



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

November 11, 2018

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

Through: Robert J. Fenton, Jr.
Regional Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Region IX
1111 Broadway, Suite 1200
Oakland, California 94607-4052

Dear Mr. President:

I would first like to thank you for issuing an Emergency Declaration on November 9, 2018, and for the assistance of the federal government in response to the Camp, Hill, and Woolsey Fires. 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 devastating wildfires burning in Butte, Los Angeles, and Ventura Counties. Based on what we know already, the Camp Fire in Butte County appears to be the most destructive fire in modern California history. Therefore, due to the catastrophic nature of these wildfires, I request that you expedite this declaration without the need for complete preliminary damage assessments pursuant to 44 CFR § 206.33(d).

Since the November 9, 2018 Emergency Declaration, the extreme fire weather conditions throughout California have continued to take a devastating toll on our communities. The low humidity, strong winds, and dry fire fuels have sent massive infernos charging throughout both northern and southern California. While first responders battle the uncontrolled wildfires, forecasters predict that the intense winds and low humidity fueling the blazes will continue wreaking further unprecedented destruction on the state.

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The Camp Fire, which continues to burn out of control, has already surpassed the then-unprecedented October 2017 wildfires, for which this administration granted a Major Disaster Declaration on October 10, 2017 (FEMA-4344-DR-CA). On November 8, 2018, the day the Camp Fire erupted, the fire burned over 20,000 acres. By November 9, 2018, the fire nearly quadrupled to over 70,000 acres. As of the date of this letter, the fire has destroyed more than 100,000 acres. Officials anticipate the Camp Fire, currently only 20 percent contained, will continue to grow, causing further destruction and endangering neighboring communities. The Camp Fire's magnitude is unparalleled. To date, state officials estimate nearly 7,000 structures have been destroyed, including 90 percent of the homes and businesses in the Town of Paradise. Effectively, the fire has decimated the entire town, home to more than 26,000 people. Every resident of Paradise will inevitably have either lost their home or have a family member or loved one who lost their home. Their community is forever changed, having their neighborhood stores, restaurants, businesses, clinics, schools, and other community landmarks burned to the ground. And tragically, there are already 23 confirmed deaths due to the Camp Fire.

November 2018 has been exceptionally dry, even as compared to 2017 where dangerous conditions led to the then-most destructive and deadly fires in the state's history. In fact, the United States Drought Monitor indicates that for November 2018 in northern-central California, the combination of long-term precipitation deficits, agricultural impacts, poor soil moisture, well below-normal stream flow levels, and groundwater issues indicate extreme drought. Additionally, areas of moderate and severe drought expanded in northwestern California where streamflow is below the 10th percentile. These circumstances, coupled with the strong high-pressure system over California, have amounted to extraordinarily dangerous fire conditions. While California strategically pre-positioned firefighting assets throughout the state in anticipation of this weather system, the event was so significant that those assets are fully engaged and stretched beyond their capabilities.

These Red Flag Warning conditions affect not only northern California, but the entire state beginning

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near the California-Oregon border and continuing south to the California-Mexico border. These conditions led to the eruption of several other fires throughout California. Most notably, on November 8, 2018, the Hill Fire and the Woolsey Fire began burning in Ventura County, dividing and straining response resources. On November 9, 2018, the Woolsey Fire spread into Los Angeles County, now burning into the City of Malibu. The Hill Fire has burned more than 4,500 acres with only 25 percent containment. The Woolsey Fire has exploded to more than 70,000 acres, and is zero percent contained. These fires are moving so quickly that resources have been prioritized to life-saving missions. The southern California fires have already claimed two lives and threaten nearly 4,000 structures.

The fire weather conditions in southern California are expected to worsen before they improve. Forecasters predict further gusty winds and low humidity exacerbating already immense fire danger. The hazardous conditions are expected to peak on Monday, November 12, 2018, with gusts reaching 50 miles per hour and humidity values ranging from single digits to teens.

On November 8, 2018, under the California Emergency Services Act, a State of Emergency was declared in Butte County as a result of the Camp Fire. On November 9, 2018, a State of Emergency was declared for Los Angeles and Ventura Counties as a result of the Hill and Woolsey Fires.

My Office of Emergency Services activated our State Operations Center, as well as the Inland Region and the Southern Region Emergency Operations Centers, and Butte, Ventura, and Los Angeles Counties activated their Emergency Operation Centers. The state activated its Emergency Plan and deployed all available assets, including local and state mutual aid as well as mobilizing out-of-state resources.

Responding to these relentless fires requires a Herculean effort. There are more than 700 fire engines and multiple aircraft deployed in response to these statewide fires, including more than 400 Cal OES and local government engines. Additionally, there are more than 5,000 firefighters on the front lines

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of the fires throughout the state, including nearly 2,000 local government firefighters. Jurisdictions are drawing on any and all available resources to contain the fires and mitigate further impacts, including equipment and soldiers from the California National Guard. In addition, several hundred firefighting assets have been requested from neighboring states.

The devastation and disruption caused by these fires is extraordinary, particularly in the Town of Paradise. In addition to the tens of thousands of individuals displaced from their homes in northern California and over two hundred thousand evacuees in Southern California, there are catastrophic impacts to critical infrastructure and significant air quality issues statewide.

