

In the wake of the recent wildland fires around our community, a number of questions were raised regarding emergency preparedness. Things to know:

Fires and fire fighting

- Fires in our area generally have a small fuel load which include grasses and bushes. These fuels are low to the ground and burn off very fast. We do not have the topography or fire load that you see in California fires and other states.
- Surrounding our community, the Firewise team under the direction of Diane Newcomb (Tonto), Eb Schueing (Rio) and the Rio Verde Fire District have cleared brush 15 to 30 feet away from our borders to mitigate any fire that may encroach on the community. The buffer helps to slow fire spread. For more information visit: <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA>
- If we had a fire approach the community from the East or West, we would have access to our surrounding fire department mutual aid partners to assist if needed. We would have all the resources we would need to help protect our community.

Emergency Management

- Large scale emergencies in the community are managed utilizing the Maricopa County Emergency Operations Plan, a framework for emergency responders and all county supporting agencies, including ours.
- The Rio Verde Fire Department works with Maricopa County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) on all emergencies and evacuation plans, this was evident on the Verde Fire when the Fire Chief updated community leaders and residents on fire conditions during the fire.
- The OEM has the ability to send out emergency alerts to all cell phones in the Verdes communities (similar to Amber Alerts). These alerts will inform residents on current emergency conditions and give direction if needed.

Community emergency notification

- In the event of an emergency in the Verdes, residents will be notified through the community emergency notification system (CENS). https://www.maricopa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/45726/CENS-Brochure_English?bidId= This will provide a recorded message regarding the emergency to landlines and cell phones in our community. Cell phones will require the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) app to be downloaded on cell phones. Visit www.ready.maricopa.gov to download.
- **We encourage everyone to** register their landlines and cell phones to receive emergency information.

Evacuation

- It would be highly unlikely that we would need to evacuate the community due to a wildfire. Evacuations would most likely take place, if needed, to the homes that border our community in which the fire is headed. Residents should stay in their homes and wait for direction from the emergency alert systems.
- Any evacuations would be directed by the Rio Verde Fire District, OEM and the sheriff's department. Verde cares is also critical to the plan to help with those who may have special needs or mobility issues.
- There are generally three types of evacuation processes: shelter in place; local evacuation center, and out of the community evacuation. The emergency alert system will instruct residents on where to go and what to do. It is vital for all residents to take the time to download these apps and visit the websites to learn more.

Please let us know if you have any questions, www.rioverdefire.org

Jay Ducote, Fire Chief
Rio Verde Fire District