

# Ready, Sel, Gol wildland fire preparedness YOUTH MAGAZINE

IRE CHIEFS



A RSG! YOUTH MAGAZINE FOR AGES 10+

2ND EDITION

### Introduction

Wildfire. It's dangerous, unpredictable, and...eco-friendly?

### Strange as it sounds, our forests and grasslands need to burn.

Prescribed burning helps the landscape stay healthy by adding nutrients to the soil, clearing space for new plants to grow, and releasing seeds from fire-dependent trees and grasses. In fact, many indigenous communities used fire as a tool to keep their forests and prairies in peak form.

When Europeans arrived in what is now called the United States, they came from a different environment that wasn't as fire-dependent. Their farms and settlements had a big impact on the ecosystem and we're still feeling that impact today.

### What happens when a fire-dependent landscape goes without fire?

And what happens when people build their cities and towns in fireprone places without planning for wildfire risk? Well, take a look at the wildfires happening all over North America right now. Most of these are happening in areas known as the Wildland-Urban Interface, or WUI.

### The WUI is any area where towns and cities meet nature.

When fires start in these places, they quickly spread to homes and businesses. Recently, these fires have gotten bigger and have started happening more often. They are putting firefighters and regular

people at risk and costing us billions of dollars every single year. We've had to change the way we think about wildfires.

We used to focus on preventing these fires completely. Now we're learning that this isn't the only way to handle wildfire risk. Instead, we need to learn to live with fire in a healthy, safe way.

Firefighters do this by preparing the land with prescribed burning (sometimes called "controlled burns"). But the number one way you and your town can become safer from wildfires is by becoming fireadapted. That means you're ready for fire inside and out. Fire-readiness starts with YOU!

### Read this guide to be:

Ready! for wildfire Set! for wildfire safety and most importantly, geared up to Go! before it's too late

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# STEP 1 ≻ From Plan To Prep

# Here's a saying you've probably heard: "The best offense is a good defense." This is true when it comes to wildfires.

You can't control whether or not a fire happens near your home, but you **CAN** make your home safer in case it does.

The best way to do this is by creating something called defensible space around your house. This means removing things that fuel fires and let them spread from your yard to your house. When a fire starts or "catches" like this, it's called ignition. During wildfires, ignition is usually caused by embers – small bits of burning material that can float over a mile from the actual fire.

Embers are always looking for a fire-friendly place to land, like in dry grass or stacks of firewood. Your goal is to make your property as unfriendly as possible for embers! You can do this by creating three "zones" of defensible space around your house. Work through each zone with an adult, and check off the steps as you go!

### ZONE 1

0-5 ft. around your house (or to the property line)

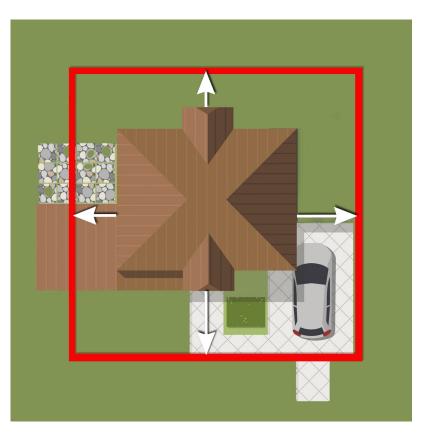
• Replace wood or straw mulch with fireproof options like concrete or gravel.

• Clear dead leaves, pine needles, and other debris from your roof and gutters.

• Set up a safe storage space for flammable materials (like gas cans) **AWAY** from your house – for example, a storage shed should be at least 10 feet away from the walls.

• Cut tree branches so they're at least 10 feet from your roof – there shouldn't be any touching or hanging over the house!

• Rake spaces near and under your house until they're clear of leaves and other flammable materials.



Don't forget to check hard-to-reach spots, like under your deck.

• Only leave fire-resistant plants near buildings. You can search online for good options or email your state's Department of Natural Resources for a list of recommended plants.

