



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

October 9, 2017

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20500

Through: Robert J. Fenton, Jr.  
Regional Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management  
Agency, Region IX  
Oakland, California, 94607-4052

Dear Mr. President:

Pursuant to Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. Sections 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations Section 206.36, I respectfully request you declare a major disaster in the State of California as a result of the fires burning in Northern California.

Beginning on October 8, 2017, multiple fires broke out throughout Northern California, during red flag fire conditions and extreme winds of more than 60 miles per hour, causing these fires to rapidly grow uncontrollably. In less than 24 hours, more than 18 fires began burning in at least seven counties and have collectively burned more than 80,000 acres. The fires are currently severely impacting Butte, Lake, Napa, Nevada, Mendocino, Sonoma, and Yuba Counties. These fires have been extremely difficult to contain and many remain at zero percent containment.

On October 9, 2017, I declared, under the California Emergency Services Act, a State of Emergency in Butte, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada, Sonoma, and Yuba Counties. The Office of Emergency Services activated our State Operations Center, as well as the Inland and Coastal Regional Operations Centers. The State's Emergency Operations Plan was implemented and all necessary state assets were deployed, including the California National Guard.

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Presently, these fires continue their path of destruction. As of the date of this letter, these fires have catastrophically destroyed more than 2,000 homes and threatened thousands of additional residences and nonresidential properties in Napa and Sonoma Counties alone. Additionally, the National Weather Service has issued a red flag warning for all of Northern California that is projected to continue through tomorrow morning. As a result, we expect the destruction to escalate further impacting both residential homes and public infrastructure.

These fires have forced thousands of Northern California residents to immediately evacuate their homes and seek temporary shelter in order to save their lives. Many residents had little time to flee due to the fires' rapid and erratic rate of spread through the rural terrain. Tragically, these fires have already taken lives and emergency responders anticipate the number of fatalities could grow.

The devastation and disruption caused by these fires is extraordinary. Thousands have been made homeless. Many schools remain closed. Major roads were damaged or destroyed. The fire destroyed utility poles causing the loss of power to over 38,000 residents. These fires have destroyed and continue to threaten critical infrastructure, including 80 communication towers, impacting essential services for thousands of people.

Presently, two of these fires have been particularly devastating. The Tubbs Fire and Atlas Fire began burning in Napa County on October 8, 2017. The Tubbs Fire quickly spread into neighboring Sonoma County and burned uncontrollably towards a populated area of Santa Rosa. Unfortunately, given how quickly this fire spread due to the ferocious wind and susceptible terrain, thousands of residents lost their homes and numerous civilians were injured.

The State of California, local governments, community based organizations, and volunteers have taken extraordinary steps to respond to these fires. Thousands of firefighters were deployed to fight these fires, including California National Guard members. In addition, multiple law enforcement

agencies and emergency managers from neighboring counties have been deployed to assist with the response through the State’s mutual aid system. The California Department of Social Services is assisting with shelter operations and is providing accommodations to individuals with access and functional needs. The Department of Social Services will be identifying long term solutions for displaced residents. The American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster are providing support to the community and disaster survivors.

Large amounts of wreckage and debris must be expeditiously removed to eliminate the immediate threat to lives, public health, and safety. Fast debris removal is also necessary to enable community rebuilding and economic recovery of impacted communities. Debris hazards, including asbestos, heavy metals, structural debris, ash, concrete foundations, and metals pose a public health and safety concern and threaten the health of the local environment.

We will be conducting preliminary damage assessments as soon as conditions permit access to these impacted areas, but we anticipate many residents will be left homeless or displaced. We anticipate that some portion of the disaster survivors have insurance coverage. However, we expect that many people will have no insurance coverage or will be underinsured. Even for those residents who have insurance coverage, major challenges remain to recovering their lives. Portions of the impacted Northern California counties are isolated and generally rural, and have very little available rental or temporary housing to accommodate homeowners during the rebuilding process.

A breakdown of Individual Assistance Program demographics is presented below:

	Population*	Average of Persons Below Poverty Level*	Median Household Income*	Percent Elderly (over 65 yrs)*	Percent Disabled**	Percent Pre-Disaster Unemployment***
National	308,745,538	15.4%	\$53,889	13.0%	8.6%	8.30%
California	37,253,956	15.9%	\$61,094	11.4%	6.8%	9.90%

Lake	220,000	19.8%	\$43,444	15.4%	12.5%	12.1%
Mendocino	64,665	21.4%	\$35,578	17.7%	15.2%	14.6%
Napa	87,841	17.8%	\$42,980	15.4%	12.0%	12.2%
Nevada	136,484	9.8%	\$71,379	15.1%	6.5%	7.5%
Sonoma	98,764	10.3%	\$56,521	19.4%	9.3%	9.8%
Yuba	483,878	10.7%	\$62,240	13.9%	7.8%	8.1%
Butte	72,155	20.3%	\$46,892	10.1%	14.5%	14.8%

\* 2009-2013 U.S. Census

\*\* 2014 U.S. Census

\*\*\* U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

California has suffered multiple disasters in the past year, which have severely impacted its resources. Beginning in December 2016, California began experiencing what would be three months of severe winter storms associated with several atmospheric river systems. These storms caused unprecedented widespread flooding and resulted in three separate Major Disaster Declarations (DR-4301, DR-4305, and DR-4308). Additionally, California has been enduring an extremely active fire season thus far, and twelve fires qualified for Fire Management Assistance Grants. I have also proclaimed state of emergencies for ten fire events throughout the State since July 2017. Additionally, there have been over 7,484 fire starts in California since January 2017.

I have determined this incident is of such severity and magnitude that an effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments and supplemental federal assistance is necessary. I am specifically requesting Public Assistance and all Individual Assistance Programs for Butte, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada, Sonoma, and Yuba Counties, including the Individuals and Households Program, Transitional Sheltering Assistance, Disaster Case Management, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Crisis Counseling and Disaster Legal Services, Hazard Mitigation statewide, and any other Stafford Act disaster assistance programs that may be appropriate for the declared counties. I am also

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requesting U.S. Small Business Administration disaster loans and funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Emergency Loan Program.

I certify for this major disaster the State and local governments will assume all applicable non-federal shared costs as required by the Stafford Act. I have designated the Director of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, Mark Ghilarducci, as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. Mr. Ghilarducci will work with FEMA in continuing to assess damages and may provide more information or justification on my behalf.

Thank you for your concern and leadership during this difficult time in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edmund G. Brown Jr.", with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Edmund G. Brown Jr.

Enclosures

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13