



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

September 10, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
NW 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 September 1, 2021, and for the assistance of the federal government in response to the Caldor Fire. Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I respectfully request that you now declare a major disaster in El Dorado County as a result of the devastating Caldor Fire.

Many communities in El Dorado County sustained tremendous destruction, including Twin Bridges, Echo Lake, and most notably, Grizzly Flats. The Caldor Fire has damaged or destroyed over 1,100 structures to date, including 711 residences, tremendous natural resources, critical infrastructure, and cultural and historic sites. As resources are already spread thin from firefighting and recovery efforts throughout California during this historic wildfire season, the severity of this fire is such that it has caused and will continue to cause significant impacts to the State and to the affected local

jurisdictions, making recovery efforts beyond the State's capabilities.

El Dorado County is largely dependent upon leisure and tourism for its economic stability. The significant ongoing mandatory evacuations and road closures continue to have a devastating effect on the entire region. Highway 50, which is the primary corridor to South Lake Tahoe, has been closed for several weeks due to the fire, even ahead of the South Lake Tahoe evacuation, resulting in significant impacts to the local economy. Residents and business owners from the tourism-reliant city of South Lake Tahoe now have to deal with the devastating economic consequences of the Caldor Fire, on top of the economic, personal, and emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The projected economic loss in South Lake Tahoe is estimated to reach nearly \$40 million due to the Caldor Fire.

## **INCIDENT OVERVIEW**

El Dorado County is enduring its 10<sup>th</sup> driest year on record since 1894 according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, with over 60 percent of the county experiencing exceptional drought conditions – the highest category. Extreme weather conditions, which included the issuance of multiple Red Flag Warnings from the National Weather Service, have exacerbated the impacts of wildfires in El Dorado County and across northern California. As of September 10, 2021, wildfires have incinerated 2,214,958 acres statewide, with just seven fires accounting for more than 1,886,099 acres. The Caldor Fire has burned for over three weeks, scorching 218,459 acres to date, and is only 53 percent contained. The current situation in California is dire, with the Caldor Fire and five additional megafires straining local, state, and federal firefighting resources as numerous communities experience imminent threats to public health and safety.

The Caldor Fire began burning on August 14, 2021. Extremely dry fuels and elevated fire weather conditions caused the Caldor Fire to rapidly explode in size. In just a matter of hours, the fire consumed 35,000 acres, including hundreds of residences in Grizzly Flats. Furthermore, the National Weather Service issued a Red Flag Warning from August 17 through August 19, 2021, which included El Dorado County, with forecast wind gusts up to 40 miles per hour and minimum daytime humidity of 9 percent. Additional Red Flag Warnings were in effect for El Dorado County on August 21, August 30 through September 1, and September 9 through September 10, 2021, presenting continuous, extreme weather conditions exacerbating the spread of the Caldor Fire despite the relentless efforts of local, state, and federal firefighting resources.

At the height of the Caldor Fire, more than 53,486 residents were under mandatory evacuation orders, with tens of thousands more receiving voluntary notices. Nine

evacuation shelters were opened across California and in Nevada with a peak overnight population of nearly 1,000 survivors, with local jurisdictions and the American Red Cross managing the operations with assistance from state and federal agencies. As the Caldor Fire continues to burn and threaten additional communities in El Dorado and surrounding counties, Unified Command has identified 24,647 structures under threat, including 23,691 residences. Today, 9,388 residents remain evacuated in El Dorado County, and two shelters remain open with an overnight population of 53 survivors. Due to the closure of Highway 50, South Lake Tahoe residents were forced to evacuate east into Nevada, resulting in an unprecedented and extraordinarily complex cross-border shelter operation. At its peak, nearly 1,000 California evacuees were sheltered in Nevada.

Two civilians suffered serious injuries and were transported to hospitals by air ambulances, and an officer from the Galt Police Department was tragically killed in a traffic accident while responding to assist with law enforcement mutual aid at the fire, and seven firefighters have sustained injuries.

