

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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December Gardening Guide with Cynthia Brian ...read on page D9

Be fire evacuation ready, Lamorinda

By Cathy Dausman



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

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 Napa working as a Medical Reserve Corps shelter volunteer at both Crosswalk Community Church and Napa Val-

ley 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.

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Be sure to have chargers accessible for laptops and smartphones.