After Wildfire

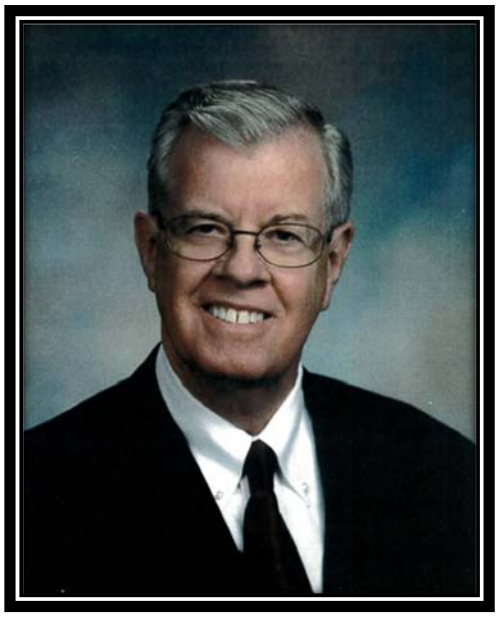
A GUIDE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITIES

SILVER JACKETS
MANY PARTNERS, ONE TEAM

June 2019

Page intentionally left blank

In Memory



Colonel Carl Morrison was a well-respected collaborative leader of California flood risk management issues. His support of the California Silver Jackets team and contributions to flood risk management were invaluable. This After Wildfire guide is dedicated to his memory.

This After Wildfire guide was a collaborative effort by the California Silver Jackets Team. Silver Jackets is an interagency partnership program encouraging federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to work together to find solutions for complex flood risk management issues.

Agencies that contributed to this guide include:

California Geological Survey
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
California Department of Water Resources
California Office of Emergency Services
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Natural Resources Conservation Service
National Weather Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. Forest Service

Table of Contents

1. **Welcome to the After Wildfire Guide 7**
2. **Staying Safe Immediately After a Wildfire 8**
   a. Around Your Home 8
   b. Around Your Neighborhood 9
3. **Post-Wildfire Hazards 10**
   a. Flooding Hazards and Flash Flooding 10
   b. Flash Flood and Debris Flow Watches and Warnings 11
   c. Rockfall 14
   d. Roadway Erosion 14
   e. Burned and Distressed Trees 14
4. **How to Protect Yourself Before and During a Flood/Debris Flow 15**
   a. What to do Before a Flood/Debris Flow 15
   b. What to do During a Flood/Debris Flow 16
   c. Resources for Weather and Emergency Alerts 18
   d. Mobile Apps 18
5. **Programs to Assist with Recovery Efforts 20**
   a. Programs for Individuals, Families, and Businesses 21
      1. Housing 21
      2. Food 22
      3. Social Services 23
      4. Debris Removal 24
      5. Farm Rehabilitation 26

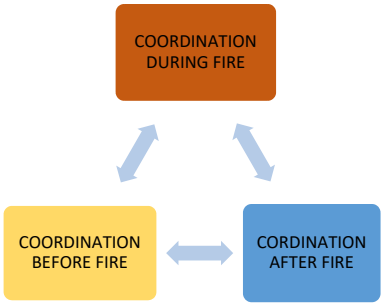
6. Business Support 27
7. Religious Organizations 27
8. Tribal Groups 28
9. Non-Governmental Organizations 28
b. Programs for Communities 29
1. Housing 29
2. Food 29
3. Social Services 29
4. Pets and Livestock 30
5. Pollution and Hazardous Waste 30
6. Programs to Help the State, Cities, and Responders 31
a. State of California Programs 31
b. Federal Programs 31
c. Non-Governmental Organizations 34
7. Financial and Funding Tips 36
8. Mobilize Your Community Before and After a Wildfire 38
a. Planning Ahead 39
b. Communications 39
c. Establish a Local Government Post-Fire Coordination Group 40
d. Establish a Community Post-Fire Coordinator 41
e. Volunteer Coordination 42

1. Welcome to the After Wildfire Guide

The 2017 Thomas Fire burning Santa Paula Ridge near the town of Fillmore (Credit: Ventura County OES)

After Wildfire: A Guide for California Communities is an interagency response to requests from fire-affected communities for a single, consolidated resource that can help them recover from a wildfire and plan for post-wildfire hazards. California has experienced numerous catastrophic wildfires, many of which were made more destructive by the intense flooding and debris flows that followed during subsequent rainfall. In the wake of these events, individuals and communities seeking help often struggle to navigate the complex requirements of the many state and federal response authorities.

This guide contains valuable information that will help start you on the road to recovery. It offers practical guidance about staying safe immediately after a wildfire, contacting the appropriate agencies for assistance, managing the financial and funding aspects of your recovery, and mobilizing your community as part of the recovery process.



For additional information, visit: www.readyforwildfire.org/postwildfire/.

2. Staying Safe Immediately After a Wildfire

Wildfires can devastate the lives and property of community members. But the danger is not over after the flames are put out. Flash flooding and debris flows, rockfalls, structural damage, road instability, and damaged trees are just some of the dangers that can follow a wildfire and persist for weeks or months thereafter.

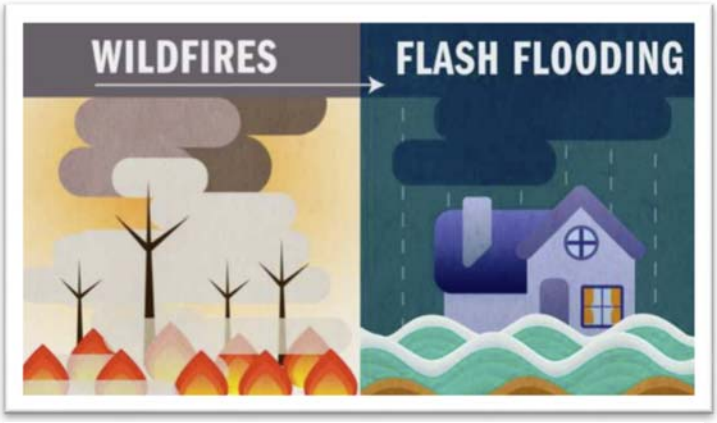
In the immediate aftermath of a wildfire, and as the rainy season approaches, keep these tips in mind:

a. Around Your Home

- ✓ Stay away from your home or business until fire officials tell you it is safe to return.
- ✓ Be aware of and use extreme caution around burned structures, trees, power poles, and other tall objects or structures that may have lost stability during the fire. Most burned structures and surfaces are unstable.
- ✓ Do not touch any power lines.

- ✓ Keep a "fire watch." Look for smoke, sparks, ash pits, and embers throughout your house and on rooftops (e.g., in gutters). If you find any of these, contact your local fire department immediately and stay clear of the hazard.
- ✓ Check for downed power lines and for the smell of natural gas before entering or inspecting your home. Turn off power until you have completed your inspection.
- ✓ Use a battery-powered flashlight to inspect a damaged home. Turn the flashlight on outside your home before entering because the battery may produce a spark that could ignite leaking gas, if present.

- ✓ Check for power. If it's off, contact your local utility company. If you use propane, turn off all valves and contact a propane supplier to arrange for an inspection. If you use heating oil or have solar panels, contact licensed technicians to verify that these systems are safe for continued operation.
- ✓ Do not drink or use water from the faucet until emergency officials say it is okay. Water supply systems can be damaged and become polluted during wildfires or as a result of subsequent post-fire flooding.
- ✓ Check for damage to your well. If it has been damaged by fire, contact a local licensed and bonded well constructor or pump installer to determine the extent of the damage and what must be done to either repair or decommission the well.
- ✓ Discard any food that has been exposed to heat, smoke, flood waters, or soot.
- ✓ Make sure you have non-perishable emergency supplies and a disaster supply kit. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides a thorough checklist at: https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/checklist3.pdf.
- ✓ Have an evacuation plan in place and make sure all family members are familiar with it.
- ✓ Have a battery-powered AM/FM weather radio and a cell phone available to listen for emergency updates and weather forecasts.
- ✓ Be aware of imminent post-wildfire hazards. Flash floods and debris flows are very real and deadly hazards when it rains in a wildfire-burned area upstream or upslope of your location.



b. Around Your Neighborhood

- ✓ Stay away from storm channels and natural drainages because rivers, creeks, streets, and canals can convey deadly flows of water and debris when it rains, especially after a wildfire.
- ✓ Stay out of burned forests during windy conditions because the wind can topple burned trees.

