

NOVEMBER 28, 2016 WILDFIRES  
FAQ

Q) What is the money that is being raised being used for? Particularly, are any of the relief funds designated for aid for citizens to help rebuild their properties, living expenses, etc.?

A) As noted on [www.moutaintough.org](http://www.moutaintough.org) website, the Gatlinburg Relief Fund is set up and managed through SmartBank and its purpose is to directly benefit families impacted by the Sevier County wildfires. Employees of businesses that were either destroyed or were unable to open by January 25, 2017, were eligible for relief funds of \$1,000 per month for three months. The third and last installments were recently disbursed. Overall, approximately \$1,065,000 has been disbursed.

Those individuals and families that did not qualify for relief from this fund will be able to apply for assistance through the newly formed Mountain Tough Long-Term Recovery Team. Those who apply and meet criteria for assistance will be assigned a case worker to individually assist them with their unmet needs. The effort is already well underway and more information will be forthcoming.

Q) What are the relief funds related to the wildfires?

A) Information regarding funds can be found on [www.moutaintough.org](http://www.moutaintough.org)

Q) What if I still need counseling now that the deadline for FEMA provided counseling has passed?

A) [www.moutaintough.org](http://www.moutaintough.org) site has links to counseling options. Helen Ross McNabb also provides counseling and can be reached at (865) 429-0557.

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Q) What type of alert/warning system did the city have in place at the time of the wildfire?

A) The existing siren system was installed as a component of the city's Flood Warning System. The siren locations are positioned to provide audible coverage to the riverside areas of downtown that could be affected during a flood. The city chose to use this system to help notify residents and visitors within hearing distance of the sirens of the need to evacuate. The warning sirens were activated twice between 8:20 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. The sirens emit a warning tone that lasts for 60 seconds followed by a live voice command for "all people to evacuate the area". The four sirens are located at: East Holly Ridge Road, River Road beside the Water Plant, Parkway at the corner of the City paid parking lot and Marathon Gas station and Baskins Creek Bypass. This system was later damaged by the wildfire.

Q) What type of system is in place now and what type of emergency alert system is planned for the future.

A) Currently, all residents and visitors can go the city's website at [www.gatlinburgtn.gov](http://www.gatlinburgtn.gov) and click on the CODERED button and sign up for alerts to be sent to home phones, cell phones, text and email. In addition, the city is replacing the damaged flood warning siren system with an Emergency Notification System that will place 5 sirens in the downtown area initially. This system will be capable of sending siren and voice alerts over the speakers, activating the CODERED phone and text alerts, IPAWS alerts and will also integrate with an AM radio station that will broadcast warning information.

Q) Why were the trolleys evacuated before the citizens?

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A) No trolleys were evacuated before the citizens. On November 28, multiple trolleys were out and operating their normal transit routes. Certain drivers were reassigned to evacuation notification and transport while a few other trolleys were placed in the emergency vehicle staging area on Reagan Drive so they could be deployed to help transport evacuees. The trolleys that are not in use are normally stored in the trolley lot on Newman Road (beside the city's Street Department and Service Center). All the unused trolleys, staff vehicles and the personal vehicles of the trolley drivers are kept there. The unused trolleys were not moved from this lot until 4 A.M. on Nov. 29 after the area had sustained fire damage. 3 trolleys, 1 mass transit staff vehicle and several personal vehicles were damaged by fire or debris.

Q) Explain the lack of cell phone service?

A) City and county officials experienced cellular outages with the extreme conditions of wind, fire, fallen trees and powerlines contributing to these outages. One would have to direct the cellular outage questions to the cellular companies for a more specific explanation of the cellular outage.

Q) Warning sirens- how many were there, when did they go off and for how long?

A) See question #4 response above.

Q) Is there an Emergency Evacuation Plan and can it be posted or made available for citizens to review?

A) Evacuation procedures are a part of the city Emergency Operations Plan. The procedures do not identify evacuation routes

due to the mountainous terrain of our area and the inability to predict which roads would be open and/or clear of hazards and obstructions.

Q) County Mayor Larry Waters stated on the Channel 10 Investigative Report that the EAS- Emergency Alert System was activated over the TV and Radio. What Time?

A) Multiple TV outlets began broadcasting the evacuation of specific areas throughout the evening. These media outlets also began reporting the mandatory evacuation of the city at approximately 8:20 P.M. The EAS was activated by the National Weather Service in Morristown, TN. We understand that this activation may have occurred at approximately 9:03 p.m.

Q) What is being done in regards to hydro-seeding and strategic cutting of trees to prevent mudslides that are a natural risk after a wildfire?

A) Public rights-of-way are scheduled to be hydro seeded in the very near future, through a grant with the NRCS. Other hydro seeding will be done on private property as needed and determined, based on site surveys by Thompson Consulting Services. Trees on both public and private property will be inspected and those determined to be hazardous will be removed as directed by Thompson Consulting Services.

Q) Who was in charge of evacuations?

A) Per the City Emergency Operations Plan, Evacuation Procedures are listed within the Notification Section and lists the following: Upon the decision of the On-Scene Incident Commander, the agency department head, the City Emergency Management Director, or City Manager ---- Evacuation procedures will be carried out by the Police Department utilizing their resources or other resources from other city agencies. The Police Department will

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utilize departmental guidelines in carrying out this function. The Fire Chief, as the On-Scene Incident Commander, ordered the evacuations to occur and those evacuations began occurring at noon on November 28 and continued throughout the day.

Q) How/why did the Park allow the fire to burn for five days in the presence of an extreme drought?

A) Any questions of this sort should be directed to the GSMNP.

Q) What policies, if any, have been put in place since 11/28 to address the issues faced with the wildfires?

A) An After-Action Review will be conducted and if any recommended changes or improvements are revealed from that review, those recommendations will be implemented to insure the safety of our citizens and visitors while enhancing the effectiveness of our emergency operations.

Q) Statements were made regarding November 27 School System Notification.

A) No notification from School System occurred on November 27 as was stated.

Q) Can a property owner build back in a smaller footprint?

A) Property owners can build back in a smaller footprint if it is within previous footprint.