Scenario 3: Wildfire Answer Key

1. This applies mainly to rural and suburban communities, as these areas have open spaces that are more prone to wildfires either through man-made or natural ignition sources. The risk of a wildfire is higher during the warmer months. This is due to people engaging in outdoor activities and areas being more susceptible to lightning strikes. Additionally, in drier climates, dried plants and leaves can act as kindling. Your local Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and local media outlets will have up-to-date information about the elevated threat of a wildfire.

2. If your home is located adjacent to a wooded area, be sure that you and your neighbors establish a buffer zone between the homes and the wooded area, as doing so may significantly curtail the spread of the fire. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the following preparedness measures are recommended:
   - Clear off pine needles and dead leaves from gutters, porches and fence lines as this will reduce the risk of embers starting additional fires.
   - Store away furniture, rattan mats, and sports equipment that may act as ignition sources.
   - Screen and seal windows and vents to reduce the risk of embers entering your home.
   - Rake landscaping mulch to a minimum of five feet from your home.
   - Trim back any tree branches that are closer than five feet from your home.
   - If a mandatory evacuation is ordered, close all windows and seal any pet doors through which embers may pass.

   The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) also recommends you equip your home with smoke detectors placed outside every sleeping area/bedroom. Regarding fire extinguishers, the NFPA recommends selecting "a multi-purpose extinguisher (can be used on all types of home fires) that is large enough to put out a small fire, but not so heavy as to be difficult to handle."

3. Steps to reduce the risk of wildfire include completely extinguishing tobacco products before discarding and completely extinguishing campfires.

4. If your home is threatened by a wildfire, the safest course of action is to evacuate, especially if the local OEM, police, and fire departments have issued a mandatory evacuation. A home evacuation plan should be created before the threat of fire occurs and then practiced by all family members, especially youth. Two meeting places should be established both in the neighborhood and outside of the neighborhood.

5. Your local OEM and local media outlets are good sources to turn to should an evacuation order be issued. Other options include installing mobile apps from the local OEM, the local Chapter of the American Red Cross, and FEMA.

6. If a loved one is comforted by a certain item (a blanket, photograph, stuffed animal, etc.), be sure to pack the item when evacuating. If a relative requires regularly scheduled mental health visits, make sure their mental health provider is aware of the location of the shelter.

7. To familiarize yourself with the evacuation route, consider driving the actual route itself should you and your family decide to leave the area prior to an evacuation order being issued. Additionally, it is a good idea to create an evacuation route that utilizes back roads, as main thoroughfares may be crowded during an evacuation. Plans to stay with family or friends well outside of the impact zone should be established prior to the threat of a wildfire.

8. Consider having a Go-Kit with, at the very minimum, the following items: water (one gallon per person, per day) and/or water purification tablets, a first-aid kit, a flashlight, batteries, a hand-crank/solar powered radio, non-perishable food, medications/prescription glasses, baby food, formula, diapers, cash (in small denominations), a wrench (to turn off utilities), hand sanitizer, a mylar blanket, ear plugs, and a book and/or deck of cards. Also consider having a Go-Kit for your pet(s) which should include food, water, medication, medical records kept in Ziploc bags and favorite toys (if applicable). Include your veterinarian's contact information and be sure that your pet is microchipped or at least has the proper ID tags displayed.

9. Returning home after a wildfire is an extremely dangerous time. There are several things to keep in mind as you return home and rebuild after a wildfire. These include:
    - Listen to authorities to find out when it is safe to return and whether water is safe to drink.
    - Avoid hot ash, charred trees, smoldering debris, and live embers. The ground may contain heat pockets that can burn you or spark another fire. Consider possible danger to any outdoor pets or livestock you might have.
    - Make calls only in emergencies. Phone lines are often jammed following a disaster. Text messaging and social media are the two best ways to contact loved ones.
    - Wear a NIOSH certified respirator and wet debris down to prevent inhalation of particulate matter.
    - Conduct an inventory of damages and contact your insurance company for assistance.
    - Wildfires dramatically alter landscape and ground conditions, which can lead to increased risk of flooding due to heavy rain or mudflows. Flood risk is heightened up to 5 years after a wildfire – consider purchasing flood insurance to protect the life you've built.