



DISASTER NEWS



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EVACUATION PREPARATION

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“A state of emergency has been declared! You have 30 minutes to evacuate your home. The fire is only one mile away!”

That type message was delivered to dozens of residents on Saturday, February 19, in Louisa County, VA as a rapidly-moving brush fire swept across 1,200 acres. This fire was fueled by very dry natural debris in the woods and fields, and fanned by 50-mile-an-hour winds.

Similar situations were simultaneously taking place across central Virginia on Saturday. More than 100 brush fires of various sizes were reported across Central Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. Many were in Albemarle County, VA, where firefighters spent much of the day and night protecting homes and other buildings. Many were initiated by trees being blown down across power lines. Reports of possible fires were called into several 9-1-1 centers, only to find that the smoke was from fires on the other side of the Blue Ridge Mountains. While most of the fires were contained during the night hours of Saturday, some firefighters had to continue their work into Sunday morning. Central and eastern Virginia is in a drought condition, according to the National Weather Service. All residents are urged to stay alert to any area that could easily be set on fire. The annual state-wide burn ban is in effect until the end of April.

Suppose you were traveling along I-95 in Maryland on Saturday, and you came upon an official roadblock, where you were being

diverted onto another route. A several-mile section of I-95 was closed due to heavy smoke caused by a nearby fire. This was the situation for several hours on Saturday.

These situations bring to mind the need for each family having a well-developed and practiced evacuation plan and supplies.

If you were told you had only 30 minutes in which to gather your belongings and leave your home because a brushfire was headed toward your house, do you know what you would take? Do you have your valuables together, in a readily-accessible location? Perhaps more importantly, do you have personal care items, ready-to-eat foods, and other necessary emergency equipment and supplies ready to “load and go”?

When you travel, do you have appropriate food, water, and other emergency equipment and supplies with you?

The above situations are real! They actually took place. They could happen in your area as easily as they did in Maryland and Virginia. **ARE YOU PREPARED AND EQUIPPED?**

You can be! Contact your conference Disaster Response Coordinator to learn where and when the next “Introduction to Disaster Preparedness” class will be held. Better yet, schedule a class at your church. Then begin assembling your personal and family evacuation kits.