

RED FLAG WARNINGS

What Are They?

Red Flag Warning alerts occur when conditions for wildfire risk are at the highest. They are Issued by the National Weather Service. State and local news usually announce them 24-48 hours in advance, via TV, radio, phone, and email, so there is enough time to act on short-term preparations. Red Flag Warning definitions below are very important to know.

Fire Weather Watch:

- One level below a Red Flag Warning but fire danger is still high.
- Extreme weather conditions are forecasted for the next 12-72 hours.

Red Flag Warning:

- Critical fire weather conditions are expected during the next 24 hours with a *combination* of:
 - low relative humidity (18%-28%)
 - warm temperatures (over 75 degrees F)
 - strong winds (gusts to 35mph)
 - dry fuels and dry lightning strikes add to the danger level
- 'Santa Ana' winds occur in southern CA; northern CA calls them Diablo winds.
- Get prepared to evacuate!

Particularly Dangerous Situation (PDS)

- Warns of the highest risk of wildfire.
- A PDS is for areas already under red-flag warnings. These warnings are issued when conditions are present or expected to combine to increase the risk of fire.

Understand the different in these terms

- **Evacuation Warning** - evacuate asap but take a short delay to gather your things and prepare your home. Always leave if you feel unsafe.
- **Evacuation Order** - leave right now. Evacuate immediately. Do not delay in gathering your belongings and preparing your home.
- **Shelter in place** - stay in your current location or find a safe place. May be required when evacuation is not necessary or is too dangerous.

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Things You Can Do *BEFORE* Red Flag Warning is Issued

- Make an evacuation plan and checklist; collect all necessary supplies:
 - know where you're going to go and what routes are available.
 - keep checklist of pre-evacuation steps visible – near the front door, on the refrigerator, or next to garage door opener

- Know which City AND County evacuation zones you are in. City zones for Oakmont are:

- Oakmont North
- Oakmont South
- Stone Bridge

Note: The "Pythian" zone, which is in Santa Rosa city limits, does not refer to Pythian Drive in Oakmont; it's on the east side of Hwy 12.

- Make sure you are signed up for multiple alerts and notifications on your cell phone (see Alerts page), including:
 - SoCo Alert
 - CivicReady
 - cell phone apps
 - Pulse Point
 - Watch Duty
 - MyShake
- Know your neighbors! Know who might need help evacuating. Know who has special skills that might help after an earthquake.
- Keep each person's Go-Bag ready either by the door and/or one in the car
 - your pet's Go-Bag should be next to yours.
- Be sure your pets wear tags and are registered with microchips.
- Have a portable NOAA emergency weather radio:
 - **Sonoma County NOAA radio frequency is 162.475**
 - if you are deaf or have hearing loss there is add-on equipment such as strobe lights and bed shakers

- the Midland 120 model is suggested and is available online (i.e., Amazon)

- Hi-lo siren:

- know what it sounds like and what it means (*leave now!*)

- <https://www.facebook.com/sonoma.sheriff/videos/240426629981486>

- Review your homeowner's insurance policy to ensure you have sufficient coverage. Most homeowners are underinsured.

- Create defensible space around your home.

- Use home hardening best practices on your home's exterior

- keep gutters clean and roof free of debris and in good condition

- install 1/8" or 1/16" screening around vents to prevent embers from entering.

- make sure siding is in good condition and caulk any openings.

- Make sure you have firewise landscaping in place.

- Know how to open and close your garage door manually in case power goes out.

- Locate & gather your important documents. Have them ready to go during fire season.

- Know local radio & TV you should listen to, so you know where the fire is.

- **Local Radio: 1350AM; 103.5FM; 100.1FM; 98.7FM; 89.1FM (Spanish)**

- Leave a hidden key out for emergencies and neighbors.

- Know where your gas & water shut offs are. During an emergency, turn off your gas only if you smell gas, hear hissing, or the meter is spinning rapidly. Only PG & E can turn it back on!

- Charge cell phones, laptops, and flashlights. Get in routine of keeping everything charged *all the time* during fire season.

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Things to do *When* a Red Flag Warning is Issued

- Leave immediately if ordered or if you feel unsafe.
- Remain calm - panic is deadly.
- Make sure everyone's Go-Bag is ready to go.
- Check with neighbors that they know Red Flag Warning issued; make sure they can evacuate. Assist elderly or disabled neighbors.
- Let others know when you leave (friends & neighbors). Leave a note informing others when you left, where you went, and cell number. Put a visible "OK" or "Evacuated" sign in front window so firefighters don't spend valuable time checking on you.
- On Red Flag Warning nights:
 - leave hearing aids in
 - don't take sleep medication
- Have your car ready; keep your keys readily available.
 - make sure you have a full tank of gas or fully charged EV
 - back your car into the driveway (out of garage)
 - keep car windows & doors closed
 - keep an old-fashioned map and list of destinations (hotels) in your car
- Keep pet carriers by front door, ready to go with fresh water and extra food. Think about how you are going to corral your pet before a Red Flag warning. Place pets in carrier EARLY. You won't be able to catch them when evacuation chaos begins.
- Listen to fire officials on local radio/TV then follow evacuation instructions.

Things to do Before you leave to evacuate (voluntarily or Evacuation Warning)

(*remember **Evacuation Order** means **LEAVE NOW** *)

Outdoors

- Leave wooden gates open for access and propped open to create a fire block.
- Leave a non-combustible/metal ladder out and visible. Firefighters use these at times for spot fires and gutter & roof fires.
- Leave hoses connected, extended & untangled, front, and back, visible and with good spray nozzles attached. Firefighters can use these to put out spot fires.
- Take all combustibles indoors - patio furniture cushions, jute mats & brooms, umbrellas, anything that will burn.
- Turn BBQ propane tanks off and move >30' away from the house or into the garage. Can put on street in front of house.
- Time (and wind) permitting, blow leaves away from house.
- Check that sprinklers and auto water systems are off, and water is not on. This can adversely affect water pressure that firefighters need.

Indoors

- Turn off air conditioning, attic fans, and whole house fans to avoid outside air, smoke, or ember intake.
- Turn off and unplug small appliances to avoid damage from power surges; don't forget the icemaker which can melt, leak & cause damage. Empty ice maker!
- Close all windows and interior doors.
- Move combustible furniture to center of room if time, away from windows. Keep drapes and window coverings open.
- Leave interior & exterior lights on so firefighters can see your house through heavy smoke.
- Load your important documents and valuables in the car. Less to worry about later.

All these actions will help you and firefighters!