3. Post-Wildfire Hazards

By dramatically changing landscape and ground conditions in the area, wildfires increase the likelihood that rates of erosion and runoff will reach dangerous levels. For this reason, become aware of, and remain vigilant about, the following hazards. They can threaten lives and property even after the fire is extinguished.

Home impacted by the January 9, 2018, debris flow in Santa Barbara County after the 2017 Thomas Fire (Credit: California Geological Survey)

a. Flooding Hazards and Flash Flooding

Flooding occurs when water accumulates and submerges land that is normally dry, and flash floods are exactly what the name suggests: floods that happen in a flash! In burned areas, flash floods occur most often when rainfall rates reach half an inch per hour. When it rains in a burn area, debris flows started by flash floods can travel many miles downslope from the burn area, where it may not even be raining.

Remember: it takes much less rainfall to cause flash flooding in a burn area than it would have taken before the wildfire occurred. In fact, thunderstorms that develop over burn areas can produce flash flooding and debris flows nearly as fast as National Weather Service (NWS) radar can detect the rainfall.

b. Flash Flood and Debris Flow Watches and Warnings

In California and other western states, post-fire flooding and debris flows are a significant threat after wildfires, both in terms of life-safety and property damage. Changes in land cover due to wildfire can cause upstream areas and streams to produce extremely large amounts of fast-moving runoff and sediment. For example, local experts estimated that debris flows carrying water, mud, boulders, trees, and tree branches reached up to 25–30 feet high and moved 25–35 miles per hour in the lower areas of Montecito, California, on January 9, 2018 (National Weather Service). They cannot be outrun; the fastest human runs just under 28 miles per hour.

Motorists putting themselves in danger by not heeding to "Turn Around, Don't Drown"

When there is a threat or potential threat of flash flooding or debris flows, the NWS may issue Flood Advisories, Flash Flood Watches, or Flash Flood Warnings. Understanding NWS watches, warnings, and advisories can help you keep your family and community safe when it rains after a wildfire.

Debris Flows

As water runs downhill through burned areas, it can create major erosion and pick up large amounts of ash, sand, silt, rocks, boulders, and burned vegetation (trees, shrubs, or plants), generating a debris flow (also commonly termed "mudflow"). These fast-moving, highly destructive debris flows are one of the most dangerous post-fire hazards because they tend to occur with little warning. They block drainages, damage structures, travel in unpredictable directions, and can endanger human life even miles away from the burned area.

Be aware and continue monitoring conditions when the NWS issues a Flood Advisory.

A **Flood Advisory** is issued when a forecasted weather event may cause trouble and require action. You should continue monitoring local news outlets and your local NWS office for updates as conditions develop. A Flood Advisory is issued when flooding is not expected to be bad enough to issue a warning. Take appropriate actions to safeguard your family and property, and consider modifying travel plans.

Be prepared for a flash flood when the NWS issues a Flash Flood Watch.

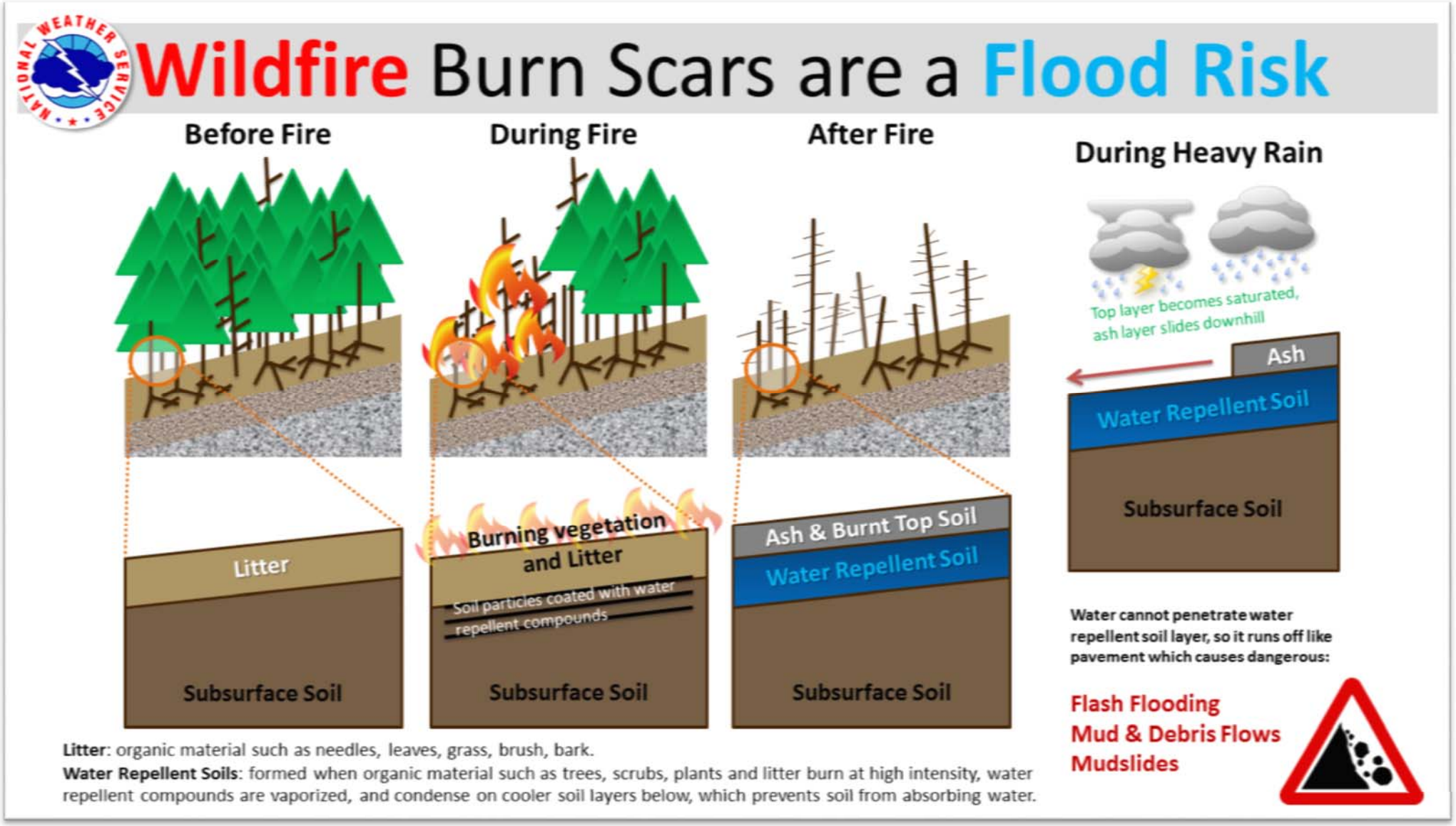
A **Flash Flood Watch** is issued to indicate that current or developing conditions may result in flash flooding. However, flash flooding or debris flows are not imminent, and there may be

some uncertainty about the location or timing. In areas where ground conditions have been changed by wildfire, a watch is typically issued within several hours to days ahead of forecasted thunderstorms and rain events that could possibly generate flash flooding or debris flows. An example of this is the rainfall that occurred in the Thomas Fire burn area, which led to flash flooding and debris flows downslope of the burn area in Montecito, California, on January 9, 2018.

