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Grim Forecast for 2021 Fire Season Results in Collaboration Between West Coast Burn Centers, the National Fire Protection Association and Fire Rescue Organizations

The nine organizations, led by Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, are joining forces to educate high-risk areas on wildfire safety and burn prevention

[Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors](#), the leading national non-profit dedicated to supporting burn survivors, is launching a national campaign in conjunction with nine west coast burn centers, the National Fire Protection Association and fire rescue organizations nationwide. Outreach will focus on wildfire safety, burn prevention and first aid to prepare the public for a severe wildfire season following 2020's catastrophic season. Campaign partners include Anaheim Fire & Rescue, Legacy Oregon Burn Center, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Santa Clara Valley Medical Center's Burn Center, UC Davis FFBI Regional Burn Center, UC Irvine Regional Burn Center, UW Medicine Regional Burn Center at Harborview Medical Center and Western States Burn Center at North Colorado Medical Center.

"The United States has witnessed a tremendous increase in wildfire activity over the past decade," said Amy Acton, CEO of Phoenix Society and NFPA board chair. "Wildfires are getting bigger and threatening more communities for longer periods of time each year. At any moment, a fire could consume hundreds of acres, destroy communities, and threaten lives. That is why we're teaming up with the NFPA and many of our west coast Phoenix SOAR hospitals to spread safety awareness and work to prevent future tragedies."

Every year, wildfires burn across the United States, and a growing number of people are living where wildfires are a real risk. In 2020 more than 58,000 fires burned over ten million acres across the U.S., mobilizing tens of thousands of firefighters, razing over ten thousand buildings, and killing at least 37 people. The fires caused over \$19.884 billion in damages, including \$16.5 billion in property damage and \$3.384 billion in fire suppression costs.

"The relentless tally of wildfire losses makes it increasingly clear that the U.S. is facing a deep wildfire problem," said Lorraine Carli, Vice President of Outreach and Advocacy for the National Fire Protection Association. "While there is widespread destruction from wildfire, there is not widespread regulatory action and a concerted effort to put in place policies to reverse the dangerous trend. Without a new approach we are destined for greater and unmanageable loss of life and property."

In October 2017, Sara Shepherd and her family were caught in the Redwood Valley Fire in northern California while evacuating their home. In a matter of minutes, Sara and her husband John were the only survivors. Sara hopes others who live in wildfire prone areas will benefit from her experience. "I'd tell people to put on jeans or long pants when you evacuate. Know your

evacuation route and have a backup. One of those mylar emergency survival blankets would have been good to have on hand."

On October 9, 2017, at approximately 9:45 A.M. a wildfire broke out near the 91 Freeway and Gypsum Canyon Road. It leaped over the Route 241 toll road, raced up the ridge and set fire to several homes. By noon it had burned 800 acres. By 2:30 p.m., fueled by high winds, and low humidity, it had burned 2,000 acres and was 0 percent contained. As of 6:00 am on October 10th it had burned 7,500 acres and at least 24 structures had been damaged and a dozen homes destroyed. By October 15th the fire was reportedly 90 percent contained with a total of 9,217 acres burned with 25 structures destroyed and another 55 damaged. Canyon Fire 2 was declared 100% contained by October 17th.

"Wildfire is no longer a seasonal hazard – the threat is now year-round in Southern California, as it is in many other parts of our country," said Lindsey Young, Fire Marshal for Anaheim Fire & Rescue. "We are dedicated to studying and implementing strategies in all subject areas to keep our residents safe from wildfire, at any time of year."

The eight partners are working together to provide residents with fire safety preparedness checklists, tips on preparing homes for wildfires, burn prevention information, first aid for burns and more. Experts and medical professionals are making themselves available to chat with media along the west coast as well as nationally to share a unified message around wildfire safety and burn prevention.

"We know from years of experience and research, cool tap water — not ice-cold water — is the best first approach to first aid of a burn," said Dr. Tina Palmieri, surgeon and burn surgery chief at UC Davis Health in Sacramento, Calif. "If you cannot get to the ER immediately, wash and apply clean dressing, or a sheet if that is all you have, before you can receive medical treatment."

Allyson Watson, a survivor of a 2003 wildfire is a fierce advocate for wildfire prevention. "I believe that wildfire prevention is important because these fires are becoming increasingly common. Population growth into the Wildland–urban interface (WUI), droughts, weather changes, even the bark beetle; all these things are causing an increased danger of a wildfire similar to what my family experienced. I don't want anyone to go through what I did that day, watching the news; hearing the stories of families being devastated by wildfire (for example, the loss of life in the town of Paradise California), tears at my heart in a way that I cannot describe."

"It's important to know first aid for burn injuries," said Dr. Lyndsay Deeter, Medical Director, at Western States Burn Center at North Colorado Medical Center in Greeley, Colorado. "Extinguish active flames by smothering the area with a blanket, rolling on the ground or submerging in water. If you or your loved one are having trouble breathing call 911 for help. Always make sure you are in a safe location after the fire is extinguished. You may briefly apply cool water to the burned area for no more than 5 minutes. Then switch to covering the burn with blankets or towels to maintain warmth. If pain is intolerable, or if skin is falling away from the burned area seek medical attention immediately. You may require transfer and treatment by a multidisciplinary team in a specialized burn center or referral to an outpatient burn clinic. Burn

injury can be as emotionally traumatic as physically damaging and close follow up with your healthcare provider is recommended to support psychological recovery too."

For more information on Phoenix Society, the Wildfire Safety and Burn Prevention campaign, and current programs, visit <https://www.phoenix-society.org/wildfire21>.

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About Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors

In the U.S., 40,000 people are hospitalized with burn injuries each year. Burn survivors and their loved ones face a lifelong journey of physical, emotional, and social recovery. Connecting with others who have walked a similar path is essential for optimal recovery and social reintegration. Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors is the leading connector for those affected by a burn injury, the primary resource for quality information and education, and the trusted authority for all in the burn community. The organization sees a future where the voice of the burn community unites across the globe to profoundly advance lifelong healing, optimal recovery, and burn prevention. For more information, visit www.phoenix-society.org.

Phoenix SOAR (Survivors Offering Assistance in Recovery) was designed by a national advisory team of healthcare professionals and burn survivors to provide a structured volunteer peer support program. This training program is designed to provide insight, knowledge, and communication skills necessary for the peer supporter to interact with families who have experienced a burn injury. The program also enables the burn programs to develop motivated and trained peer supporters functioning as an extension of your burn team!