### **ZONE 2:**

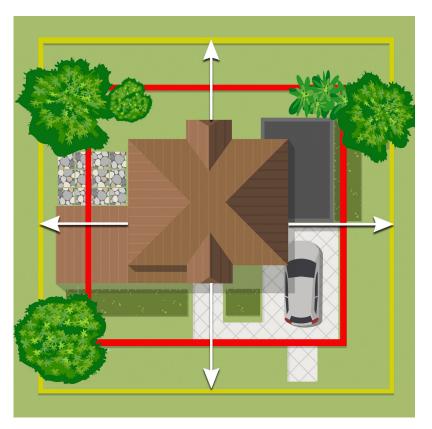
### 5-30 ft. around your home (or to the property line)

• Space out trees and shrubs by creating green "islands" with plenty of space between them. Trees should be at least 30 feet apart!

• Get rid of "ladder fuels" by putting space between the lower branches of trees and shrubs. The top of each shrub should be at least 6 feet from the lowest branches.

• Mow grass and wildflowers so they are less than 4 inches tall.

• Remove leaves and pine needles from the yard, and dispose of your yard waste properly by putting it into bags or bins.



# **ZONE 3:**

30-200 ft. around your home (or to the property line)

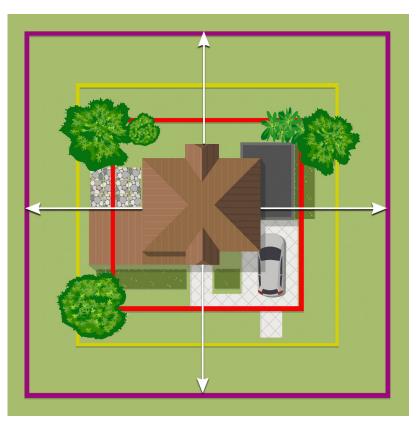
• Have trees trimmed so their tops (canopies) are at least 10 ft. apart.

• Keep your firewood in this zone, and keep the area around it clear.

• Get rid of dead trees, tree branches, and shrubs, and rake up any patches of dry grass.

• Create space between the edge of your yard and the start of the forest or wild grass.

• In the area outside of your yard, remove dead or dry bushes and branches so there's space between living plants – don't feed the fire



Check out the RSG! Program's National Action Guide for a full list of recommended steps. You can get your guide at www.iafc.org/wildlandguides

## **STEP 2** > Plan Your Exit

If a wildfire happens and you're told to evacuate, will you know what to do? A lot of people get hurt because they don't have a plan for what to do during a wildfire emergency. Sometimes, you only have minutes to make your exit and get to safety!

Make those minutes count by having a **WILDFIRE ACTION PLAN** that tells everyone what to do in an emergency. Practice your plan with your family, friends, and even your pets. The better you know your plan, the safer you'll be when a fire happens.



**THINGS TO REMEMBER:** If you live with or near someone who can't move on their own, or need some extra help make sure you have a detailed plan for how they can get out of out of harm's way. Investing in a folding wheelchair or stroller and keeping it handy can make a big difference when you need to move fast.



### **MAKE A WILDFIRE PLAN!** Your Plan Should Include These Things:

### A LIST OF EMERGENCY MEETING PLACES.

Be sure to include addresses and simple directions. Meeting areas should be outside of wildland fire hazard areas (check out www. nifc.gov/fire-information/maps for maps of local fire risk zones).

### AN EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLAN.

During a wildfire, your phone might not work. Make sure you have other ways to talk with members of your household. Walkie-talkies and handheld radios are good options.

**FIRE EXTINGUISHERS.** Make sure your house, cars, and any other buildings on your property have a fire extinguisher in them. Keep an eye on their expiration dates!

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR SHUTTING OFF THE GAS AND WATER**. Ask an adult where these switches are and write down the steps for turning them off. Practice at least once so you know what to do!

MAKE YOUR GO KIT. Pack a bag with everything you'll need if you have to evacuate. Get each family member to make one, too (see page 11 for detailed instructions).

**CREATE A GO KIT FOR YOUR PET.** This should be a small bag with a sealed container full of food, some clean water, vaccine records, and any medicine your pet takes. Make sure your pet has a collar and tag with your name and contact information.

**KEEP AN EMERGENCY PET CARRIER READY** at all times. Teach your pet to be OK with their carrier so they don't cause trouble during an evacuation!

INVEST IN A PORTABLE RADIO OR

SCANNER. This will make sure you can

receive real-time updates and instructions via the weather and emergency services during a wildfire.

