

# *Protecting Children and Families during Fire Emergencies*



## **Keeping Expectant Mothers and Children Protected during Wildfires**

Wildfires continue to wreak havoc in Colorado, Montana and Utah, forcing thousands of people to evacuate their homes, and destroying many thousands of acres of land.

Of the thousands of families uprooted by the fires, or during any disaster for that matter, pregnant women and children are often the most vulnerable. That's why Save the Children is releasing the following two-part guidance—a combination of tips from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and our own disaster preparedness experts—to help expectant mothers and families with young children stay safe and protected during the Colorado wildfires or any fire emergency.

### **Tips for expectant mothers and parents with young children facing evacuation**

*(Guidelines derived from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. To see the complete guidance--Wildfires: Information for Pregnant Women and Parents of Young Infants--please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Emergency/WildFires.htm>)*

- Be prepared to evacuate quickly and have important items (such as copies of medical records and medications) ready to go— you may not have much time.
- When checking into a shelter or temporary housing, alert the staff if you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant.
- If pregnant, seek prenatal care even if it is not with your usual provider.
- Make sure health care providers at the shelter know about any special needs or health problems that you or your child have, or any medicines you might be taking (both over the counter and prescription.)
- If you don't have your infant's medicine with you, ask health care providers at the shelter for assistance in getting it.
- Make sure your baby gets plenty of breast milk or formula, and you drink enough water.
- Pregnant women and children should stay indoors, if possible, to keep from Avoid breathing smoke or fumes, rest often and stay indoors if possible.
- If you're pregnant, rest often and get plenty of water.

For more information on how to keep you and your children safe during a wildfire, visit the [website of the Center for Disease and Control Prevention](#).

### **General fire safety tips for families**

Save the Children wishes to remind parents, teachers, and caregivers about the importance of child fire safety. About 80 percent of all fire-related deaths and injuries occur in the home, and young children are at a particularly high risk. They may not understand the danger or may not be able to escape. Children under the age of 5 account for almost half of all home fire victims.

Children in the poorest homes face the greatest risk of death. Every family member should know exactly what to do in case of a fire emergency. Precious seconds can be lost when someone can't find a way out in the dark or does not know how to release a window lock. Having a family fire safety plan and practicing it will save lives.

Below are some tips for keeping families safe. For further guidance specific to your community, contact your local fire department.

- Talk to children about fire safety. Children accidentally set many of the fires that harm them. Teach children **not to** play with matches and lighters. If they see matches or lighters within reach, teach them not to touch but go tell a grown up right away.
- Teach children the **DON'T HIDE, GO OUTSIDE** rule in the event of a fire. Fires are scary, but they should **NEVER** hide in closets or under beds when there is a fire.
- To escape during a fire, teach children to **FALL & CRAWL**. It is easier to breathe in a fire if you stay low while getting out. Use the back of your hand to test if a door is hot before you open it. If it is hot, try to use another way out.
- Practice **STOP, DROP and ROLL**: If clothes catch on fire, don't run. Stop where you are, drop to the ground and roll your body back and forth until the fire is out. Running makes the fire burn faster.
- Teach children to never go back into a burning building for any reason. If someone is missing, tell a firefighter.
- Make a family fire plan and practice it. The plan should include identifying two exits from each room and marking an outside meeting place. Practice escaping by both exits to be sure windows are not stuck and screens can be quickly taken out.
- Make sure street signs and address numbers are easily visible so fire trucks and emergency responders can find where they need to be.
- Teach children what a fire alarm sounds like and make sure that it will effectively wake them in the middle of the night.
- Ensure smoke detectors are installed on every floor and in the sleeping areas of your home, and that batteries are changed twice per year. Carbon Monoxide detectors are also recommended. Test these alarms to make sure they can effectively wake family members.
- If there are security bars or locks on doors, make sure all family members know how to release them. All family members should be able to escape from the second floor.
- Know your local emergency number. Put stickers and magnets with emergency numbers on your refrigerator and every telephone in the house.

Parents should also take steps to learn about their child's school or child care fire safety plan, as part of an overall emergency plan. They should also ensure that any family friends have evacuation plans in case a child spends the night elsewhere.

## About Save the Children

Save the Children works to break the cycle of poverty and improve the lives of children by ensuring they have the resources they need—access to quality education, healthy foods, and opportunities to grow and develop in a nurturing environment. When disasters strike, like hurricanes and wildfires, Save the Children is among the first on the ground, ensuring the needs of children are being met.

In the United States, Save the Children's early childhood education, literacy, physical activity and nutrition, and emergency response programs reached more than 185,000 children last year alone. For more information, visit [www.savethechildren.org/usa](http://www.savethechildren.org/usa).