

WILDFIRES IN SPAIN: WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

If you live in a forest in Spain or within 500 metres of one, you are **required by law to have a fire prevention and self protection plan in place**, just in case a fire should occur.

It's a sad fact of life, that **only around one quarter of all forest fires are started by natural causes**, such as lightning. **The rest are as a result of negligent practices or intent.** So, it makes perfect sense that if you are visiting or living in the

countryside, you should be in a position to consider your options, if you are caught near a wildfire.

Many of the local people have been aware of fires in the countryside all of their lives, but wildfires are not something that many visitors or expats have ever had to deal with, coming as many of us do, from wet, northern European countries. We are unprepared.

So what should we do?

Fire prevention:

- Have a **safe zone** around your house, where there is less vegetation. Keep that area free of dried grass, weeds or other flammable materials.
- Cut back any **branches of trees** that overhang your house.
- Pay particular attention to **discarded garden prunings and wood stores**, making sure they are a safe distance from the house.
- Keep **gas bottles** either within the house or in a safe place some distance away.
- Don't allow **dead leaves** to accumulate on your roof or gutters.
- When outside, ensure that all lit cigarettes are **completely extinguished before you leave them.**
- **Never BBQ near to trees or flammable materials**, and always **have the garden hose nearby.**

Self protection:

- **BE PREPARED!** Prepare an **advance plan** with your family, considering **what you will each do in the event of fire** and **how you will communicate with each other.** Also think about **how your pets fit into your plans.**
- Review all your possible **emergency escape routes**, making sure they are **never blocked.**
- Always **have at least one quarter of a tank of fuel** in your vehicle.
- Prepare a list of items to be taken in an **Evacuation Pack.**



In the event of FIRE:

- **Call the TOLL-FREE Emergency telephone number 112. DO NOT ASSUME THAT SOMEONE ELSE HAS ALREADY CALLED.** *They may be thinking the same thing.*
- **Close all doors and windows** in your house.
- Bring all **flammable outdoor chair cushions** inside the house.
- Make safe any exterior **gas bottles.**
- **STAY CALM** and follow your **escape plan** (if necessary), taking with you

your **Evacuation Pack.**

What should be in an Evacuation Pack?

- **Everyone's will be different**, but here are some items you might consider **important** enough to include:
- **Personal papers** – such as passports, birth and marriage certificates, house deeds or rental contract, medical cards, insurance policies.
- **Photographs** – either in albums, on flash drives, external hard drives or portable computers. Also take any charging cables you may require.
- **Medication** - paper prescriptions (if you have them), pills, or items kept in the refrigerator such as insulin.
- **Money** – enough to tide you over until you can visit an ATM.
- **Emergency food, water and clothing** – including snacks, pet food, baby formula, nappies, sanitary items, bottled water.
- **Battery-powered radio** – to listen to emergency bulletins on local radio station.
- **Mobile telephone** – complete with contact telephone numbers and addresses.
- **Irreplaceable precious items** – but only small ones that will not hinder your escape.