The Camp Fire destroyed Paradise High School, Paradise Elementary School, and the Paradise Unified School District Office, and forced the closures of more than 100 other schools in Butte and Glenn Counties, affecting 31,760 students. The Hill and Woolsey Fires together forced 241 school closures and affected 122,218 students in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties.

The fires have destroyed power infrastructure, resulting in power outages to thousands of households, schools, and businesses. Additionally, the fires continue to threaten power lines and communication towers, including Saw Mill Peak and Flea Mountain lookouts. Additionally, these fires have forced the closure of major roadways and have impacted critical communication towers, cellular sites, and microwave facilities including radios and repeater sites that support public safety communications. In fact, nearly 450 cellular sites in the Los Angeles area are inoperable as a result of the fires.

The State of California, local governments, community based organizations, and volunteers have taken extraordinary steps to respond to these fires. More than 20 California state agencies have been activated and are providing assistance, both in the field and at the State Operations Center. This includes the California Department of Social Services, which is assisting with shelter operations and is providing support to individuals with access and functional needs. The American Red Cross and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster are providing support to the community and disaster

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survivors. Despite this, there will be an extraordinary need for sheltering of the evacuees, particularly those who have fled Paradise and will be displaced for quite some time.

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

Based on the information we have thus far, we know tens of thousands of residents will be displaced and many will be left homeless. While we expect some portion of the disaster survivors to have insurance coverage, we know based upon the numerous wildfires California has endured recently that many people will be underinsured or have no insurance coverage whatsoever. Even for those residents who have insurance coverage, major challenges will remain with regard to their recovery. Portions of the impacted communities are isolated and generally rural, with very little available rental or temporary housing to accommodate residents during the rebuilding process.

Overall, the impacted counties, and the Town of Paradise in particular, have exceptionally vulnerable residents and will inevitably face a challenging recovery from this disaster. Many residents in these communities live on low or fixed incomes. In fact, more than 19 percent of Butte County residents live below the poverty level, which is higher than the state and national averages of 13.3 and 15.4 percent, respectively. More than 18 percent of the population in Butte County, and 25 percent of the population in Paradise, is elderly. This exceeds the state average of 13.9 percent and national average of 15.6 percent for the elderly population. Further, Butte County also has disabled populations that are substantially above the state and national averages of 6.8 and 8.6 percent, respectively.

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 (Under 65 yrs)**	Percent Pre-Disaster Unemployment***
National	308,745,538	12.3%	\$55,322	15.6%	8.6%	4.0%
California	37,253,956	13.3%	\$63,783	13.9%	6.8%	4.2%
Butte County	220,000	19.5%	\$44,366	18.2%	12.7%	4.3%
Los Angeles	9,818,605	16.3%	\$57,952	13.2%	6.2%	4.8%
Ventura County	823,318	9.8%	\$78,593	15.0%	6.7%	3.1%
Town of Paradise	26,216	14.1%	\$47,533	25%	18.9%	9.4%

* 2017 U.S. Census

** 2012-2016 U.S. Census

*** Federal Reserve Bank Economic Data/U.S. Department of Labor

California has suffered multiple disasters in the past year and a half, which have severely impacted its resources. Beginning in December 2016, California experienced 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 (FEMA-4301-DR-CA, FEMA-4305-DR-CA, and FEMA-4308-DR-CA). Last October, you issued a Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA-4344-DR-CA) for wildfires in Northern California, the deadliest and most destructive in California history, which destroyed thousands of structures and claimed 43 lives. Further, beginning in December 2017, the largest wildfire in California history, the Thomas Fire, erupted in Southern California, burning hundreds of thousands of acres. Following that fire, a deadly mudslide took more than 20 lives. The Thomas Fire and subsequent mudslides caused unprecedented damage and destruction and resulted in a separate Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA-4353-DR-CA).

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Then this year, in July of 2018, the Carr Fire and the Mendocino Complex Fire erupted, for which you issued a Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA-4382-DR-CA). The Carr Fire burned through 229,651 acres before it was fully contained. At least 1,079 residences, 22 commercial structures, and 503 outbuildings were destroyed. The Mendocino Complex Fire surpassed the Thomas Fire from 2017 to become the largest fire in California history, burning through 410,203 acres before it was contained. With the fires erupting without rest, the firefighters are seemingly fighting fires year round, as last year's fire season extended well beyond what would historically have been post-fire season. Unfortunately, extreme weather patterns, enormous wildfires, and extended fire seasons appear to be the new normal for California's wildfires.

Preliminary damage assessments are impossible to perform at this time in these counties due to inaccessible, unsafe conditions, ongoing life-saving response activities, and due to both State and local resources being overwhelmed. State and federal officials, however, have visited the affected areas, where possible, and observed thousands of private homes either destroyed or with major damage and an enormous amount of public infrastructure damage that far surpasses the State of California's threshold. I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments, and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary. I am specifically requesting Public Assistance and all Individual Assistance Programs for Butte, Ventura, and Los Angeles 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. I am also 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.

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Mr. Ghilarducci will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency 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,



Edmund G. Brown Jr.

Enclosures

Stafford Act and State Disaster Declarations in Previous 18 Months
NOAA Fire Weather Map and Forecast
OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13