



**City of Ashland Evacuation Study Key Findings Summarized by the
City of Ashland and KLD Engineering, P.C. (KLD)
May 2021**

- Breaking the City into evacuation zones is a best practice supported by the analysis. Zones can be evacuated one by one, or in groups as the situation dictates. The study analyzed evacuation times for all zones independently, groups of zones and the whole city. To get the most people out of harm's way it is important to evacuate only when your zone is called unless you need extra time to evacuate due to special circumstances such as mobility or health issues.
- In best case scenarios, it will take most people at least an hour and twenty minutes to evacuate an individual zone and up to 3 hours and 10 mins to evacuate the entire city, if not longer should some exit routes be blocked. Main streets will experience congestion and delays in best-case scenarios. If a fire starts inside, or on the edge of the community, there may not be enough time to evacuate everyone and people could be exposed to hazards. The study suggests safe refuge zones for identified access-limited neighborhoods, but also notes a lack of centralized areas large enough to hold the number of people in access-impaired neighborhoods, primarily in the hillside areas.
- Taking one car during an evacuation can save time and lives. Roughly 40% of people surveyed would take two or more cars. *We can save 30 minutes of evacuation time by taking one car each.* Fewer cars equal less congestion and faster evacuation for all, reducing fire exposure for those who could be close to danger.
- Traffic flow improvements were analyzed including adding an emergency on-ramp at North Mountain Ave and Interstate 5. KLD concluded that adding the North Mountain access to the interstate would reduce evacuation time, but only by 10 minutes.





- KLD assessed expanding the single lane of traffic in the “road diet” on North Main St between Helman St and Jackson Rd to double lanes leaving the city toward Valley View and Talent. The study concluded that 20 minutes would be saved by temporarily doubling the lanes outbound.
- Building a bridge connecting E. Nevada St and N. Mountain Ave over Bear Creek would reduce evacuation time, but only by 10 minutes.
- Widening South Valley View Road between Highway 99 and Interstate 5 would not save time due to limited lane capacity as cars merge onto the Interstate in one lane.
- The analysis looked for intersections to place traffic control staffing for smoother traffic flow. The intersection at Crowson Road and Siskiyou Boulevard was identified due to the potential for high traffic volume where there is no traffic light. Where intersections are already controlled by traffic lights, the analysis supports letting existing traffic lights function normally to allow orderly cross traffic.
- Evacuations when Southern Oregon University (SOU) students are on campus will take longer due to added cars and people. The City will work with SOU on strategies to lessen traffic impacts from campus.
- Those commuting from Ashland to neighboring communities may not be able to return home if fire is immediately threatening roads and neighborhoods that are closed for public safety. Be prepared to stay at work, with friends, relatives, or in hotels. Keep a bag packed in your car and arrange for neighbors to evacuate your pets when they leave.





Important conclusions from City staff, but not in the study:

- Red Flag Parking advisories can help create more lanes of traffic, allowing firefighters quicker access on narrow streets while residents evacuate. This is a best practice that has been implemented for many years in California communities. Critical streets would need to be identified and a program created over several years to encourage or mandate that vehicles not be parked on certain streets on Red Flag fire weather days as declared by the National Weather Service.
- Managing vegetation both inside and on the fringes of town is important to buy time for evacuation and foster fire suppression success to reduce citizen exposure. Similarly, managing vegetation on individual lots is critical to slow fire spread and reduce exposure in neighborhoods and particularly along street fronts where cars may have to wait in line. If homes and landscaping do not catch fire, they do not expose people to harm during the evacuation process. See tips on making your home and landscape fire resistant at www.fireadaptedashland.org

