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**From:** JODY EVANS

My name is Jody. I lived in Detroit. I'm going to tell you my story about the fire.

Please let me tell you what happened in my life before the fire. I promise it will be the condensed version.

I'm 58. Single. Disabled. I have 3 kids, 4 grand. I worked almost 20 years for HP. In 97, I was in a collision with an 18 wheeler.

That experience leaves a mark. After the broken bones and stitches healed, I had a stroke from hitting the windshield. The lap belt held but the shoulder belt did not. Where the lap belt was just below my kidneys, was internal damage to my aorta that was undiagnosed.

I had a descending aorta bypass in 2012. That failed and I had a thrombectomy bypass in 2015. After that I had 4 large hernias. Surgery again.

During those years, I lost all of my employment, my retirement, and some belongings. I had to file bankruptcy and disability. It was a struggle.

I was only able to save my house. After my surgeries, I remodeled my house again to sell. It took years. I sold and paid all my debt.

I bought the place in Detroit in cash and put in a new little mobile. I was going to live and die there. Never moving again. I was just putting up house numbers on my new house on Sept. 7th 2020. ....

Sept. 8th

A fire was burning on Opal creek for several days before the wind storm on the holiday weekend. 80 mph winds were predicted. I was watching for warnings or information on tv and internet. Nothing. Then about 7pm the power went out. So, if there ever was a warning, I didn't get it. My cell phone was dead and I had just plugged it in before the power went out. So 8% on my phone. I checked on my neighbor Maria and did a few things by candle light and then went to bed.

I woke up because the wind chime on my porch was crashing so hard. It was almost midnight. I had left a window open and ash was blowing sideways into the house.

There was no power so no lights. I got one text from my God son in Albany that I should get out now. Fire is too close. I had all my important material ready to go. I had packed photos and paperwork in case of evacuation. But how do you find it all in the dark? How do you collect your life in the dark? How do you go down stairs with your arms full without being able to see? I held a little flash light in my mouth until the batteries died. I was able to get my purse and medication and phone together. The wind was so bad, I could hear trees and branches falling. I got scared. I couldn't think straight. What should I take with me?

I thought the fire is going towards the west. Maybe it won't get here. And then, I hear a loud speaker and see police lights coming up the hill. Hes saying "Go NOW"!! Do not wait. Leave Now. over and over. Run Run Run.....I froze in fear. I couldn't try to save any memories. I had to go. I whipped around the corner to my neighbors to make sure she was leaving. I yelled LETS GO. I heard them scream that the canyons on fire and go east. Wind, ash, trees, branches were all swirling. Like a disaster movie but in real life. When I came to hwy 22, I went east. My phone was almost dead and I had no signal. When I came thru Idana I was confused by the orange glow. What type of emergency vehicle has orange lights? Just then I came around the bend and it wasn't a vehicle; it was a wall of fire. The entire hillside. It had jumped the road and on the other side. I looked behind and that was glowing orange too. The road in front was glowing. All four sides. I was going 88mph. Thru fire. Then a tree came down in front of me. Some man with a saw cut it open and we drove thru the tree. That was the longest 4 minutes of my life. I thought I had went the wrong way. I thought that I wouldn't live thru this one. I couldn't call my kids to say good bye to them. I was wearing pajamas and slippers. I was scared for my life. I was alone, and driving thru fire.

I ended up in the red cross evac center in Redmond. Since then, my life has been turned upside down. I'm living in a 22' rv in a friends back yard in Albany. It's been more than 5 months. During that time, I've delt with insurance, bills, fema, and so many agencies it hard to list. I had to get my deed replaced and all the paperwork in place. Insurance covers some things but not all. The process forward isnt clear. There are no utilities in Detroit. I own land that is totally destroyed. I just want to go home, but there is no home. I have more information and would be happy to speak to you. The red tape and isolation is overwhelming. Its not just the fire, it's fire with a pandemic on top. The struggle is real. For instance, I tried to apply to fema on my phone while in evac. It was very small print and they asked for everything but DNA. So, I went to school that had a fema help desk. There were 2 people at desks. One man talking to another man and one lady who I sat in front of 8 feet apart. Thru a mask I tried to explain. I only have my phone. My eyeglasses were lost in the fire. Can you help me with the application? Oh her computer wasn't cooperating. She said to just get online and fill out the form. I said again, my laptop was lost in the fire and I don't have eyeglasses yet. Can you help me? She said just get online.....again. I said my house burnt with the internet connection. My laptop burnt. My eyeglasses burnt. Can you help me please? The man at the other desk interrupts and says I'm the manage for fema. He said he didn't appreciate my tone. I'm thinking well yeah....I'm talking thru a mask from a distance and I was frustrated. I tried to explain to him while waiting for the lady to get her computer running. I lost my laptop, glasses and internet connection in the fire and wanted to apply for some help. His response was.....well don't you have any friend or family? Really? I asked who he was again. He said hes the manager and I said no sir you are an ass. The lady at the computer laughed out loud. I turned around to leave. So disappointed. He said in a snotty voice.....have a nice day. Are you kidding me? There are good people trying to help but the response has been a joke. I've left out quite a bit. Theres alot more. But you get the gist.

All my life, as far back as I can remember, if I had a problem or complaint or crying about something, I was taught that I could complain only if I had a solution or suggestion to fix the thing I was complaining about. Solid advice. So.....heres my suggestion. I hope it falls on ears that can actually help. Millions of trees were cut. Thousands of homes were lost all over the state that night. People want to rebuild. There need to be a cooperative effort coordinated by a qualified disaster trained person. With one set of information. The national guard need to called in to recover all the utilities systems needed in every county to even start the process. Why can't all the trees cut down be turned around and provided to the tax payer at the fire addresses for rebuilding? Get fema and state and foundations to subsidize mills and process lumber for homeowner. For everyone not just me. People are suffering and face challenges at every angle. From every direction. Just my 2 cents.

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