

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

to *Picking Up The Pieces: Restoring Rural Housing and Communities After a Disaster*

2017 California Wildfires Disaster Guide

Housing Assistance Council

October 12, 2017

As of October 12, at least 22 separate massive wildfires have destroyed entire towns, as well as wineries and other businesses, in northern California. For the most part, they are not yet contained.¹ Another fire damaged buildings in Orange County, near Los Angeles in the southern part of the state.²

Many thousands of residents have been evacuated, and hundreds are missing. The death toll, and the number of injuries, are increasing rapidly as the blazes spread. At least 3,500 homes and commercial buildings have been razed, and almost 170,000 acres charred.³ Even in places that were not destroyed, power is out and cell phone service disrupted.⁴ Intense smoke has led to warnings of poor air quality and closure of some schools.⁵

On October 10, President Trump declared a major disaster, making federal funding available to the state of California and to eligible local governments and some nonprofits on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work in the counties of Butte, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada, Sonoma, and Yuba.⁶ On October 12, the House of Representatives was scheduled to vote on an Administration request for an additional \$576 million to fight wildfires, along with additional assistance for areas recently hit by major hurricanes.⁷

By October 12, fire had moved into Solano County,⁸ an area not included in the disaster area declared on October 10. To determine whether additional counties have been added, check Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) news releases online at <https://www.fema.gov/news-releases> or call FEMA's toll-free number, 1-800-621-FEMA (3362).

Resources

The following guide provides information for individuals and families affected by the fires about current and potential efforts. For more information, please see HAC's report: *Picking up the Pieces*:

¹ "Thousands more evacuated as Wine Country blazes spread and death toll hits 23," San Francisco Chronicle, October 12, 2017, <http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Thousands-more-evacuated-as-Wine-Country-blazes-12269691.php>.

² "Fire evacuation orders continue in North Bay, 17 confirmed deaths," ABC7 News, San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose, October 11, 2017, <http://abc7news.com/fire-evacuation-orders-continue-in-north-bay-17-confirmed-deaths-2515177/>.

³ "Thousands More evacuated as Wine Country blazes spread and death toll hits 23."

⁴ "Fire evacuation orders continue in North Bay, 17 confirmed deaths."

⁵ "Live Updates," October 11, 2017, <http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Live-updates-Gusts-expected-to-fuel-Wine-Country-12269146.php>

⁶ "President Donald J. Trump Approves Major Disaster Declaration for California," FEMA news release, October 10, 2017, <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2017/10/10/president-donald-j-trump-approves-major-disaster-declaration-california>.

⁷ Daily Schedule, <https://www.majorityleader.gov/daily-schedule/>.

⁸ "Thousands more evacuated as Wine Country blazes spread and death toll hits 23."

Restoring Rural Housing and Communities After a Disaster, available free online at http://www.ruralhome.org/storage/documents/disaster_guide_2012.pdf.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is not currently offering funds to assist residents, but that may change in coming days.

If your house is inaccessible or currently uninhabitable, a number of localities are offering temporary shelter. Information on evacuation orders and evacuation centers is available on the California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) website at http://www.fire.ca.gov/current_incidents/ and the San Francisco Chronicle website at <http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/evacuation-sites-list-napa-sonoma-solano-mendocino-12269606.php>.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

If federal assistance becomes available for residents affected by the fires, to apply you must complete a multi-purpose application *online* at <https://www.fema.gov/apply-assistance> or *over the phone on FEMA's toll-free helpline*.

Toll-free helpline:

1-800-621-FEMA (3362)

For hearing impaired callers only:

1-800-462-7585 (TTY)

1-800-621-3362 (Video Relay Service)

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD offers a Disaster Recovery Toolkit and makes other related resources available: <https://www.hud.gov/info/disasterresources>.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

To determine whether USDA has specific assistance available for fire survivors who had USDA Rural Development assistance before the fires, check for information online at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/services/rural-development-disaster-assistance>, or call the USDA Rural Development state office in California at 530-792-5830 for rental housing or 530-792-5816 for owner-occupied housing.

American Red Cross Disaster Service

For referrals and updates on Red Cross shelter services in your area, locate a local Red Cross office through: <http://www.redcross.org/find-help> or by calling the Public Inquiry Center at 1-800-214-0441.

State Housing Agencies

Each state has at least one agency that administers state and federal programs to promote decent affordable housing for low-income individuals. Typically, these agencies and authorities administer some aspects of state or federal programs.