Take action to keep your family and community safe when the NWS issues a Flash Flood Warning.

A **Flash Flood Warning** is issued when a flash flood or debris flow is imminent or occurring. If you are in the warning area, take action immediately, as these conditions are often life-threatening. Debris flows result from short duration, high intensity rain events over ground that has been altered by a wildfire. Impacts from flash flooding and debris flows can occur many miles away from the burn area.

Even if you were not directly affected by the wildfire, it does not mean you are safe from the possibility of flash flooding or debris flows after it.



The burn scars left from a wildfire cause changes to the landscape that can result in flooding and debris flows

(Credit: National Weather Service)

c. Rockfall

Rockfall is a natural process where rock fragments on steep slopes fall, bounce, or roll downhill. After a fire, this process may become more frequent because wildfires can burn hot enough to crack rocks (making them less stable and more likely to fall) and destroy trees, stumps, logs, woody debris, and roots that normally hold loose rocks in place. Rockfalls can be especially hazardous to life and property along roads, trails, and steep slopes near residential, industrial, and farm buildings.

d. Roadway Erosion

Increased runoff from rain in a burn area may cause sediment buildup on and erosion of roadways. Thick cones and piles of sediment can build up on roadways and in drainage ditches. The latter may clog culverts, block flows beneath bridges, and cause erosion of embankments supporting roads. In heavy storms, this may lead to partially or completely collapsed roadways. These hazards make traveling in burn areas or in areas downslope of burn areas especially dangerous at night.

Landslides caused by heavy rain weakened the foundation of Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge, causing it to crack and start sliding down the hillside in February 2017 (Credit: California Department of Transportation)

e. Burned and Distressed Trees

It is important for homeowners to check and monitor trees after a wildfire, because burned and distressed trees may fall at any time, with or without wind. Fallen trees may also get hung up in the branches of other trees and break away later. Remain alert and monitor the trees on your property.

Home impacted by a distressed tree post-wildfire (Credit: CAL FIRE)

4. How to Protect Yourself Before and During a Flood/Debris Flow

If you live or own a business downstream or downslope of a burned area, be aware that there's a high likelihood you may experience floods and debris flows during the next rainfall. This section describes what to do before and during floods and debris flows and what resources and apps are available to help you.

a. What to do Before a Flood/Debris Flow

There are several things you can do to minimize property losses and ensure the safety of family and employees.

- ✓ Monitor incoming storms and immediately heed all warnings and orders from emergency officials.
- ✓ Check your homeowners or renters insurance coverage, as flood damage is not usually covered. Speak with your insurance agent about purchasing the right types and amounts of coverage for your home. To find out more about flood insurance, visit: www.fema.gov/(national-flood-insurance-program.
- ✓ Take first aid, CPR, and disaster-preparedness classes.
- ✓ Sign up for local wireless emergency alerts sent by authorized government agencies through your mobile carrier. Also, sign up for alerts through your county office of emergency services, where available.

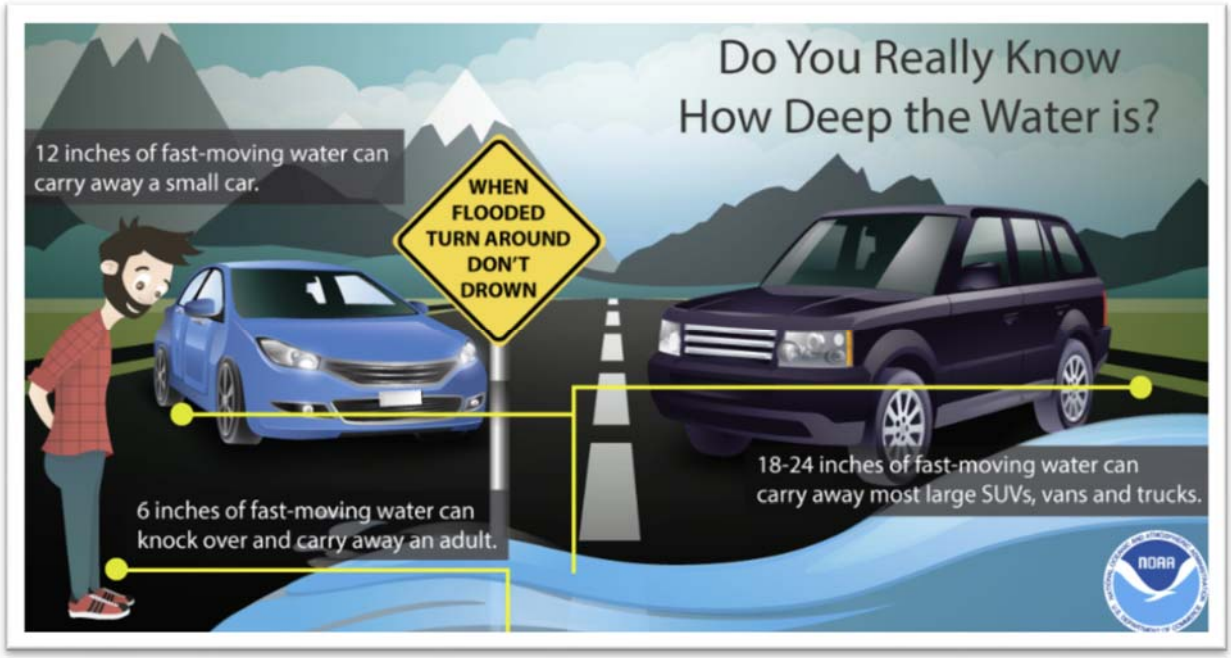
- ✓ Identify the types of hazards that could affect your family (e.g., flash flooding).
- ✓ Know and understand your home's vulnerability to flooding and wind.
- ✓ Identify safe areas on higher ground to which you and your family can evacuate. In certain circumstances, the safest place may be at shelters within your community.

- ✓ Determine safe evacuation routes from your home. Have an evacuation plan in place and make sure all family members are familiar with it.
- ✓ Have a cell phone available with extra batteries or an external charger.
- ✓ Identify an out-of-state friend as a family contact, so all your family members have a single point of contact with whom to check in.
- ✓ Make a plan now for what to do with your pets, should you need to evacuate.
- ✓ Post emergency telephone numbers by your phones and make sure your children know how and when to call 9-1-1.
- ✓ Make sure you have non-perishable emergency supplies and a disaster supply kit on hand. FEMA provides a thorough checklist at: www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/checklist3.pdf.
- ✓ Purchase a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, which has a special radio receiver or scanner capable of picking up a signal from the NOAA Weather Radio broadcasting network. Remember to replace its batteries every 6 months, as you do with your smoke detectors.
- ✓ Assemble a first aid kit and ensure that you have working flashlights and extra batteries.

b. What to do During a Flood/Debris Flow

Take the following precautions to help protect yourself and your property from the risks associated with flooding:

- ✓ Do not walk through moving water – just six inches of water can sweep an adult off their feet. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving and use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you (flooding can buckle and tear out sidewalks and roads).
- ✓ Do not attempt to drive through a flood or debris flow, or into flooded areas. You and the vehicle can be quickly swept away. It takes only a foot of water to float or sweep away most vehicles. Remember: “Turn Around, Don’t Drown.” For more information, visit: www.nws.noaa.gov/os/water/tadd/.