PRINT AREA MAPS AND KEEP THEM WITH

**EACH GO KIT.** You can't rely on your cell phon during an emergency – that means no Google Maps. Print a few paper maps so you won't get lost.

### **SIGN UP FOR EMERGENCY**

**NOTIFICATIONS**. Local emergency services will text, call, email, or send you a phone notification in the event of a wildfire. These alerts will contain instructions and other important information, so go online and sign up for them!

### MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS A BACKUP

**PHOTO I.D.** Scan and print out a picture of your passport info, driver's license or learner's permit, or school I.D. Keep this in your Go Kit.

**BACKUP PLANS.** Good planning means having options A, B, and C in the event of an emergency. Imagine ways your plan could go wrong and think of how you'll handle it. Write these backup plans down and include them with the original.

**REMINDER:** Making an action plan is the first step. Once you've created it, you need to practice it. Make sure your drills include pets, babies, and anyone else who will need extra help during an evacuation.



If you can, laminate all paper documents included in your action

plan. Keeping them in plastic folders is another good option. This will keep them from getting damaged before or during an emergency.

## **STEP 3** > What To Do After You're Told To Evacuate

When a wildfire becomes dangerous to people in a certain area, they'll be ordered to evacuate and go somewhere safe. The government will send the order and instructions to your phone, they'll play it on the TV, and they might even send police or firefighters to your house!

The amount of time you and your family have to leave depends on how close the fire is, what the weather is like, and how busy the roads are near your house. You should try to go as early as possible, but you may be asked to wait until a specific time.

If that happens, you can use this time to prepare your house and make it easier for firefighters to do their jobs while you're gone.

# Here's what to do if you're home and have at least one hour to evacuate.

- **Close all windows and doors.**
- Remove curtains and shades from your windows. Metal blinds can stay put, but close them tightly.
- Push furniture to the center of the room, getting it as far away from windows and doors as possible. Do not attempt to move heavy furniture by yourself!
- **Turn on inside and outside lights** so firefighters can see your house better.
- □ Move flammable items away from the outside of your house. These include things like wicker porch furniture, holiday decorations, birdhouses, or even doormats.
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- Ask an adult to turn off propane tanks and other gas at the meter. If you're old enough, learn how to do this yourself as part of your Action Plan!
- **Turn off all faucets and sprinklers to conserve water pressure**. Firefighters will need all of the water and pressure they can get when they arrive on-scene.



What do you do if you can't evacuate for some reason? If you're stuck at your house during a wildfire emergency, **step one is simple: remain calm.** 

- □ **Call 9-1-1 immediately and tell them your situation**. Provide all the information you can, including why you're trapped and the specific things stopping you from evacuating. This helps rescuers get to you as quickly as possible!
- □ If fire outside prevents you from leaving, stay inside until you're told to leave by emergency personnel. Shelter away from walls and windows. Keep doors closed.
- □ Make sure you have at least one way out if the building catches fire. Avoid rooms with no outside access, if possible.
- **G** Fill sinks, tubs, and buckets with water for an emergency supply.
- **C**lose all doors and windows to keep the fire from spreading if it reaches your home.
- Stuff wet towels, sheets, or other fabric under doors, leaving as little space as possible for smoke to seep in.
- Put on a long-sleeved shirt or jacket and long pants, like jeans (made of natural fibers, if possible).
- Put on your sturdiest shoes with the thickest soles (hiking boots work great if you have them).
- Get a mask or a damp cloth/t-shirt ready in case you need to cover your nose and mouth. Smoke inhalation is often more dangerous than flames during a fire.
- Get yourself safe and geared up before you try to help anyone else.
- **Gather all pets in one room and close the door.**

In a scary situation like this, it can help to talk through your action steps out loud. Keep yourself as busy as you can and remember **try to remain calm.** 

## **STEP 4** > Stay Informed

During a wildfire, things happen fast. If you're stressed, it can be hard to remember things or make plans. Making sure you have the right information before a wildfire arrives is key to handling "the event" when it happens.

### **INFORMED PEOPLE ARE SAFE PEOPLE.**

First, sign up for weather alerts and follow your local fire department on social media. Stay informed about fires happening in your state, even if they don't seem that close (yet). Listen for

something called a Red Flag Warning: it means your area is at high risk of a fire happening, and you need to be extra alert.

