

May 2019 Cityscape

We now live in an environment that's more vulnerable to fires and floods than ever before: Fifteen of the 20 largest fires in California history have happened since 2000, according to Cal Fire.

So far, Healdsburg has been spared overall when it comes to weather-related disasters. Our city did not experience the physical devastation of the fires that swept through Sonoma and Napa counties in October 2017. And while the floods in late February impacted some residents and City facilities, the Russian River's high-water levels receded after a few days. Our community must prepare for the next disaster, or round of disasters, that could more squarely impact residents and businesses.

Emergency Preparedness Brochure

City Staff, including our Fire and Police Departments, have developed a multi-page color brochure on how the community can better prepare for disasters. The brochure will provide information on topics such as building an emergency kit for you and your family (including pets), vegetation management, and resources from FEMA, Fire Safe Sonoma, and the American Red Cross.

The brochure will also feature two maps – one for Healdsburg and one for Fitch Mountain – that provide travel-route options in case you need to evacuate the area. Note that evacuation routes are unique for each disaster; please become familiar with possible travel routes as there are many dead-end roads in Healdsburg.

The overriding message of the brochure: Prepare for a disaster now. Do you and your family have a communications plan in case you get separated? Have you digitized important documents? Do you have an emergency “go-bag” ready with necessities such as clothing, medication, and food? What's your pet emergency plan? Don't wait until a disaster strikes before you start planning.

The emergency-preparedness brochure is being printed and will be mailed to residents and businesses within the City limits in the coming weeks. Once it's available, we will also provide a digital copy of the brochure on the City's website (www.cityofhealdsburg.org), and post it on social media.

In the meantime, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has a website that will help you and your family plan for emergencies: <https://www.ready.gov/>.

And if you haven't yet, please sign up for Nixle and SoCoAlert. These systems will be used to send instant emergency alerts and other key information to community members. Alerts will go straight to your cell phone or email. For Nixle, just text your zip code (95448) to 888-777 or go to www.nixle.com to register. For SoCoAlert, create a managed account by going to: <http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/FES/Emergency-Management/SoCoAlert/>

Emergency-Management Training

In addition, to better safeguard our community, City Staff members this year are undergoing emergency-management training from the California Specialized Training Institute, part of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES).

The City's Department Directors and other select City Staff already have some on-the-job emergency-management experience. The City has activated its 24-hour Emergency Operations Center three times in the past five years: In December 2014 due to flooding in the downtown area, in October 2017 due to the fires and again this past February due to localized flooding. The EOC provides a central location for me, the Fire and Police Chiefs, and other City Directors and Staff to better communicate with each other, support our Public Safety and City Staff in the field, and strategize how best to keep our community safe.

The Cal OES training is led by seasoned Cal OES public-safety personnel -- many of whom have led multi-jurisdiction EOCs in wide-scale disasters such as the recent Camp Fire. The training provides a rigorous structure and analytical process to help City Staff best manage resources and strategize what the City and the public need to do in disasters, whether they're single incidents or multiple incidents.

City Staff will provide an update on emergency-management services and training in the coming months, so please stay tuned.