(Credit: National Weather Service)

- ✓ Listen to NOAA Weather Radio via the following smartphone applications for more information and alerts:
  - o Android: play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.coudriet.weatherradio&hl=en
  - o iPhone: itunes.apple.com/us/app/noaa-weather-radio/id410148139?mt=8
- ✓ Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons, and other low-lying areas that can flood suddenly. Remember: Flash floods can occur miles downstream/downslope from where rain is falling; they can appear in low-lying areas with or without typical warnings (e.g., clouds, rain).
- ✓ Pay attention to local emergency response messaging and heed evacuation notifications. Local authorities may indicate it is safer for you and your family to shelter in place if flash flooding is not impacting your neighborhood. When local authorities indicate it is necessary to evacuate, leave your home immediately.
- ✓ Move yourself and your family to a safe evacuation location if you believe there is a possibility of flash flooding hitting your home or property.
- ✓ Go to the top floor, attic, or roof if water rises in your home before you evacuate.
- ✓ Wash your hands with soap and disinfected water if they come in contact with floodwaters.
- ✓ Turn off all utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances, but do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

c. Resources for Weather and Emergency Alerts

- ✓ **Wireless Emergency Alerts**: These alerts are sent by authorized government agencies through your mobile carrier. Pay attention to local emergency response messaging and heed evacuation notifications. Mobile users are not charged for receiving these text-like alerts and are automatically enrolled to receive them. These alerts may be used to notify mobile users of Presidential Alerts during a national emergency, AMBER alerts, or extreme weather alerts.

- ✓ **National Weather Service Forecasting**: Provides flash flood and post-fire debris flow "watch" and "warning" notifications in burn areas. For a list of NWS radio stations in California, visit: www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/coverage/stations.php?State=CA.

- ✓ **Emergency Alert System**: Broadcasts flash flood warnings on commercial radio and TV. For more information, visit: www.fcc.gov/general/emergency-alert-system-eas.

- ✓ **FEMA**: Provides email alerts and text messages to the general public. For more information, visit: www.fema.gov/mobile-app.

- ✓ **Ready for Wildfire**: This is a CAL FIRE smartphone app that provides wildfire alerts, text messages, and other information. For more information, visit: www.readyforwildfire.org.

- ✓ **Nixle**: Provides free text and email alerts for anywhere in the nation. Alerts include severe weather, criminal activity, severe traffic, and local events. For more information, visit: www.nixle.com/.

- ✓ **Reverse 9-1-1**: Some parts of California have reverse 9-1-1 systems in place that provide NWS watch and warning communications for extreme storm events. Check your local county's website for more information on alert systems specific to and available in your area.

d. Mobile Apps

Consider downloading these apps for additional resources and tools you can use after a wildfire or other disaster.

- ✓ **Wildfire**: Developed by the American Red Cross, this app provides checklists for what to do right before, during, and after a wildfire. The latest wildfire news is also contained within the app: www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/mobile-apps.

- ✓ **CAL FIRE Ready for Wildfire**: Allows homeowners to track their progress when creating defensible space, hardening their homes with fire-resistant construction, assembling an emergency supply kit, and creating a family communication and evacuation plan. Users can sign up for customized alerts that will send notifications to a mobile device, or text messages when CAL FIRE crews are responding to a wildfire nearby: www.readyforwildfire.org/Ready-for-Wildfire-App/.

- ✓ **FEMA Mobile App**: Helps plan for and respond to natural disasters: www.fema.gov/mobile-app.

- ✓ **First Aid App**: Developed by the American Red Cross, this comprehensive app includes a checklist of how to prepare for an emergency, how to identify and perform first aid for various conditions (including how to treat burns), and a feature for locating the hospital closest to you: https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/mobile-apps.html.

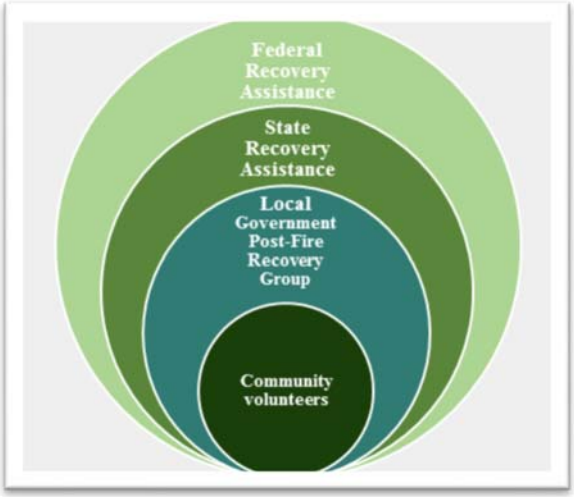
(Credit: National Weather Service)

- ✓ **ReUnite**: This post-disaster reunification tool helps connect lost family members and friends: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/reunite/id368052994?mt=8.

- ✓ **Weather Underground**: Provides weather updates with data points from 200,000 personal weather stations across the globe: www.wunderground.com/download/index.asp.

5. Programs to Assist with Recovery Efforts

In cases of wide-scale need, the local Emergency Manager or other government representative will coordinate with government agencies, public safety officials, nonprofit organizations, and elected officials to secure public facilities (e.g., emergency shelters), identify government assistance for special-needs populations, and obtain emergency food and water supplies. In California, county emergency services work with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and FEMA.



This section describes a selection of recovery programs and services provided by government and non-governmental organizations to individuals, families, businesses, and communities.

- ✓ ***For individual, family, or business assistance*: see Section 5a, pages 21-28. Topics covered pertain to housing, food, social services, debris removal, farm rehabilitation, business support, religious and tribal organizations, and non-governmental organizations.**

- ✓ ***For community assistance:* see Section 5b, pages 29-30. Topics covered include housing, food, social services, pets and livestock, and pollution and hazardous waste.**

- ✓ ***For state or community-wide assistance:* see Section 6 for state, federal, and non-federal resources.**

Please note that programs and funding levels can change from year to year, and assistance may not always be available. You may also find additional assistance from community volunteers and local organizations that are not included here.

If there is an official disaster declaration for your area, visit www.disasterassistance.gov/ to find information, support, services, and a means to access and apply for disaster assistance.

a. Programs for Individuals, Families, and Businesses

1. Housing

❖ **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

The first step toward getting housing assistance – after calling your insurance company – is to register with FEMA. Go online to www.disasterassistance.gov/ or call the FEMA helpline at 800-621-3362, (TTY) 800-462-7585. Once you have registered, FEMA will arrange for an inspector to examine your home. (Note that if you receive an SBA loan application, completing it is an important step in finding out what aid may be available to you.)

❖ **Federal Housing Administration (FHA)**

Homeowners with FHA loans may qualify for relief if a presidentially declared disaster has affected their ability to make mortgage payments. Let your lender know that you are an affected borrower. More information can also be found at:

- FHA and Housing: www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing
- Disaster Relief: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/sfh/nsc/qaho0121

❖ **Individuals and Household Program**

In a federally declared disaster, the Individuals and Households Program for housing assistance provides money, up to the program maximum, for necessary housing-related expenses and serious needs that can't be met through other means.

Housing assistance under the program includes:

- Temporary housing
- Repair or replacement of existing home
- Semi-permanent or permanent housing construction

For questions or to apply by phone, call 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or visit: www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/24945.

2. Food

❖ **California Department of Social Services – Disaster CalFresh**

Disaster CalFresh (D-CalFresh) helps meet the temporary nutritional needs of disaster victims within a 30-day period following a natural disaster. D-CalFresh provides a month's worth of benefits on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card which can be used to purchase food at authorized retail stores. D-CalFresh is only available when all of the following occur:

- A Presidential Disaster Declaration for Individual Assistance has been declared in the affected area.
- Commercial channels of food distribution have been disrupted and those commercial channels have been restored.
- The State of California has been approved to operate a D-CalFresh program and the affected county has submitted a request to the California Department of Social Services.

For more information, contact the D-CalFresh Benefits Helpline at 1-877-847-3663 or visit one of the following websites:

- CalFresh Homepage: www.cdss.ca.gov/
- CalFresh Disaster: www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/CalFresh/Disaster-CalFresh
- California State Office: www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/California/index
- County Welfare Office List: www.cdss.ca.gov/County-Offices

❖ **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)**

The Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) may help you replace food lost in a disaster or help you apply for D-SNAP benefits online. An expedited D-SNAP program for disasters exists to provide benefits within seven days. For more information, call 1-800-283-4465 or visit: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/d-snap-resources-state-agencies-and-partners.