Next, learn how wildfires spread and get familiar with the warning signs of wildfire. Has it been a long time since it rained? Has there been any lightning in your area? Is there smoke in the air or a strange glow on the horizon?



Then, find out what gear and equipment your fire department or local safety organization recommends in case of wildfire. Some examples might be extra gas for your car (stored properly in labeled containers), fire extinguishers, or an official evacuation map. Make sure your family has the recommended items and keep them handy.

Finally, know your last-minute steps in the event of an evacuation. Even small choices can make a big difference down the line. Drink water, put on sunscreen, and plan to stay close to your family or friends until you're ready to leave.

Evacuating with a group is almost always safer than going alone. Plan ahead and share information so no one is left alone during an emergency.

### EVACUATING WITH A GROUP IS ALMOST ALWAYS SAFER THAN GOING ALONE. PLAN AHEAD AND SHARE INFORMATION SO NO ONE IS LEFT ALONE DURING AN EMERGENCY.

# STEP 5 ≻ Don't Wait – GO!

### The best way to survive a fire is not to get stuck in one. Many of the injuries and deaths that happen during wildfires are due to people waiting too long to evacuate.

Evacuating early gives you the best chance of making it out of a wildfire – and it helps other people get out safely, too!

### **LEAVING EARLY HELPS BY:**

- Preventing traffic jams. This tends to happen when everyone tries to leave at the same time...usually at the last minute.
- Making it safer for first responders to do their jobs. Fewer people in the area means less firefighters, police, and EMTs to worry about. This allows them to focus on the fire and work quickly.
- □ Helping evacuation shelters operate smoothly. During a crisis, emergency shelters can be overwhelmed by large crowds arriving at the same time. Get there early to help prevent this problem
- . Encouraging other people to evacuate. A lot of people look at what their loved ones and neighbors are doing to help them decide their next step in an emergency. If they see other people evacuating, they're more likely to do the same and get to safety.



# GO KIT GUIDE: What To Keep Ready So You're Set To Go!

Here's a more detailed list of what to put in a Go Kit. Make sure your kit is in an easy-to-reach spot, and keep it stocked with fresh items.

### YOUR GO KIT SHOULD INCLUDE:

**1. ENOUGH WATER FOR THREE DAYS.** This equals one gallon per person per day.

**2. NON-PERISHABLE FOOD.** Nutrition bars, trail mix, and beef jerky are all good options.

**3. A FIRST AID KIT.** There are lots of pre-made kits you can buy, or you can make your own. Make sure your kit has disinfectant, burn cream, and gauze.

**4. A SANITATION KIT.** This kit should include hygiene items like disinfectant wipes, baby wipes, and toilet paper. Adding a toothbrush and period products is a good idea, too.

**5. A FLASHLIGHT.** Keep fresh batteries loaded and tape a few extras to the handle.

**6. A BATTERY-POWERED RADIO.** You can buy one of these online or at an electronics store. Keep fresh batteries loaded and tape extras to the outside of the radio.

**7. AN I.D. BAG.** You can use a pencil case or Ziploc bag for this. Keep an extra set of keys, a credit card, a photo I.D., and some cash inside of this bag.

**8. IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS.** Keep copies of documents like property deeds, birth certificates, and medical forms in your kit.

**9. AREA MAPS.** It's a good idea to laminate these and staple them together.

### **10. ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND CHARGERS.**

While these items can't necessarily live in your Go Kit full-time, you should leave room for your laptop, tablet, and other devices. It's a good idea to buy spare chargers and keep them in the kit along with your electronics.

**11. A PORTABLE BATTERY.** Choose one that holds plenty of charge, and make sure you plug it in every once in a while.

**12. EXTRA CLOTHES.** These clothes should be durable and easy to change into. Keep a few bandanas or masks with your clothes, and include an extra pair of shoes.

**13. A PRINTED ACTION PLAN.** This should be clipped or stapled together and protected with plastic. It should include important contact information and a list of the steps in your plan.

### **Optional Items:**

• A fire blanket. These lightweight blankets can protect you in a fire. Only buy one with listed safety features and approval from a reliable organization like the USFA or the NFPA, or a company specializing in fire safety equipment.

