



Town of Estes Park  
P.O. Box 1200  
Estes Park, Colorado 80517  
[www.estes.org](http://www.estes.org)

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## **Disasters are not procrastination-friendly**

**By Town Administrator Frank Lancaster**

If you are anything like me, I'm sure you have a list of "things you're eventually going to get around to..." You may have that list written down, or it may be in the back of your mind, but it's there. "Someday," I say, "I'm going to organize all the photos and slides in the shoe boxes in the basement; I'm going to write down family stories; I'll clean the garage; I'll paint the family room; I'll put together an evacuation kit and a blizzard box."

Most of these things can wait, but I do have an evacuation kit of sorts, and I am going to update it.

May is "Emergency Preparedness Month" and the ideal time to stop talking about doing it and just put together your evacuation kit and checklist. It probably won't take more than an hour, but that's an hour you may not have if someday you get an emergency notification telling you to evacuate your home. Fires and floods are not procrastination-friendly events.

Think about what you would need to have if you were forced out of your home for a week. Then think about the irreplaceable items that you and your family would be heartbroken to lose. If you must reduce your life to only what fits in the trunk of the car, what would you take? Talk this over with your family and keep the list where everyone can access it. If you are ever in the situation where you have to leave your home quickly, you'll be able to save what is important to you. Don't assume you can just make those decisions on the fly while embers are floating down onto your roof.

My list includes all the basic things such as a couple changes of clothes, prescriptions, my home computer, financial records, passports and driver's licenses, and our health insurance information. Then there are the special personal things like my grandfather's photo album with five generations of family pictures, my father's baseball glove, the tri-folded flag from my father's funeral, his and my mother's World War II medals, and our wedding photos. There are a few other things, but I think you get the drift. All in all, it's not a lot of stuff and it will fit easily in the back of our car, but if some of this stuff were left behind, I would regret it forever.

My list isn't just "stuff to save," but "stuff to do" as well. In the case of wildfire, I would close window coverings to reduce radiated heat, set the extension ladder outside where firefighters can see it, hook a hose up to the hose bib, and move any flammables (propane, gas cans, etc.) away from the house. I would remind myself to move combustible items like lawn furniture 50 feet away from the house, close all windows but leave them unlocked, turn off the natural gas, and leave on the exterior lights to make your home more visible at night or in heavy smoke.

Visit [www.estes.org/emergency](http://www.estes.org/emergency) to find checklists, plan outlines and other great resources from the Town and our partners at the Estes Valley Fire Protection District, Estes Valley Library and Simplicity Organizing Services. Once you have a plan, it will be easy to update and adapt to your family's needs.

The Town Board proclaimed May "Emergency Preparedness Month" in Estes Park. At the Town, we're working toward more preparedness all the time -- from continual staff training and collaboration with our partner agencies, to establishing procedures for setting up call centers and other information sources, to creating backup systems to ensure we can continue providing you with important services during a crisis.

Check out our newest emergency preparedness project -- the "Estes 1470" AM Radio station. We're using it to provide everyday information, and it will be extremely valuable during the next emergency. Listen on your AM radio or at [www.estes.org](http://www.estes.org).

Remember, our emergency services staff will do everything they can to help during a disaster, but it's truly our responsibility to prepare ourselves and our families.

**END**