3. Social Services

❖ **California Employment Development Department (EDD)**

Payment of Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) may be authorized following a presidentially declared disaster. Individuals who become unemployed as a result of the disaster, and who do not qualify for regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, may file for DUA. In the event of a disaster, the affected state will publish announcements about the availability of assistance under the DUA program.

UI claims, including claims for DUA, can be filed online or by phone, mail, or fax. The fastest and easiest way for individuals to file claims for UI benefits is online using UI Online℠ at www.edd.ca.gov/Unemployment/ui_online.htm. To file a DUA claim by phone, call the EDD at one of the toll-free numbers below between 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon (Pacific Time), Monday through Friday (except holidays):

- English: 1-800-300-5616
- Spanish: 1-800-326-8937
- Cantonese: 1-800-547-3506
- Mandarin: 1-866-303-0706
- Vietnamese: 1-800-547-2058
- TTY (non-voice): 1-800-815-9387

Individuals with current claims for benefits and who are unable to receive their UI payments at their home due to the disaster or emergency should contact their local post office at www.usps.com/.

See also: www.edd.ca.gov/Unemployment/Disaster_Unemployment_Assistance.htm.

❖ **Federal Emergency Management Agency Disaster Unemployment Assistance**

The purpose of FEMA's DUA is to provide unemployment benefits and re-employment services to individuals who have become unemployed as a result of a major disaster and who are not eligible for regular state unemployment insurance.

For additional information, visit:

- DUA Fact Sheet: www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/24418
- DUA Program Information: www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/597

❖ **U.S. Administration for Children and Families**

For fact sheets, guides, activities for young children, and tools that can help families prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters, visit: www.acf.hhs.gov/ohsepr/children-and-families.

❖ **Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN)**

Under the leadership of CalOES, OAFN identifies the needs of individuals with access and functional needs before, during, and after disasters, and integrates them into California's emergency management systems. This includes people with disabilities, limited English proficiency, low income, difficulty accessing transportation, and/or seniors and children. For additional information on the types of resources provided by the OAFN, visit: https://www.caloes.ca.gov/Cal-OES-Divisions/Access-Functional-Needs.

❖ **California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC) Disability Organizing Network**

This organization, with a network of 28 Independent Living Centers (ILC) across the state of California, educates individuals with disabilities about local, state, and federal independent living resources. The services they offer can include assistive technology, internet, and communication apps. In an emergency, individuals can contact this organization to help find an ILC located in their county. For county ILC contact information, visit: http://disabilityorganizing.net/community/.

4. Debris Removal

❖ **California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle)**

Under the leadership of CalOES, CalRecycle partners with local jurisdictions to develop debris removal management plans. These plans help homeowners who choose to participate understand how to properly dispose of or recycle dangerous concrete, metal, ash, contaminated soil, and other wildfire debris. For more information, visit: www.calrecycle.ca.gov/Disaster/Wildfires/.

Before beginning any cleanup effort:

- Create a list of damaged belongings, document damage with photographs, and contact your insurance provider.

- Decide whether to (a) participate in a government-run debris removal program, which requires signing a right-of-entry form; (b) hire a private contractor for debris removal at your expense; or (c) conduct debris cleanup yourself.

Key considerations for determining which approach to use:

- ✓ Using a government-run debris removal program can result in no out-of-pocket expenses for homeowners. To avoid duplication of benefits, homeowners may be required to remit a portion of homeowners insurance claim payments specifically reserved for debris removal.
- ✓ Government-run debris removal programs often utilize a two-phase approach:
  - Phase I: Removing household hazardous waste that poses a threat to human health and the environment (e.g., batteries, asbestos siding, paints). Phase I is required for all properties.
  - Phase II: Assessing and documenting properties and removing wildfire debris. This includes removing all burned ash/debris, foundations, hazardous trees, and contaminated soil to ensure the site is restored to pre-fire conditions and safe for rebuilding. Phase II debris removal is optional.
- ✓ Using government-run programs or private contractors prevents homeowners from being exposed to toxic materials during the debris removal process.
- ✓ Typically, local governments require work done by a private contractor or the homeowner to meet the same safety and environmental standards established by local, state, and federal agencies.
- ✓ Phase II of the government-run debris removal program requires removing the burned house foundation. Hiring a private contractor may allow the homeowner to keep the foundation in place, but this is on a case-by-case basis and is dependent on local requirements. Property owners who wish to conduct ash and debris cleanup themselves will encounter significant health hazards when handling ash, debris, and household hazardous waste. Asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), heavy metal residues, and other hazardous substances may be present in burn ash and debris. At a minimum, it is imperative to wear the following personal protective equipment when conducting debris removal and cleanup:
  - National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-certified respirator (dust mask)
  - Gloves to provide protection if paints or solvents must be handled
  - Disposable coveralls and steel-toed rubber boots with disposable booties

- Hard hat and goggles or protective glasses

Use caution and good judgment. Ultimately, you are responsible for your own safety and well-being.

5. Farm Rehabilitation

❖ **Farm Service Agency**

The Emergency Conservation Program
Provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters. Find your Farm Service Agency office at: https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app.

Assistance with Natural Disaster Losses
Provides assistance to agricultural producers for natural disaster losses resulting from drought, flood, fire, freeze, tornadoes, pest infestation, and other disasters.

Emergency Loan Program
Provides loans to help producers who suffer qualifying farm-related losses directly caused by the disaster in a county declared or designated as a primary disaster or quarantine area. Also, farmers located in counties that are adjacent to the declared, designated, or quarantined area may qualify for emergency loans.

For additional information, visit: www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/index.

❖ **USDA Rural Development Disaster Assistance**

This program provides a variety of loan assistance for individuals and businesses in rural areas that experience a federally declared disaster, including housing and noninsured crop losses.

- For information on various USDA Programs, visit: www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fact-sheet-usda-programs-assist-individuals-small-businesses_1.pdf.
- To locate your local USDA Service Center, visit: www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/index.

❖ **NRCS General Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Financial Assistance**

Where the effects of wildfire have impacted soil, water, or other natural resources but do not pose an imminent threat to life or property, landowners may be eligible for technical and financial assistance through the EQIP.

For more information about EQIP, visit: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/programs/financial/eqip/.

6. Business Support

❖ **Small Business Administration (SBA)**

Home and Personal Property Loans
If you are in a declared disaster area and are the victim of a disaster, you may be eligible for financial assistance from the SBA, even if you do not own a business.

Economic Injury Disaster Loans
If you are in a declared disaster area and have suffered economic injury, regardless of physical damage, you may qualify for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan.

Business Physical Disaster Loans
Any business or organization located in a declared disaster area and that was damaged during the disaster may apply for a loan to help replace or restore damaged property.

For additional information, visit:

- SBA: www.sba.gov/
- Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Plan: www.sba.gov/document/support--disaster-preparedness-recovery-plan
- Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Plan PDF: www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/2018-07/2018-disaster-preparedness-and-recovery-plan.pdf
- Disaster Loan Liquidation Policy and Procedures: www.sba.gov/document/policy-notice-5000-1186-disaster-loan-liquidation-policy-and-procedures

7. Religious Organizations

Religious organizations can be important and valuable resources for individuals and communities that have been impacted by natural disasters. They can provide a variety of services, including emotional and spiritual support, coordinating volunteers through local affiliates, and providing long-term recovery efforts by addressing unmet needs months or even years after a disaster strikes. Contact your local congregation for additional information.