• A *multi-tool*. There are a lot of these to choose from. Make sure it includes pliers, a knife, and scissors – a Swiss Army Knife is one example of a good multi-tool.

• A *headlamp*. This should be packed in addition to a traditional flashlight. Make sure to have extra batteries packed with it.

- A water filter. Make sure your filter says "FDA-approved" on the label.
- *Walkie-Talkies.* Only use these as needed, and only if other communication devices fail you don't want to clog up channels used by first responders.

# Make your kit work for you – just because something isn't listed here or in another guide, that doesn't mean you shouldn't include it. You can even include a copy of this Youth Guide!

### Wildland Fire Glossary

### **ACTION PLAN**

A detailed set of steps that you and your family will follow in an emergency.

### **CONTAINED**

A fire that's limited to a specific area with defined borders due to firefighter intervention and is unlikely to spread.

#### **PRESCRIBED BURN**

An event where people (usually firefighters) intentionally set up and maintain a fire in a specific area. Used to clear brush and other materials to prevent later, uncontrolled wildfires.

#### **DEFENSIBLE SPACE**

An area around a building or property that has been cleared of flammable debris, vegetation, and other materials. The area has been prepared to reduce the risk and limit the spread of fire.

### **EMBER**

A burning particle, often comprised of organic matter like leaves or wood ash, that continues to burn even if it is not exposed directly to flames or heat. They are lightweight and can be blown by wind across long distances. Embers are the number one danger to houses during a wildfire.

### **EVACUATION**

The movement of people and animals from a dangerous location to safety. An official evacuation order means that the government has instructed people to leave the area. Evacuation routes are labeled, pre-planned, and are specific roads or paths.

#### **FIRE ADAPTED**

Able to survive a fire; can withstand a fire due to specific features. Fire-adapted communities accept their wildfire risk and implement specific measures such as building codes, public education campaigns, and land management practices to address this risk.

### **FIRE FRONT**

The part of a wildfire that is actively spreading. The place where land is actively igniting, and everything behind this line is already burning or has already burned.

### FIRELINE

A section of land that has been intentionally cleared and treated to prevent fire from spreading. They act as a barrier against the firefront and help reduce the speed and intensity of a wildfire.

#### **FIRE-RESISTANT**

Difficult to ignite; doesn't burn easily. Fire-resistant materials have special features that prevent them from catching on fire. Stone, dirt, metal, and canvas are all examples of fireresistant materials.

### **FIRE WEATHER WATCH**

A state of alertness triggered by specific fire-friendly environmental conditions. This announcement means that current conditions are likely to result in a fire within the next 72 hours.

#### **FLAMMABLE**

Easily set on fire; likely to burn if exposed to certain conditions or directly to flames.

#### **FUEL**

Components that cause fires to burn more intensely. Fires are fueled by flammable materials like dry vegetation or gasoline as well as oxygen and other combustible gasses. Fires cut off from fuel sources will soon go out.

### **GO KIT**

A specially packed, mobile kit with items that will be taken during a wildfire. These items relate to safety, comfort, or communication. The kit is kept in a constant state of readiness and accessibility.

### HAZARD

A risk factor; something that increases danger. A community's fire hazard is "the combination of likelihood and intensity" related to a potential fire.

### **HIGH FIRE RISK**

A fire is likely, if it occurs, it will be intense, AND in the event of a fire,

people (and property) are likely to be harmed by it. Fire risk ratings combine likelihood, intensity, exposure, and vulnerability into a single measurement that tells us how safe a given place is from wildfires.

#### **IGNITION**

The process where fuel combusts and a fire begins to burn. Embers and lightning are two common and natural sources of ignition; cigarette embers, fireworks, and campfire coals are examples of ignition sources caused by human activity.

#### **INTENSITY**

How hot, concentrated, or energetic a fire currently is. Intensity refers to the amount of energy a fire releases, and fires release energy through heat, speed, and the relative size of their flames. Flammable materials increase a fire's intensity by providing fuel.

### **PYROPHILIC**

A category of plant or animal that relies on fire to help it survive and reproduce. Some types of pine cones have to be exposed to fire in order to drop their seeds, for example. A whole ecosystem can be referred to as pyrophilic if its biodiversity depends on wildfires.

