

Wildfires & Mental Health



Wildfires can start from natural causes, like a lightning strike or drought, or spread by accident. North Carolina communities most often experience wildfires during warm, dry months across spring and summer. Rural areas and mountain regions are especially vulnerable to wildfires.

While there are steps communities can take to prepare, it's normal to feel stressed as you think about how to respond to a wildfire and keep everyone safe. Resources are available to help navigate mental and emotional health needs before, during and after a wildfire.



Ways to support mental and emotional health as you prepare for a wildfire

- Build an emergency kit; include important documents and keep medications filled
- Make a plan to stay in touch with loved ones
- Look into local shelters and evacuation routes; text SHELTER + your zip code to 43362
- Monitor air quality and pay attention to smoke alarms
- Enjoy favorite, stress-relieving activities
- Check your insurance coverage and take photos and videos of valuables
- Check weather and emergency alerts only as needed
- Continue recommended medications and treatments

RESOURCES

- Wildfires in NC: bit.ly/NCReadyWildfire
- Wildfire Preparation: Ready.gov/Wildfires
- Make a Game Plan: Ready.gov/Plan
- Evacuation Steps: bit.ly/EvacuationSteps
- Steps from Smokey Bear: SmokeyBear.com
- Emergency Alerts: NCDPS.gov/emergency-alerts
- Wildfire Safety: Rdcrrs.org/3P0rYeg
- Community Guidance: bit.ly/NFPAFirewise
- Free, 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline: **800-985-5990** (Use videophone for ASL)
- Disability-Specific Guidance: Ready.gov/Disability
- Tips for People with Disabilities: bit.ly/FireSafetyDisabilities
- 988 Lifeline: Call/text **988**, bit.ly/988DisasterSurvivors

Print or screenshot this information to have on hand.

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Wildfires & Mental Health



Wildfires can begin without warning, spread quickly and cause significant damage – it's natural to be deeply affected and need mental health support after a disaster. Take care of yourself, connect with loved ones and reach out for help if you need it. There are resources available to help prepare and support people living with disabilities, as well as caregivers, as communities come together to recover and rebuild.



Ways to support mental and emotional health after a wildfire

- Keep in touch with family and friends
- Know when to reach out for extra help
- Follow safety guidance from fire officials
- Take regular breaks from cleaning up
- Limit substances that impact stress levels like caffeine, alcohol, tobacco & others
- Get information and updates from official sources and take regular breaks
- Stay in touch with health care providers and continue treatment and medication – make a plan for treatments that rely on electricity and travel

RESOURCES

- Wildfire Resources: [Ready.gov/Wildfires](https://www.ready.gov/wildfires)
- Safety Tips: [CDC.gov/Wildfires](https://www.cdc.gov/wildfires)
- PTSD After a Wildfire: bit.ly/PTSDWildfires
- Emotional Health: bit.ly/APADisasterRecovery
- Wildfires and Mental Health: bit.ly/SAMHSAWildfires
- Disaster Distress Helpline: 800-985-5990
- Disabilities and Disaster Safety: [Rdcross.org/42KwumV](https://www.rdcross.org/42KwumV)
- Substance Use Support, Resources and Treatment: 800-662-HELP (4357), [FindTreatment.gov](https://www.findtreatment.gov)
- Caregiver Guidance: [Ready.gov/Caregivers](https://www.ready.gov/caregivers)
- NC Peer Warmline: 1-855-PEERS NC (1-855-733-7762)

Whether you struggle with mental health right away after a wildfire or later on, you're not alone. Help is always available – it's never too early or too late to reach out for resources and get support, NC. ❤️

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