8. Tribal Groups

❖ **Administration for Native Americans**

The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) occasionally provides funding to help Native American communities recover from natural disasters. If you are an ANA grantee affected by a disaster, please contact your program specialist as soon as possible. If you are not a grantee, please contact ANA at the toll-free Help Desk number at 877-922-9262.

❖ **Indian Health Service**

The Indian Health Service (IHS) may fund repairs and reconstruction of homes on reservation lands in coordination with tribal authorities. IHS may use their interagency agreements to fund cleanup costs and work with area leaders to assess further needs of impacted communities.

9. Non-Governmental Organizations

❖ **The American Red Cross**

Responds to disasters 365 days a year and can help assist impacted individuals with their immediate emergency needs. Go to www.redcross.org/ and click on "Get Help," or call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

❖ **The Salvation Army**

May provide temporary assistance for families in need, including vouchers for rent, emergency aid, and legal aid. For information on services provided by the Salvation Army, visit: www.salvationarmy.org/.

❖ **2-1-1 Free Information Referral Center**

A regional, free information and referral center connecting residents to community resources located in their area. 2-1-1 has several regions in California. This resource is not specific to post-wildfire situations. For more information, visit www.211.org.

b. Programs for Communities

1. Housing

❖ **California Department of Housing and Community Development**

When major disasters occur, Congress may appropriate additional funding for the Community Development Block Grants program as Disaster Recovery Grants to rebuild the affected areas and bring crucial seed money to stimulate the recovery process. For more information call 916-263-2771 or visit: http://www.hcd.ca.gov/community-development/disaster-recovery-programs/cdbg-dr.shtml.

2. Food

❖ **Feeding America**

Feeding America is the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, delivering food to communities impacted by tornadoes, storms, hurricanes, flooding, and wildfire. For more information, visit: www.feedingamerica.org/.

3. Social Services

❖ **FEMA - Crisis Counseling**

Surviving a wildfire can be a highly stressful, traumatic experience for many. The Crisis Counseling Program assists individuals and communities in recovering from the effects of natural and human-caused disasters through community-based outreach, psychological counseling, and educational services. Supplemental funding for crisis counseling is available to state mental health authorities through two grant mechanisms:

- *The Immediate Services Program*: Provides funds for up to 60 days of services immediately following a disaster declaration.
- *The Regular Services Program*: Provides funds for up to nine months following a disaster declaration.

More information about these programs can be found at: www.fema.gov/recovery-directorate/crisis-counseling-assistance-training-program.

❖ **United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)**

The UMCOR is a nonprofit organization that provides humanitarian relief and disaster response to communities in the United States and worldwide. When responding to a

disaster in the United States, UMCOR provides training for teams of volunteers, financial assistance to the affected communities, expertise in disaster response, and networking with non-governmental organizations, experts, local government, and other organizations that can help communities recover from disaster. For more information, visit: www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Programs/Disaster-Response/Disaster-Response.

4. Pets and Livestock

❖ **American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**

Offers temporary sheltering assistance and funding to qualified animal welfare organizations and government agencies whose communities suffer the impact of natural and other disasters. Contact local animal shelters for additional information.

❖ **California Department of Food and Agriculture**

Coordinates with private sector organizations dedicated to providing food, water, shelter, and care to animals/livestock. It also provides information on appropriate, available fairgrounds that may be activated as human and/or animal mass care shelters.

For more information, visit:

- Cal OES's California Animal Response Emergency System: www.caloes.ca.gov/for-individuals-families/california-animal-response-emergency-system
- Additional CARES Information: www.cal-cares.com/

5. Pollution and Hazardous Waste

❖ **California Environmental Protection Agency**

The Environmental Protection Agency can provide technical assistance to responders in identifying and assessing any disaster-related hazardous waste or pollution threats. For more information, visit: www.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-office-chemical-safety-and-pollution-prevention-ocspp.

Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)
When requested by a state or local agency, DTSC may dispatch emergency response contractors to address imminent hazards. Local agencies should follow procedures in place for requesting emergency assistance in disaster situations (e.g., counties must contact their OES Regional Emergency Operations Center and request assistance). For more information, visit: www.dtsc.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/ERP/index.cfm.

6. Programs to Help the State, Cities, and Responders

a. State of California Programs

This section describes some of the many programs California offers to aid in disaster recovery.

❖ **California Department of Aging**

The Department of Aging allocates a portion of state and community program funds to reimburse state and tribal organizations for expenses incurred while providing services to the elderly during a presidentially declared disaster. For services within California, call: 1-800-510-2020. For more information, visit: www.aging.ca.gov/ProgramsProviders/AAA/Disaster_Preparedness/.

❖ **California Office of Emergency Services**

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Following a Presidential Disaster Declaration, FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds plans and projects that reduce the impacts of future natural disasters. In California, these funds are administered by the CalOES Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Unit. Eligible applicants include state agencies, local governments, special districts, and some private nonprofits. For more information, visit: www.caloes.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/hazard-mitigation.

b. Federal Programs

The federal government offers a number of programs and resources to aid communities in disaster recovery, several of which are described in this section.

❖ **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

Disaster Legal Services

When the President declares a disaster, FEMA, through an agreement with the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association, provides free legal help for survivors of that disaster when assistance is requested by state, local, tribal, and territorial governments. For more information, visit: www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/24413.

Other Needs Assistance

Other Needs Assistance provides additional aid for other urgent needs in a federally declared disaster. This can include disaster-related medical, dental, or funeral expenses that cannot be met by any other source of assistance (e.g., insurance or aid programs). For questions or to apply by phone, call 1-800-621-FEMA (3362).

❖ **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)**

USDA-NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

The EWP program was created to reduce the threats to life and property posed by wildfire and other "sudden watershed impairments." It is a federal program administered by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible sponsors for emergency measures that address potential damages associated with runoff, flooding and erosion.

Work is not limited to any one set of prescribed measures, but it must be environmentally and economically defensible. Common post-fire EWP projects in recent years have included channel clearing, installing debris and flood barriers and diversions, mulching bare soil, and protecting culverts.

- For NRCS contact information, visit: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ca/contact/?cid=nrcs144p2_064190
- For information on EWP Program, visit: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp/

❖ **Federal Transit Administration Emergency Relief Program**

The program helps state and public transportation systems pay for protecting, repairing, or replacing equipment and facilities that may suffer or have suffered serious damage as a result of an emergency, including natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes. The program can fund capital projects to protect, repair, or replace facilities or equipment that are in danger of suffering serious damage, or have suffered serious damage as a result of an emergency. The program can also fund the operating costs of evacuation, rescue operations, and temporary public transportation service; or reestablishing, expanding, or relocating service before, during, or after an emergency. For more information, visit: www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grant-programs/emergency-relief-program/emergency-relief-program.

❖ **United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)**

Continuing Authorities Program

This program is for relatively small projects dealing with flood plain management, flood control, ecosystem restoration, erosion control, and streambank protection. This program is broad, including activities such as streambank erosion protection and modifications to existing infrastructure. It is funded by Congress. For more information, visit: https://www.spn.usace.army.mil/Missions/Projects-and-Programs/Continuing-Authorities-Program/.

Emergency Flood Protection

USACE can provide emergency assistance during flood events. USACE emergency assistance is intended, by law, to be temporary in order to meet immediate threats. Through this program, USACE can provide technical assistance to state and local governments with regard to emergency preparedness and planning activities. Assistance is intended for developing contingency plans, evacuation plans, and exercises to help communities gain expertise in both areas. For more information, visit: www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Emergency-Operations/Floods.

Permanent Flood Protection Solutions

USACE has the authority to construct large-scale flood risk management projects, including dams and engineered levees, through its Civil Works Program. Smaller-scale projects may be constructed through USACE's Continuing Authorities Program. For more information, visit: https://www.iwr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Flood-Risk-Management/Flood-Risk-Management-Program/Frequently-Asked-Questions/FAQ-USACE-FRM-Authorities/.

