

SAFETY

Make a Safe Exit With Proper Planning

NewsUSA

(NU) - In the wake of the devastating wildfires that have burned across extensive spans of California and the previously active hurricane seasons that have impacted multiple states, more and more people are beginning to plan ahead in case they, too, are forced to evacuate their homes and communities.

Notification through the media and even through newer, cutting-edge technology such as the mass-notification system called IRIS or Immediate Response Information System, which automatically delivers information to thousands of citizens through multiple channels such as cell phones, e-mails, PDAs and pagers, is becoming more widespread. In fact, the IRIS system has even been adopted by Florida's school system.

But what steps need to be taken once citizens are notified that they must evacuate? The following tips will help you evacuate safely, quickly and even ensure that you are prepared:

- **Have it in tow.** It is imperative that you bring enough clothing, food and water to last each family member three days. Remember to plan one gallon of water per day for each person. And don't forget to grab all of your important documents such as birth certificates, social security cards and even your homeowner's insurance policy. Your address book could also be helpful, so you can contact family and



Between natural disasters, such as the California wildfires, and other emergencies, it is important for your family to be prepared to evacuate.

close friends if needed. Finally, if you have time, pick up any prescription medications, cash and a full tank of gas.

- **Map your evacuation.** Before you face an emergency, it is important to come up with a family plan. Decide on a location where your family will meet should an emergency occur when you are not together. Also, map out and make sure you are familiar with the emergency evacuation routes in your area.

- **Secure your home.** Before leaving your home, secure it by locking all doors and windows, unplugging all appliances and shutting off the electrical, gas and water switches and valves.

For more information on evacuation procedures, contact your city or state Web site. For more information on emergency-response systems such as IRIS, visit www.useiris.com.