As the Caldor Fire continues to burn, there are additional threats to PG&E assets and also to critical infrastructure, including overhead distributions lines, transmission lines, the El Dorado Powerhouse hydro-facility, distribution substations, telecommunications towers, fiber optic communications assets, and associated equipment. These assets provide power to thousands of customers in El Dorado and the surrounding counties. The approximate value of assets at risk is \$11,300,000. Liberty Utilities has assets of critical infrastructure threatened including distribution lines, transformers, and a substation. Disruption would leave approximately 20,000 customers without water and potable water as their infrastructure provides power for water distribution. Volcano Telephone has a fiberoptic line threatened that runs from Pine Grove to Kirkwood as well as a critical central office location threatened by the fire. Disruption would leave approximately 5,000 people without cellular or telephone coverage.

The Desolation Wilderness is impacted and the Mokelumne Wilderness is threatened. The Cosumnes, American River, and Lake Tahoe watersheds are impacted. There is a potential threat to the Mokelumne Watershed. Threatened and Endangered state and/or federally listed species at risk due to the Caldor Fire include Foothill yellow-legged frog, California red-legged frog, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, great grey owl, goshawk and spotted Owl, Yosemite toad, Sierra Nevada red fox, California wolverine, bald eagle, western bumblebee, and the Lahontan cutthroat trout. Under the current Southwest flow, smoke from the Caldor fire is impacting the Lake Tahoe Basin causing periods of Unhealthy to Very Unhealthy Air Quality Index (AQI) readings in locations within the Placer County Air Pollution Control District and the El Dorado Air Quality Management District in California.

The health of Lake Tahoe, which is a world-renowned body of water, is threatened by the impacts of the smoke and fire debris. Impacts to the Lake Tahoe Watershed will include toxic household hazardous waste runoff from the burned structures at Echo Summit, as well as the influx of sediment into sensitive wildlife habitat. These effects will result in downstream impacts to the Truckee River Watershed, as the Truckee River is the only outlet of Lake Tahoe. The Truckee River Watershed supports the area's 20-billion-dollar economy by providing drinking water to over 400,000 individuals and 7,000 businesses, and is home to sugar pines, tiger lilies, and buttercups—as well as river otter, bobcat, Great Blue Heron, and Lahontan cutthroat trout.

Additional threats include the Cosumnes Watershed and El Dorado County's water sources, such as Jenkinson Lake and 300-million-gallon water facility that provides half of the County's water supply. Destroyed water transportation flumes have resulted in the loss of one-third of the El Dorado Irrigation District's water supply, which is the primary source of drinking water and hydroelectric power production. This watershed is home to important natural resources and productive agricultural lands which are at risk due to the potential mobilization of ash, debris, and household hazardous waste from the hundreds of destroyed structures. Furthermore, the Cosumnes Watershed serves as a tributary to the San Joaquin River, which serves as the drainage channel for the entire 16,000 square mile San Joaquin River basin and discharges into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

## **RESPONSE OVERVIEW**

On August 17, 2021, I proclaimed, under the authority of the California Emergency Services Act, a State of Emergency in El Dorado County due to the Caldor Fire. On August 30, 2021, I proclaimed a State of Emergency to also exist in Alpine, Amador, and Placer counties due to the Caldor Fire. Additionally, El Dorado County, the City of South Lake Tahoe, and Alpine County also proclaimed local emergencies.

My Office of Emergency Services expanded its State Operations Center (SOC) activation on August 4, 2021, to include response to multiple wildfires occurring in the State, even as the SOC remains activated for COVID-19 response activities and the Southern Border humanitarian mission. The SOC has been activated since March 2020. 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. The Inland Regional Emergency Operations Center was also activated as of June 24, 2021 to support the coordination of fire response resources. Additionally, El Dorado County activated their Emergency Operations Center at the county level. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Operations Center is also activated to support statewide wildfire response.

On July 14, 2021, the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group raised the Wildfire Preparedness Level (PL) to 5, only the third time in the past 20 years the nation has reached PL 5 by mid-July.

As of September 10, 2021, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) reported 13,336 personnel, 895 engines, 241 hand crews, 257 bulldozers, 393 water tenders, and 114 helicopters assigned to battle and suppress wildfire incidents across the State, with additional fixed-wing aircraft assigned daily. The California National Guard (CNG) has 1,079 personnel, including 421 from out-of-state, activated for the wildfire firefighting effort. Activated aircraft include seven helicopters for fire suppression and medical support, as well as all eight Modular Airborne Firefighting System aircraft for fire suppression. These eight units were all deployed on the Caldor Fire at the same time, which was the first instance in nearly a decade that this all units were simultaneously deployed on a single fire. Additionally, pre-positioned Cal OES Fire and Rescue and local government mutual aid resources include 442 engines and 20 water tenders. California has requested 150 engines from all 50 states through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact and to date has received 35 engines and 154 personnel. Additionally, Title 10, Department of Defense assets are deployed to assist with the Caldor Fire.