Regulatory Program Authority

USACE can assist with permitting after a wildfire has occurred. A permit is required from USACE for activities involving discharge of fill or dredged materials into bodies of water in the United States. Dredged material includes the redistribution of rocks, gravel and sediments already in the stream, lake, pond, wetland, etc. For more information, visit: www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Regulatory-Program-and-Permits.

Tribal Partnerships Program

This program enables USACE to assist on a reconnaissance study of various water resources and related issues involving pueblos and tribes. Examples of topics include flood damage reduction, environmental restoration and protection, watershed planning, and cultural resources studies. For more information, visit: www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Tribal-Nations.

Flood Plain Management Services Program

Through this program, USACE can provide a full range of technical services and planning guidance that is needed to support effective flood plain management. Types of studies that

have been conducted under the program include: flood plain delineation/hazard, dam failure analyses, hurricane evacuation, flood warning, flood damage reduction, stormwater management, flood-proofing, and inventories of flood-prone structures. For more information, visit: www.iwr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Flood-Risk-Management/Flood-Risk-Management-Program.

Planning Assistance to States
USACE can provide states, local governments, other non-federal entities, and eligible Native American Indian tribes assistance with preparing comprehensive plans for developing, utilizing, and conserving water and related land resources. Typical studies are only at the planning level; they do not include detailed designs for project construction. For more information, visit: www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Public-Services/Planning-Assistance-to-States.

❖ **United States Geological Survey**

Debris Flow Modeling
Post-fire debris-flow hazard assessments for recently burned areas in the western United States are provided free to any interested federal, state, or local agency, or to any private organization, company or individual. These assessments rely upon field-validated estimates of soil burn severity in geospatial format.

For more information on post-fire debris flow hazard assessments, or any questions you may have in regard to such matters, visit: https://landslides.usgs.gov/hazards/postfire_debrisflow/.

Response time is dependent upon the current assessment workload. You may also call 1-888-ASK-USGS (8747).

c. Non-Governmental Organizations

There are many non-governmental organizations that aid in disaster recovery, two of which are described in this section.

Lutheran Disaster Response
Lutheran Disaster Response collaborates with other disaster response organizations and religious entities in the United States. Some key areas of work include: providing emotional and spiritual support, coordinating volunteers through local affiliates, and providing long-term recovery efforts by addressing unmet needs months or even years after a disaster strikes. For more information, visit: www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Your local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) may be able to provide help after a wildfire or natural disaster. For a listing of your SWCDs, visit the California Association of Resource Conservation District's website at http://carcd.org/home0.aspx, or call them at 916-457-7904.

7. Financial and Funding Tips

Experiencing a destructive wildfire can be financially straining, and in some cases, devastating. Below are some tips to assist individuals, families, and businesses before and after a wildfire or other natural disaster.

- ✓ **Document, document, document**. Take pictures of your property from multiple angles (and provide "before" images if they are available). Taking pictures is one of the single most important things you can do to have the proof needed when negotiating with your insurance company.

- ✓ **Keep all of your receipts** from restoration and recovery projects (e.g., debris clean-up in your yard, repairing siding on a building).

- ✓ **Store records and photos of your property in an off-site location** (such as a safe deposit box) to protect them for insurance and other claims. Storing digital copies of photographs, receipts, etc. online in a secure cloud-based storage system can also be a useful strategy to maintain important records.

- ✓ **If you have insurance, contact your insurance agent as soon as possible**. The Insurance Information Institute provides answers to **"**frequently asked questions" about wildfire and insurance at www.iii.org/issue-update/wildfires. Contact the California Department of Insurance at 800-927-HELP to obtain consumer information guides about additional insurance products, or for any insurance-related questions.

- ✓ **Consider purchasing flood insurance**. A top priority after a wildfire is flood preparedness – protecting yourself and your property from damaging post-wildfire floods and debris flows. If possible, it is important to purchase flood insurance. To find out more about flood insurance, go to the California Department of Insurance Flood Insurance Fact Sheet at www.insurance.ca.gov/01-consumers/140-catastrophes/FloodFacts.cfm and FEMA's informational page on how to buy flood insurance at www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program/How-Buy-Flood-Insurance.

Remember: Flood insurance typically does not go into effect until 30 days after the purchase date. However, some property owners will be eligible for expedited access to insurance coverage if they will be impacted by flooding resulting from wildfires on federal land. This is determined on a case-by-case basis.

- ✓ **Contact your lenders** as soon as possible if your financial obligations cannot be met due to wildfire. For example, if you cannot pay your mortgage, you have more options if you work with your lenders sooner rather than later.

- ✓ **Do not assume FEMA is all you need**. FEMA assistance, when provided, is not a substitute for insurance but rather is minimum assistance to get people on their feet after a disaster.

- ✓ **Look into tax relief programs**. If a major disaster is declared, individuals who suffer losses may complete a retroactive tax return and take the loss out of the previous year's return. This may provide some immediate funding for you in a post-wildfire situation. An accountant or your local Internal Revenue Service (IRS) office (www.irs.gov/uac/contact-my-local-office-in-california) can help you navigate this process.

- ✓ **Contact your County Emergency Manager**. Your local emergency manager needs to know how many damaged or destroyed homes and structures (particularly uninsured) resulted from the disaster and how many businesses suffered impacts. This will help them determine if your community qualifies for disaster assistance, which in turn may help you receive additional help. Contact CalOES Individual Assistance at 916-845-8149.

8. Mobilize Your Community Before and After a Wildfire

Wildfires that create wide-scale damage inherently necessitate a community-scale response for recovery. The local Emergency Manager official will work with federal and state partners to handle the disaster response and immediate needs. However, mobilizing a team or group of teams within a community can serve as a crucial part of the recovery process. Successful recovery requires informed and coordinated leadership throughout all levels of government as well as neighborhood or community-level volunteers.

Unlike wildfire suppression, post-fire response is not generally conducted by a unified federal or state team. Instead, each agency and each level of government continues to act on its own authority. This creates an even greater need for coordination at the local level and the sharing of information among agencies to coordinate wildfire recovery efforts. Information that will need to be shared among agencies could include:

- Emergency shelter locations
- Road closures and openings
- Status of critical infrastructure
- Burn severity maps
- Flood and debris flow hazard assessments
- Sources for federal, state, and local assistance for individuals
- Federal and state assistance to local governments
- Flood insurance information
- Weather forecasts
- Flood and debris flow warnings

As a supplement to federal, state, and local agency response, grassroots volunteers provide essential services to their fellow community members. Often, volunteer groups fulfill needs that government organizations may not be able to meet.

This section offers guidance for community leaders and provides information to help volunteers organize recovery efforts.

a. Planning Ahead

You may not have to start planning the recovery process from scratch. A growing number of California communities have adopted all-hazard mitigation plans that address wildfire response. If your county, tribe, or municipality already has a plan, you may have already completed many of the tasks on the next few pages. If your community does not have a plan in place, this guide will help you identify steps to take. If you are reading this before a wildfire has occurred, the most important thing you can do is plan ahead.

