

Wildfire preparedness checklist for auto dealerships



Please route to:

- Dealer principal
- General manager
- F&I manager
- Sales manager
- Service manager
- Office manager

Wildfires are becoming increasingly frequent and severe,¹ posing a serious threat to auto dealerships located in high-risk regions. Wildfires can ignite with little warning and spread rapidly, endangering inventory, facilities, and the safety of employees and customers. Beyond the immediate physical damage, wildfires can disrupt operations for weeks or even months, impacting revenue and customer relationships.

Proactive planning is essential. By implementing preventive measures and having a clear emergency response strategy, dealerships can significantly reduce the risk of loss, protect their people, safeguard their facilities and inventory, and maintain business continuity.

Below you'll find a checklist of practical steps and best practices to help your dealership prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfire events.

Before wildfire season

- Review and update emergency response plan.
 - Establish and communicate employee and vehicle evacuation plans.
 - Train staff on wildfire-specific drills, evacuation procedures and safe shutdown procedures.
 - Ensure staff have access to emergency alerts, contact lists, and gathering points.
- Remove any dry vegetation and debris within 30 feet of dealership buildings.
 - Use gravel or other non-combustible landscaping near structures.
 - Inspect and clear roofs, gutters, and vents of leaves and debris.
- Install ember-resistant vents and consider fire-rated doors/windows.
- Keep fuel tanks at least half-full for quick relocation (avoid overfilling).

- Verify fire extinguishers, sprinkler systems, and backup power are operational.
- Confirm insurance coverage for wildfire and business interruption.
 - Maintain a digital VIN inventory list for insurance documentation.
- Coordinate with local fire authorities for site assessment.
- Arrange mutual aid agreements with nearby dealerships for temporary storage.

When wildfire risk is elevated

- Monitor local fire alerts and weather conditions.
- Relocate high-value vehicles indoors or to designated safe zones.
- Remove or secure flammable materials from display areas and service bays.
- Remove flammable materials from outdoor areas.
- Protect critical systems and data with generators and cloud-based backups.
- Deploy real-time wildfire monitoring tools if available.

If evacuation is required

- Execute evacuation plan for staff and vehicles.
- Remove keys from vehicles and take them to a secure location.
- Collect and secure valuables (e.g., customer property, portable electronics) if time and safety permit.
- Secure facility and shut down non-essential systems.
- Communicate with employees and customers about closures.

¹ Manning, Anne J. "The Smoky Signature of Climate Change." Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. 15 December 2025.

After the event

- Confirm site safety before reentry; follow local authority guidance.
- Document all damage with photos and detailed notes for insurance purposes.
- Account for all vehicles and parts; secure undamaged assets.
- Contact your insurance carrier promptly to initiate claims.
- Activate contingency plans for temporary relocation or remote operations.
- Provide resources for staff affected by the wildfire.

By following these guidelines and practices, you can better protect your people and your property in the event a wildfire impacts your business.



Helpful resources

- [Zurich North America Wildfire Resource Hub](#)
- [U.S. Department of Homeland Security – Wildfires](#)
- [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\) – Wildfire preparedness](#)

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