from a Santa Rosa family who lost their home to fire!

Recently I spoke with a Coe resident who learned some valuable Must Do's from a Santa Rosa man I'll call Jeff, whose home burned down in the big fires of 2017.

- 1) **have a tiered evacuation plan.** In Santa Rosa, Jeff's home went from not being threatened to being on fire in 15 minutes !!!! His wife and daughter literally barely had time to get themselves and their pets out in time! Our local experience with the Klamathon fire gave a longer period of many hours to days between fire alert and evacuation. But clearly, anything can happen, so consider this cautionary tale carefully. Jeff recommends having a "Go Bag" you can carry with the absolute essentials: meds, a few clothes, water, snacks, copies of important documents. Grab and literally get out now! Then have a secondary plan if you have an hour or more to pack items into your vehicle. Also, keep your vehicles' fuel tanks filled during summer months so that you have plenty of fuel, even if heavy traffic slows you down.
- 2) **at a minimum, have a video record of all your belongings.** Begin with a simple video using your phone of all the rooms in your home and other buildings. Then if you have a free hour, pull out all the pots and pans in the kitchen and take a photo. In this more detailed way, survey all your possessions room by room. One must list every single item in the home for insurance, which Jeff said was both difficult and painful.
- 3) **have a cell phone contact system** - Jeff advises that in an emergency outgoing calls get bogged down and shut down. Assign a family member /friend elsewhere to CALL IN to you. Incoming calls are more likely to get through. Then that family/friend serves as the distributor of information to the rest of the family/friend network.
- 4) **know your fire safe's rating and be prepared to have that system fail.** His was rated to 1500F for several hours (not sure the details) but everything inside it burned.
- 5) **review your fire coverage and rebuilding coverage in detail with your insurance agent.** Jeff thought he had very sufficient coverage for rebuilding but there was a sneaky part that didn't account for rebuilding to current building codes. He is on the hook for 50% of the rebuild that concerns upgrading what was the prior residence's structure to modern code.

Residents, I hope you find these real-life lessons helpful and you move ahead with emergency preparations! ~ Lisa Buttrey