

Wildfire Preparedness Month, Part 3: Knowing When Danger is Imminent

Over the past two weeks, the City of Horseshoe Bay has provided information to residents about the risks associated with wildfire and offered tips and suggestions to help protect residences through “home hardening” and “firewise landscaping.” As Wildfire Preparedness Month ends, residents may also wonder: what should I do if there is an active fire in the area and how do I get notified so I can keep my family and property safe?

The City received calls after a mulch pile fire broke out in the Summit Rock subdivision last week. Some residents were concerned after seeing and smelling smoke, and did not know whether the fire was an imminent danger to their lives or property. While the mulch fire was considered more of nuisance than a threat, residents may not always know the difference or how to get the information they need to feel safe. One thing is certain: the timeliness of the fire serves as an important reminder for all residents to stay informed!

The first thing residents should do is sign up for the free alert systems the City is registered with to ensure they receive succinct, actionable notifications when emergencies occur.

The first system is www.WarnCentralTexas.org, which is utilized by the City in partnership with the Capital Area Council of Governments. Registering with Warn Central Texas allows the City, as well as Llano and Burnet County and CapCog officials to contact our communities by phone, email, and text during times of disasters or public safety events. This includes any imminent fire dangers, as well as notices to evacuate or shelter in place. To register for emergency alerts, visit www.WarnCentralTexas.org.

The City also uses CivicReady to send mass emergency and non-emergency notifications to subscribers via email, text message, and voicemail. To sign up for notifications, visit www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov/CivicReady. To modify your existing notifications or unsubscribe, visit www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov/modify.

The City limits the number of alerts sent to avoid spamming residents. With CivicReady, residents have the option to sign up for notifications about community events and non-emergencies. If your primary concern is to know when an emergency warrants action, be sure you are signed up with www.WarnCentralTexas.org, and be sure to select the type of events most important to you when signing up for CivicReady under Weather Alerts.

Alerts I Want To Receive

Default Notification Groups

- Emergency Alerts

Notification Groups

-  City Council Agendas + Minutes
-  Community News
-  Contractor's Corner News
-  Fire Department
-  HSB Business Community
-  Planning / Zoning Agendas + Minutes
-  Police Department
-  Street Improvement / Construction
-  Utility Department

Weather Alerts

For those weather alerts selected below, receive advanced notification of weather events with targeted alerts to your email and/or sms-enabled phone if your location is included in the designated area.

- Select All Severe Weather Alerts**
- Air Stagnation/Smog
- Coastal
- Dust Storm
- Fire
- Flood / Flash Flood
- Fog
- Frost
- High Wind
- Thunderstorm
- Tornado
- Winter Storm

Some residents have also asked how neighbors who cannot use these technologies or have limited access to the internet can stay informed. In an urgent situation requiring immediate action, the City utilizes the Fire and Police Departments to notify residents door-to-door. During the Central Water Plant chemical incident in October 2024, residents were contacted via alert systems along with door-to-door notifications to evacuate.

With the mulch fire in Summit Rock, alerts were not sent out because the incident was considered lower risk, meaning no property or lives were threatened. The Fire Department notifies contractors that certain activities should be avoided when the humidity is at 20 percent or below. Additionally, Fire Code pertains to structures, not open spaces, meaning the authority to restrict contractor activity—for example, removing mulch piles—is limited.

The Horseshoe Bay Fire and Police Departments are fully staffed, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days per year. FD is staffed by 25 full-time firefighters and 1 part-

time firefighter. The staff includes a Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, 3 Shift Captains, 3 Lieutenants, 6 Engineers (Driver/Operators), and 10 Firefighters.

The department operates out of two stations. Central Fire Station is next to City Hall and Station 2 is in Horseshoe Bay West on Broken Hills. Crews run a 48/96 shift (on two days and off four days) with a minimum staffing of six personnel. At any given time, the Fire Department will have six to eight people on duty.

During emergencies, personnel are dispatched to locations where action is needed. If the Captain on duty sees the need to send an alert, he or she will rely on FD personnel during business hours and on dispatch personnel after hours to send alerts. If the Captain sees the need to alert residents door-to-door, the Police Department will be contacted to help deliver the message as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The HSB FD can also contact the City's auto-aid partners to respond if the risk to residents is high. HSB is proud to work with many auto-aid partners, including: Marble Falls Fire Rescue; Marble Falls Area Volunteers; Granite Shoals Fire Rescue; Spicewood Fire Rescue; and Cottonwood Shores Volunteers. When HSB experiences a significant event, we are capable of doubling in personnel size with their help! HSB can also request mutual aid from Sunrise Beach Fire Department, Burnet Fire Department, and Pedernales Fire Department.

We hope this article provides useful information to help keep residents informed, as well as reassurance that any emergency occurring in the City will be treated with a quick and appropriate response from local fire department and law enforcement personnel.

For more information about wildfire preparedness, visit www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov/wildfire. Please follow the City on Facebook (www.facebook.com/horseshoebaygov) and Instagram (www.instagram.com/horseshoebaygov). You may also follow the Fire Department on Facebook (www.facebook.com/HorseshoeBayFireDepartment). If you have questions about fire safety, feel free to contact the FD by calling (830) 598-6953 or stop by the closest fire station.