In addition to creating and adopting resources, such as an all-hazard mitigation plan, keep in mind these key points and questions for planning ahead:

- ✓ **Document, document, document:** Document your community with photographs in case you need to use images after a wildfire for insurance or other financial purposes. Consider taking photographs or making scans of important documents and securely saving copies or storing them online with a cloud-based service.
- ✓ **Plan for social recovery:** If a wildfire happened, it is important to plan for social recovery as well as providing for services and provisions such as shelter, food, supplies, medications, and support such as counseling. Who would need help? What does the community need to do to aid in recovery?
- ✓ **Plan ahead for funding the recovery:** How will your community come up with matching funds for grants? Planning ahead for finances and for volunteers can help your community begin its recovery more quickly.
- ✓ **Address post-wildfire hazards:** If a wildfire occurs, how does the community address the threat of post-wildfire flooding and debris flows? After wildfires in California and the western United States, flooding and debris flows pose significant threats to life and property.

b. Communications

Implementing the following steps can help your community communicate successfully following a wildfire:

- ✓ **Emergency notification**: Develop and maintain emergency notification systems that allow authorized officials to alert residents and businesses of emergency situations and relay life-saving information.
- ✓ **Communication of hazards that exist after a wildfire**: Convey post-wildfire hazards to the public.
- ✓ **Getting the word out**: Decide the best way to inform the broader community through outreach such as public meetings, phone calls, radio, TV, or social media.
- ✓ **Public meetings**: Group forums can be vital sources of information about programs and services available in the community after a wildfire.
- ✓ **Point of contact**: Let the community know who the Post-Fire Coordinator is and how and when to reach them.
- ✓ **Communication with multiple entities**: Determine how local officials, emergency response teams, stakeholders, and volunteers will interface and communicate with your community team based upon your needs assessment.
- ✓ **Online tools**: Online resources such as https://recovers.org/ can help you communicate with the public and match volunteers to needs.

c. Establish a Local Government Post-Fire Coordination Group

Each community is encouraged to establish its own version of a Post-Fire Coordination Group (PFCG) to lead and direct the response to any subsequent post-wildfire natural hazards and help determine post-fire mitigation options. The PFCG should be responsible for working directly with local, state or federal agencies, emergency response officials, and others to help in a coordinated response. Primary functions of the PFCG might include coordinating the risk assessment and the exchange of pertinent information among agencies, assembling and exchanging geospatial data, supporting public communications, and coordinating with elected officials. The structure and size of the PFCG will depend on the size and complexity of the fire, the number of agencies involved, and community needs.

For additional information, see:

- National Disaster Recovery Framework: www.fema.gov/national-disaster-recovery-framework
- Recovery Support Functions: www.fema.gov/recovery-support-functions

When significant interagency coordination needs to take place, the coordination may be led by a county's Office of Emergency Services. Members of the PFCG may include local government departments such as emergency services, planning, building and utilities, and local elected officials. A good reference for elements and functions of a PFCG is the California Statewide Multi-Agency Coordination System Guide (MACS Guide), which can be found at www.caloes.ca.gov/PlanningPreparednessSite/Documents/10%20California%20Statewide%20Multi-Agency%20Coordination%20System(CSMACS)%20Guide%202-13-13.pdf.

The advice in the MACS Guide focuses on coordination during a fire, but it can be adapted to a post-wildfire setting to accommodate the different relationships among agencies and the nature of the response.

For additional information, please see the After Wildfire guide website at www.readyforwildfire.org.

d. Establish a Community Post-Fire Coordinator

The Post-Fire Coordinator is appointed by the community to support a coordinated response to a wildfire and to facilitate the community's post-fire recovery. The role of the Post-Fire Coordinator is distinct from that of the Incident Command and the federal, state, and local authorities and agencies that participate in emergency response and post-fire community recovery efforts. However, the Post-Fire Coordinator is likely to work with many of these agencies during or after a fire.

While the Post-Wildfire Coordinator should handle many of the community coordination tasks, such as coordinating with the PFCG, local officials will be responsible for incident response and providing governance, which includes serving as the collective decision-making body of the community; ensuring fiscal accountability and responsibilities are met; providing for public health and safety; and keeping community members informed.

The Post-Fire Coordinator does not need to be an elected official. They can be a community volunteer (e.g., a Neighborhood Watch Group lead, a member of a Firewise Community group or Community Emergency Response Team) or a resourceful and dedicated community member. For example, two sisters, just 20 and 24 at the time, filled this role after a tornado hit their town in Massachusetts. To see their inspiring story and their accomplishments, visit: https://recovers.org/ or view their TED Talk at www.ted.com/talks/caitria_and_morgan_o_neill_how_to_step_up_in_the_face_of_disaster.

Skills and qualifications that an effective Post-Fire Coordinator would possess include:

- ✓ Managerial skills
- ✓ Internet and social media skills (the coordinator assists in communication with the public, among other tasks)
- ✓ Experience with government agencies, programs, and working across jurisdictions
- ✓ Knowledge about the community
- ✓ Availability to serve throughout a fire emergency response and recovery effort
- ✓ Ability to meet with others and attend various local meetings and gatherings
- ✓ Bilingual skills – though not required, could be an asset under some circumstances

You may want to plan to have multiple coordinators to help share responsibilities. For example, there could be coordinators for different phases, such as a coordinator during the fire and another to coordinate the response after the fire (focusing on rebuilding, flooding, restoration, etc.). In other cases, depending on the geography, size, or scale of the community affected by a fire, multiple coordinators may be helpful to support post-fire response on a neighborhood or regional scale.

e. Volunteer Coordination

The amount of work to be done in the wake of a disaster can be daunting, and recovery often takes years of work. Volunteers are essential to helping your community recover from a wildfire. Below are some steps that can help you develop a strong and organized group of volunteers.

- ✓ **Identify a volunteer coordinator**: This should be a personable and organized individual with prior management experience. Your coordinator can take the lead in:
  - o Handling volunteer requests
  - o Handling volunteer offers and screening volunteers
  - o Creating and maintaining the volunteer database
  - o Tracking volunteers, services and donations
  - o Matching the right volunteer with the right project

- Reviewing project proposals
- Researching and obtaining funding and resources for projects
- Recruiting volunteers through social media, press releases, and outreach opportunities

✓ **Assess resources**: In order to get the skill set you need to accomplish the tasks you've identified for your community, it is important to consider the following questions:

- What jobs need to be done that we do not have the resources for?
- What tasks can be done by volunteers?

✓ **Recruit volunteers**: Typically, volunteers with the following skills will be needed:

- Patient, kind, knowledgeable people to answer telephones.
- Well-organized and detail-oriented people to handle volunteer applications, enter information into computer databases, and make follow-up calls.
- People willing to get dirty (cleanup, filling sandbags, raking, seeding, and related activities). When working with volunteers on physical jobs, safety is paramount. Ensure people are properly trained, and keep groups small (about seven people with each volunteer leader). The leader should be trained in the work being implemented and have clearly written instructions for accomplishing the task at hand. Keep instructions simple and clear for hands-on work.
- People who can operate equipment and lift and place heavy erosion-control materials.
- People with professional skills such as grant writing, accounting, legal skills, and media and outreach skills.

✓ **Motivate volunteers, but keep them from going "overboard"**: Volunteers can injure themselves or experience overwhelming fatigue. Monitor volunteer well-being to avoid dangerous situations.

✓ **Have a plan for addressing liability and injury issues**: This includes the creation of a volunteer waiver and forms for release of liability. These forms can also include a volunteer work agreement to help ensure projects get completed.

✓ **Find tasks for people who want to help**: If possible, rather than turn away someone who wants to volunteer, try to find the right job for that person. Allowing community members to pitch in and help out not only provides needed labor, but can also promote community cohesion. To help match volunteers with needs, use online resources such as https://recovers.org/communities?address.

- ✓ **Maintain a volunteer database**: Developing a volunteer database is an important step. Each project and community will require different information, but at a minimum the database should include:
  - First name, last name (or name of organization and primary contact)
  - Address, city, county, state, zip code
  - Work phone and extension, home phone, mobile phone
  - Email address
  - Whether volunteer is an adult or minor
  - Skills/type of work volunteer is willing to perform and any relevant experience or expertise
  - Availability
- ✓ **Clearly define volunteer response roles**: Responsibility for the numerous tasks required for community wildfire response and post-wildfire recovery is divided among many entities. It is critical that volunteers know what their roles and responsibilities are. This will help ensure their safety and the safety of others.