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Craven County Great Lakes Fire Update and Safety and Preparation Tips

CRAVEN COUNTY, N.C. – The incident referred to as Great Lakes Fire is a wildfire located in the Croatan National Forest which is a 160,000-acre national forest of which a portion is in southeastern Craven County. The US Forest Service website contains a map to show the location of the Croatan National Forest: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5403940.pdf.

There is no indication at this time that evacuation orders need to be issued in Craven County, but a fire situation can change. Craven County Emergency Management officials are physically visiting the site multiple times a day to assess for any indication evacuation or additional community fire protection, such as more fire trucks, might be needed. We cannot say with certainty Craven County residents will be immune from Great Lakes Fire related danger. Citizens living in the Brice's Creek area from Perrytown Road to the Jones County line should continue to remain vigilant and prepared should an evacuation become necessary.

Craven County Emergency Management is involved in closely coordinated communication with the US Forest Service and NC Forest Services. The Great Lakes Fire incident is under the command of the Southern Area Red Team Incident Management Team and Craven County is considered a Cooperating Agency. All official incident information is released by the Southern Area Red Team and public information requests about the incident should be directed to them at 2023.GreatLakes@Firenet.gov or (252) 285-6174.

There are things citizens can do to prepare in advance should an evacuation of an area become necessary:

- Build an emergency kit to include essential items your family and pets will need to survive. Be sure to include enough food, water, and supplies in your kit for three to seven days for each person or pet. Also include medication, cash, and hygiene supplies. For more ideas of what to include in an emergency kit visit: <https://www.readync.gov/plan-and-prepare/get-kit>
- Place valuable documents, mementos and anything "you can't live without" inside the car in the garage, ready for quick departure. Pets with you should be contained in a safe place near the car so you can quickly get them into the car before you leave.
- Arrange temporary housing at a friend or relative's home outside the threatened area in case you need to leave.
- Wear protective clothing when outside – sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothes, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- Gather fire tools such as a rake, axe, handsaw or chainsaw, bucket and shovel.
- Close outside attic, eaves and basement vents, windows, doors, pet doors, etc. Remove flammable drapes and curtains. Close all shutters, blinds or heavy non-flammable window coverings to lower radiant heat.
- Close all doors inside the house to stop drafts. Open the damper on your fireplace but close the fireplace screen.
- Turn off any natural gas, propane or fuel oil supplies at the source.

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- Connect garden hoses to outdoor water faucet and fill any pools, hot tubs, garbage cans, tubs or other large containers with water.
- Place lawn sprinklers on the roof and near above-ground fuel tanks. Leave sprinklers on and dowsing these structures as long as possible.
- If you have gas-powered pumps for water, make sure they are fueled and ready.
- Place a ladder against the house in clear view.
- Cut off any automatic garage door openers so that doors can still be opened by hand if the power goes out. Close all garage doors.
- Place valuables that will not be damaged by water in a pool or pond.
- Move flammable furniture into the center of the residence away from the windows and sliding-glass doors.
- Turn on outside lights and leave a light on in every room to make the house more visible in heavy smoke.

Should anyone find themselves in danger of a wildfire, here are survival tips offered by ReadyNC:

Survival in a Vehicle

- This is dangerous and should only be done in an emergency. You can survive the firestorm if you stay in your car. It is much less dangerous than trying to run from a fire on foot.
- Roll up windows and close air vents. Drive slowly with headlights on. Watch for other vehicles and pedestrians. Do not drive through heavy smoke.
- If you have to stop, park away from the heaviest trees and brush. Turn headlights on and ignition off. Roll up windows and close air vents.
- Get on the floor and cover up with a blanket or coat.
- Stay in the vehicle until the main fire passes.
- Stay in the car. Do not run! Engine may stall and not restart. Air currents may rock the car. Some smoke and sparks may enter the vehicle. Temperature inside will increase. Metal gas tanks and containers rarely explode.

If You Are Trapped at Home

- If you do find yourself trapped by wildfire inside your home, stay inside and away from outside walls. Close doors, but leave them unlocked. Keep your entire family together and remain calm.

If Caught in the Open

- The best short-term shelter is in a thin fuel area. On a steep mountainside, the back side is safer. Stay away from canyons, natural "chimneys" and saddles.
- If a road is nearby, lie face down along the road cut or in the ditch on the uphill side. Cover yourself with anything that will shield you from the fire's heat.
- If hiking in the back country, seek a depression with sparse fuel. Clear fuel away from the area while the fire is coming. Then lie face down in the depression and cover yourself. Stay down until after the fire passes!

To learn more for how to prepare for a wildfire in North Carolina, visit: <https://www.readync.gov/stay-informed/north-carolina-hazards/wildfire> and the National Fire Protection Association website at <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA>.

Craven County Government will share information updates on the Craven County website at www.cravencountync.gov, on the Craven County Facebook page [@cravencounty](https://www.facebook.com/cravencounty) and the Craven County Twitter account [@cravencountync](https://twitter.com/cravencountync). Visit the Craven County website to register to receive emergency notifications via text, email and phone calls through the CodeRed Emergency Notification System.

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