

Published November 29th, 2017

## Be fire evacuation ready, Lamorinda

By Cathy Dausman



These 'go-bags' include jackets, sturdy shoes, flashlights and other items. Photos Cathy Dausman

Napa working as a Medical Reserve Corps shelter volunteer at both Crosswalk Community Church and Napa Valley College. He saw firsthand how difficult it was, especially for senior evacuees, who fled sometimes literally in their underwear. They hadn't time to collect their medicines or even medical necessities like oxygen tanks, "the stuff it takes to live," as Seibert describes it. In response, Seibert decided to put together a comprehensive checklist of fire evacuation tips, something he said took only a couple of hours to develop and a couple of days to vet through local police, fire and county medical agencies.

"It's gotten positive reviews," he says, noting that none of these tips are new but having them all in one place is helpful. And although the checklist is designed for a population leaving in advance of fire, it is thorough enough that the information can be useful for any type of evacuation.

The first thing to realize is that the advance "to do" list is twice as long as the actual evacuation checklist, and it covers a host of topics, from packing to document prep, communications, neighbor relations and providing help for what Seibert calls the "vulnerable population" - individuals with access or functional needs.

An access and functional needs designation describes, among others, those who have physical disabilities, as well as seniors, children and limited English speakers. The state's Office of Emergency Services website posts detailed information online.

The first step before a possible evacuation is to assemble a go-bag for each family member. This bag should include practical clothing like sturdy shoes, jacket and hat, a flashlight, toiletry kit and glasses. Pack a bag for your pets, too, being sure to include food, a leash, medication and even a picture of your pet. Both dogs and cats need to be microchipped. Bring a kennel if possible.

Scan personal documents to store in electronic form. Seibert says these should include title papers, mortgage information and insurance policies as well as personal identification like your driver's license, social security information and passport, and medical information. Transfer it to a zip drive, a CD or upload it to the cloud. Having this makes it easier to get help after the fact from government and private agencies at local assistance centers.

Evacuation plans are all about planning ahead. Know your neighbors, especially the vulnerable ones. Download apps like Nixle (text your zip code to 888777) and the county Community Warning System on your smartphone; designate an out-of-state telephone contact and program that person's number into each family member's cell phone.

When red flag warnings are posted, the focus shifts from packing to taking action. Ensure your gas tank is full, and pack the car with go-bags, water and medications. Park in the driveway, not in the garage. When power is out, garage doors become heavy and difficult to open quickly or easily. Park cars facing the street and open any driveway gates.

Gather your electronic devices, keep them charged and take them with you as you leave the house. Notify your out of state contact when you leave, via text, and notify them and local authorities of any missing or located family members. If cell phone service is not available monitor a local NOAA weather radio (that's channel 162.425 in Contra Costa County) or a local commercial radio station like KCBS (740 AM) or KQED (88.5 FM) for up-to-date information. Turn your outside lights on; leave your water sprinklers off (their use

Spoiler alert: this story lacks the usual focus on decorating, home improvement or remodeling. Instead, it is about leaving your home in a hurry - and perhaps never coming back.

Although Lamorindans have much to be thankful for this November they have also been alarmed by the number and ferocity of last month's North Bay fires and the effect it has had on friends, family and familiar locales a mere 50 miles to the north.

Conversations in person and on social media have ranged from "What can we do?" to "How do we do it?"

Even if your family never has to evacuate ahead of a disaster, having a plan in place can help you manage that possibility and insure a more positive outcome.

Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team program manager Duncan Seibert recently spent time in

reduces available water pressure for fire agencies). "Be ready to go," Seibert says "and don't think twice."

Search for additional information and sign up

- For the full listing of evacuation tips from Lamorinda CERT, go online to

<https://lamorindacert.org/documents/Evacuation%20Tips.pdf>

- For pet welfare emergency preparedness, see

<http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1117/print/Pet-emergency-preparedness.html>

- AFN info at State Office of Emergency Services:

<http://www.caloes.ca.gov/for-individuals-families/access-functional-needs>).

- Ready, Set, Go! Wildland fire preparedness:

<http://www.wildlandfirersg.org/>

- Contra Costa County Community Warning System:

<https://cwsalerts.com/>

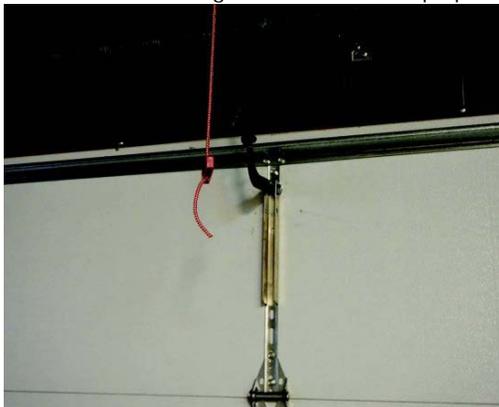
- Nixle: [www.nixle.com](http://www.nixle.com)

- Weather radio information:

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/coverage/ccov.php?State=CA>



Be sure to have chargers accessible for laptops and smartphones.



Make sure your garage door opens manually Photos Cathy Dausman



Besides cloud storage, media selection to store scanned documents

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