

Safety First: Emergency Preparation and the ‘Go-Bag’



Photo Cynthia Brian

The coyote brush burned along with the hills in the Merrill Fire.

By Cynthia Brian

Natural disasters know no boundaries. One never knows if a fire, earthquake, flood, mudslide, or other calamity is on the horizon. It's imperative to be prepared for all emergencies.

Residents of Moraga have had first-hand experience of being awoken in the middle of the night, without any power, and evacuated because of the fast-moving Mer-

rill Fire (see related story on Page A4). One hundred and fifty firefighters from numerous districts battled the blaze while local police kept the community safe. Fortunately, all property and people were spared.

Whatever the calamity, it will behoove you to have an emergency supply kit (AKA "Go Bag") in every vehicle and a larger one in your home in a closet or area near the front door that will offer you supplies for a few days.

You want duplicate Go Bags in your vehicles because when disaster strikes you may be in your vehicle and unable to return home.

In an emergency at your dwelling, you may only have time to grab your keys, phone, wallet, pets, Go Bag, and what you can carry. There will not be time to "load your car" or to be searching or running from room to room to find what you need. Keep everything that is essential together in one place. Remember, you may be evacuated for hours, days, or weeks. Sometimes, as has been the case with our California wildfires and earthquakes, a matter of minutes means the difference between life and death.

Have a sign already made with your name and phone number and the words "All Evacuated" sitting on top of your Go Bag along with a roll of blue painter's tape. Only if time permits, tape your sign to your door when you leave so that firefighters know the house is clear.

Most of all, remember that saving your life and that of your family is the most important. Everything else can

be replaced.

Fill a backpack or small case with the following and keep one of these in all of your vehicles and one in your home. Pack a small bag for each family member, or pack a larger bag to include everyone's items. Remember you may only take one vehicle upon an evacuation.

Go Bag Necessities

- First Aid kit
- Duplicate chargers for phones, tablets, and computers
- Work gloves
- Warm gloves
- Towelettes
- Small towel
- Bottled water (1 gallon per person per day)
- Blanket
- Walking shoes
- Socks
- Warm jacket
- Peanut butter
- Honey
- Protein bars
- Personal hygiene kit with a toothbrush, soap, medications
- Matches
- Candle
- Flashlight and headlamp with extra batteries
- Eating utensils and plates

- Breathing masks (Niosh-N95)
- Clothing change
- Extra undergarments
- Extra set of keys to home, office, etc.
- Cash
- Toilet Paper

Hopefully, you will never have to use these emergency kits, but it's best to be prepared. The week after the Merrill Fire, several earthquakes with the largest being 4.6 on the Richter scale shook our area. It is natural to assume that a catastrophe will happen to someone else, but the reality is no one is immune. Across the country, natural disasters are becoming more prevalent and frequent. October and November are historically prime fire and earthquake months in California. Think safety first. The life you save could be your own.

Cynthia Brian is the columnist for Digging Deep in the Lamorinda Weekly.
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Sign up for important evacuation and emergency alerts at <https://cwsalerts.com> and <https://www.nixle.com>

Local authorities continue to stress importance of evacuation planning

... continued from Page A4

Plan to evacuate before the mandatory evacuation order from authorities by placing your Go-Bags in each of your cars (you may not know which car you can take). Communicate via text with your out-of-area contact to let them know you are

evacuating. Do not attempt to evacuate on foot.

When leaving your home make sure to leave the outside lights on for first responders. Also, leave gates open for easy access to your property. Drive safely and cautiously. Authorities will be on hand to direct traffic flow to a collection point.

Check in at the collection point to obtain sheltering information.

Being prepared can keep a bad situation from becoming worse.

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community. Send a letter to the editor: letters@lamorindaweekly.com

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SAVE LAFAYETTE

Working to Secure a Cleaner and Safer Environment for Residents

Fire Evacuation Planning

- California's 10 worst wildfires occurred in the last 5 years
- 95% of wildfires are caused by humans
- 90% of wildfire fuel comes from buildings

The City Council adopted an ordinance in 2013, identifying Lafayette as a **Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone**.

Save Lafayette members...

- Worked with residents to comply with recommendations in the Lamorinda Resident's Guide to Wildfire Preparedness & Evacuation
- Participated in live Evacuation Drills with 100+ First Responders
- Support the City Council's 2019 Strategic Plan to augment community emergency preparedness

Child Health and Safety

- Gridlock on Pleasant Hill Road and Moraga Road threatens the **health & safety of students to and from school, with 3-mile commutes taking up to 45 minutes**
- **Micro particulate matter** (1/50 the width of a human hair) from these congested roads and Highway 24 can cause severe health problems for the young and the old; those exercising outside are four times as much at risk
- **First Responders (Fire/EMS) give major Lafayette streets and arterials an F-grade** because they will be unable to respond to emergencies in a timely and effective manner

Save Lafayette members...

- are collaborating with the City on mitigating traffic and related pollution problems

Local Jobs - Businesses/Housing Imbalance

- Approved housing in Lafayette will cause **300 job losses**
- Current proposals - **another 300+ local job losses**
- Elimination of downtown local businesses will force residents to go to other cities for their services.

Without local jobs and businesses, Lafayette will become a housing corridor for the Bay Area job market, making commutes even worse!

Save Lafayette supports the right housing in the right locations to **maintain proper local jobs and businesses/housing balance**

Recent State Housing Bills Create More Problems for Lafayette

- These unwanted bills **remove local housing controls** and associated health/safety regulations
- Resulting revenues from such bills are 100% guaranteed to San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland and Berkeley, **but not to Lafayette**
- **The unelected Metropolitan Transportation Commission will have the final say on what housing gets approved and will be given unlimited public/private land-grab powers**
- **Save Lafayette** is working with the City, other East Bay cities and State representatives **to prepare alternative legislation**



www.SaveLafayette.org

Visit our website to learn more or to find out how you can help. To donate, please send a check to:
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