#### **RED FLAG WARNING**

Critical fire conditions are ongoing or will occur within 24 hours. Everything is primed and ready for fire, making the situation extremely hazardous for residents and first responders.

#### VEGETATION

The plants in a given area. Usually refers to an area of ground that is densely populated by plants, rather than a single shrub or piece of grass.

### WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

A space where human development meets natural vegetation, i.e. where a forest runs up against a populated neighborhood.

# Mad Libs

 Yesterday, I woke up feeling\_\_\_\_\_\_. (feeling or mood) The weather outside was \_\_\_\_\_\_.

 (adjective) and \_\_\_\_\_\_. (adjective) I went to my window and saw some \_\_\_\_\_\_. (noun) in the air, which made me think that something was \_\_\_\_\_\_. (verb ending in "ing") nearby.

I went downstairs to ask my\_\_\_\_\_\_ (relative, i.e. "mom") what was happening, but they were busy watching the \_\_\_\_\_\_ (noun or adjective) on TV. A woman was pointing to a map of \_\_\_\_\_\_ (location) and telling everyone to be \_\_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) because a wildfire had spread from \_\_\_\_\_\_ (location) to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.(location) On the top of the screen, I saw a picture of a \_\_\_\_\_\_ (noun) and some writing that said a " \_\_\_\_\_\_ (noun) and learned we had to evacuate!

"Don't worry," I said to my \_\_\_\_\_\_(relative) , "I know what to do!"

First, we went and got our \_\_\_\_\_\_(verb) kits. Mine had \_\_\_\_\_\_(noun), \_\_\_\_\_\_ (noun), and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(adjective) in it, plus \_\_\_\_\_\_(noun) in case I needed something to do. My \_\_\_\_\_\_(relative) 's kit had the same stuff, but also a \_\_\_\_\_\_(noun). We got our pet \_\_\_\_\_\_(animal into his/her carrier and made sure they had plenty of \_\_\_\_\_\_(noun). Then I changed into a \_\_\_\_\_\_(item of clothing) and put on my \_\_\_\_\_\_(item of clothing). I helped \_\_\_\_\_\_(relation's name) find their \_\_\_\_\_\_(noun), too.

After that, we went around the house and \_\_\_\_\_\_ (verb, past tense) our windows and doors. My \_\_\_\_\_\_ (relative) flipped some switches and turned off the \_\_\_\_\_\_ (appliance) We loaded our

\_\_\_\_\_ (verb) kits into the \_\_\_\_\_ (type of vehicle) and got ready to leave.

I helped my \_\_\_\_\_\_ (relative) move some \_\_\_\_\_\_ (plural noun) out of the yard and put it all in the \_\_\_\_\_\_ (type of building/structure) so it wouldn't become fuel for a \_\_\_\_\_\_ (noun). My \_\_\_\_\_\_ (relative) checked on our neighbor, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_\_ (last name), and offered her a ride in our \_\_\_\_\_\_ (vehicle). Everything was ready and set, so it was time to \_\_\_\_\_\_ (verb) !

On our way out of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*location*), we saw other people driving their \_\_\_\_\_\_(*vehicle*, *plural*). Some firefighters were driving toward \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*location*) in their \_\_\_\_\_\_(*vehicle*, *plural*)s. There was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*noun*, *material* or *substance*)in the air, but the road was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*adjective*), and we didn't have any trouble getting out of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*location* name). We drove our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*vehicle*) to a hotel called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*place* name). Some other people from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*first location*) were there, and my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*relative*) said that they were very \_\_\_\_\_\_(*adjective*) to have me around to help them prepare for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*noun*). I was really \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*feeling/emotion*) when I heard that!

Today, we learned that the firefighters stopped the \_\_\_\_\_(noun) from getting any \_\_\_\_\_(verb ending in "er") er, and we got the "all clear" to go back to \_\_\_\_\_(first location). All in all, I think things turned out \_\_\_\_\_(adjective).

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# WILDLAND PREPAREDNESS PICIURE HUNT







### See if you can find all 14 faces of "The Ember"



Ready, Set, Go!

WILDLAND FIRE PREPAREDNESS YOUTH MAGAZINE

# FOR MORE INFORMATION ON WILDLAND FIRE PREPAREDNESS

Please visit out website at www.wildlandfirersg.org