California Department of Housing & Community Development
2020 West El Camino Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95833
916-263-7400
<http://www.hcd.ca.gov/>

California Housing Finance Agency
500 Capitol Mall
Suite 1400
Sacramento, CA 95814
877-9-CalHFA (877-922-5432)
<http://www.calhfa.ca.gov/>

Local Housing Authorities

Housing Authority of the County of Butte
2039 Forest Ave.
Suite 10
Chico, CA 95928
Phone: 530-895-4474
Fax: 530-895-4459
Contact@Butte-Housing.com
<http://butte-housing.com/>

Lake County Housing Commission
14092 Lakeshore Drive
Clearlake, CA 95422
Phone: 707-995-3744
Fax: 707-994-2642
scitron@dss.co.lake.ca.us
http://www.co.lake.ca.us/Government/Directory/Social_Services/Programs/Housing.htm

Community Development Commission of Mendocino County
1076 N. State Street
Ukiah, CA 95482
Phone: 707-463-5462
Fax: 707-463-4188
crabtret@cdchousing.org
<http://cdchousing.org/>

Napa Housing Authority
1115 Seminary Street
P.O. Box 660
Napa, CA 94559
Phone: (707)257-9543
Fax: 707-257-9239

jwatkins@cityofnapa.org

http://cityofnapa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=39&Itemid=1078

Sonoma County Community Development Commission

1440 Guerneville Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Phone: 707-565-7500
Fax: 707-565-7583

james.hackett@sonoma-county.org

<http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Community-Development-Commission/>

Yuba County Housing Authority

915 8th Street, Suite 130
Marysville
CA 95901

Phone: 530-749-5460

Fax: 530-749-5464

dphillips@co.yuba.ca.us

<https://affordablehousingonline.com/housing-authority/California/Yuba-County-Housing-Authority/CA107>

Regional Housing Authority of Sutter & Nevada Counties

1455 Butte House Rd.

Yuba City, CA 95993

Phone: 530-671-0220

Fax: 530-673-0775

p.runge@regionalha.org

<http://www.regionalha.org/>

Santa Rosa Housing Authority

90 Santa Rosa Ave.

Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Phone: 707-543-3300

Fax: 707-543-3317

dgouin@srcity.org

<https://srcity.org/806/Housing-Authority>

Evacuating and Returning Home

The Red Cross website provides suggestions on actions to prepare for evacuation and returning home after a fire:⁹

IF A FIRE OCCURS Listen to your local media for updates on the fire and be ready to leave quickly. Back your car into the garage or park it in an open space facing your direction of escape. You should also:

- Keep your pets in one room so you can find them quickly if you have to evacuate.
- Arrange for a temporary place to stay outside the threatened area.
- Keep your indoor air clean – close windows and doors to prevent the smoke outside from getting in your home.
- Use the recycle mode on the air conditioner in your home or car. If you don't have air conditioning and it's too hot to be inside, seek shelter somewhere else.
- If smoke levels are high, don't use anything that burns and adds to air pollution inside such as candles, fireplaces and gas stoves.

AFTER THE FIRE Don't go home until fire officials say it is safe. Be cautious entering a burned area – hazards could still exist. Avoid damaged or downed power lines, poles and wires. Other things to do include:

- Keep your animals under your direct control. Hidden embers and hot spots could burn them.
- Wet down debris to minimize breathing dust particles.
- Wear leather gloves and shoes with heavy soles.
- Throw out any food that has been exposed to heat, smoke or soot.
- Recheck for smoke or sparks throughout your home for several hours after the fire, including in your attic. Wildfire winds can blow burning embers anywhere so check for embers that could cause a fire.

If your home has experienced damage, remember to check the outside of your home before you enter. Look for loose power lines, broken or damaged gas lines, foundation cracks, missing support beams, or other damage. It may be safest to ask a building inspector or contractor to check the structure before you enter. Do not force jammed doors open, as they may be providing needed support to the rest of the home. Sniff for gas to ensure there are no natural or propane gas leaks. If you do have a propane tank system, make sure to turn off all valves and contact a propane supplier to check the system before you use it again. Check floors and ceilings to ensure they are not sagging from water damage, this can be especially hazardous. Take photographs of any damage as you may need them for insurance claims or FEMA claims later on.¹⁰

⁹ "Red Cross Shelters 1,000s as California Fires Burn out of Control," October 20, 2017, <http://www.redcross.org/news/article/Red-Cross-Helps-as-Fires-Burn-Out-of-Control-in-California>.

¹⁰ Excerpted from the Red Cross's Guide on "Checking Your Home: Structural Elements" available at <http://www.redcross.org/find-help/disaster-recovery/home-structural-elements>.