

Woodside Ranch

FIRE NEWSLETTER



February 3, 2020

New Mexico Wildfire--Lessons Learned by Shari Adams

Shari Adams is a Woodside Road resident who kindly wrote up details from her family's experiences with wildfire in New Mexico to enhance our preparation for wildfire in Woodside Ranch.

We lived for 30 years in Los Alamos, NM and experienced many fires. The worst was Cerro Grande in 2000. -It began as a Park Service prescribed burn and grew out of control-when winds picked up. Two hundred structures burned, affecting 300 families.

When the Los Alamos town site was evacuated many folks went to White Rock, effectively almost doubling our population. White Rock is built around a loop road with streets feeding onto it; the loop and all other arteries feed into one road going down the mountain. We got the call to evacuate about 1 a.m. and started loading the cars with items chosen in previous discussion of this possibility. It turns out we had plenty of time, as the loop road traffic was bumper-to-bumper and we had no chance to back out of our garage until 6 a.m.!



Another fire we witnessed personally was Las Conchas. We saw a fire vehicle heading toward a little plume of smoke as

we drove to a picnic spot on the mountain. Half an hour later, the wind came up and transformed that wisp into a 150,000 acre fire which threatened the town site. -

Shari's Lessons Learned:

- Fires can blow up fast.
- Fire mitigation works. In general, on any given street in the burn area, houses with untended pine needles and conifers growing too close burned; properties where needles were cleared and a defensive space was created survived.
- Documenting your home and possessions makes a difference. Backing up insurance claims of loss works much more easily with photographs or video of all room contents, including shots of open drawers, cabinets and closets.
- If you don't need immediate access, it is safer to have important documents in a bank box and/or out of town with a trusted person. Copies in multiple locations can benefit claimants if your bank in town burns to the ground.
- As soon as you know about danger, consult your quick packing list that you should have made beforehand. Assemble everything you need, including your go bag, in a central location. Time to pack and leave can be incredibly brief.
- Keep your vehicle's gas tank at least half full.
- Have a plan for animals. After Cerro Grande, I asked a friend if she had any trouble getting her cats into their kennels and into the car and she said, "Well, the first one was easy...."
- If there are delays, stay calm; everyone is in the same boat. Help your neighbors.
- If you are evacuated, be aware when watching news that television footage of disasters can be dramatic for the sake of attracting viewers. It will be an anxious situation with no need to make it worse worrying about things you cannot control. Stay positive and help others keep their spirits up by keeping routines as normal as possible with special sensitivity to children in communicating plans for evacuation.

- Do not pass along rumors and do make sure any information shared is from an official source.
- Its just "stuff." If you have to leave, leave, and don't wait for an evacuation order. After Cerro Grande, we all realized that once we had essentials in the car, anything else we could live without. You'd better believe a whole lot of de-cluttering happened when we got home.

Coming soon to our Woodside Ranch Homeowners

Fire-Newsletter:

Useful information on evacuation will be delivered in digestible installments of probably a couple of pages each time. In the meantime, **start forming your plan for a spring cleanup once again enabled by a Deschutes County grant just awarded to Woodside Ranch!** Details will follow soon.

If you have comments or suggestions for future newsletters please email them to board@woodsideranch.net or to Helen Webre at hwebre@bendcable.com