The Caldor Fire currently has 4,028 firefighting personnel assigned, including 272 engines, 50 hand crews, 43 bulldozers, 82 water tenders, and 43 helicopters, with air tankers assigned daily as conditions permit. At least 15 California state agencies are activated and providing assistance, both in the field and in the SOC, for the fire. 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.

## **STATE FISCAL CAPACITY AND RESOURCE AVAILABILITY**

Just over a year after the unprecedented economic losses induced by the COVID-19 Pandemic in March and April 2020, and a year following the record-breaking 2020 wildfires, California has begun its path to recovery. However, there still is a long way to go to reach pre-disaster levels. Since the height of the COVID-19 recession in April 2020, and more than a full year into the recovery through June 2021, the nation has added back 15.7 million jobs or more than 70 percent of the 22.4 million jobs lost in March and April 2020. In comparison, California has added back 1.5 million jobs through June 2021 or just over half of the 2.7 million jobs lost in March and April 2020. Despite these strides, California nonfarm employment was still seven percent lower than pre-pandemic levels in June 2021, compared to 4.4 percent for the nation for that same month. Similarly, California's unemployment rate was still at 7.7 percent in June 2021, compared to 5.9 percent for the nation.

While the economic and revenue outlook has improved, the state faces projected structural operating deficits through 2024-25 demonstrating the state's limited fiscal capacity. As noted in the general fund multi-year forecast from the state's recently enacted 2021-22 Budget, the state is projecting operating deficits of over \$20 billion in 2021-22 and ranging from \$2.9 billion to over \$5 billion every year through 2024-25.<sup>1</sup> Further, significant risks to the economic and revenue forecasts remain—new coronavirus variants, vaccine hesitancy, higher inflation if disrupted supply chains cannot support increased consumer demand, and a stock market decline that would significantly impact state revenues.

The rural nature of the area impacted by the Caldor Fire leads to a less diversified economy, with a reliance on tourism-related and/or agriculture activities. While El Dorado County had a higher personal income per capita and lower poverty rate and unemployment rate than the U.S. in 2019, it has a higher share of leisure and hospitality and low-wage sectors which makes it particularly vulnerable due to the impact of fires on leisure and tourism in the area. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic already depressed these sectors, and the current fires will significantly and negatively exacerbate that impact, further threatening livelihoods in these communities.

<b>Real Gross Domestic Production (billions of chained 2012 dollars)<sup>2</sup></b>									
	<b>2019:Q1</b>	<b>2019:Q2</b>	<b>2019:Q3</b>	<b>2019:Q4</b>	<b>2020:Q1</b>	<b>2020:Q2</b>	<b>2020:Q3</b>	<b>2020:Q4</b>	<b>2021:Q1</b>
United States	18,950	19,021	19,142	19,254	19,011	17,303	18,597	18,794	19,086
California	2,759	2,792	2,803	2,848	2,817	2,563	2,743	2,768	2,811
Texas	1,752	1,753	1,774	1,777	1,749	1,605	1,713	1,744	1,763
New York	1,484	1,493	1,491	1,496	1,472	1,315	1,405	1,418	1,441
Florida	956	958	965	974	963	880	946	953	970

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis; Note that state real GDP is only available through the first quarter of 2021 and the second quarter data will be released on October 1.

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<sup>1</sup> "General Fund Multi-Year Forecast, 2021 Budget Act." California Department of Finance.

<http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/reference/MultiYearProjection.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> "Gross Domestic Product by State." U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. <https://www.bea.gov/data/gdp/gdp-state>

Comparison of Select Economic Indicators							
	Personal Income per Capita <sup>3</sup>	Official Poverty Measure <sup>4</sup>	Unemployment Rate <sup>5,6</sup>	Share of Total Employment in Agriculture <sup>7</sup>	Share of Nonfarm Employment in Leisure and Hospitality <sup>7</sup>	Share of Nonfarm Employment in Mining and Logging <sup>7</sup>	Share of Nonfarm Employment in Low-Wage Sectors <sup>7</sup>
United States	\$56,490	13.4%	3.7%	1.0%	11.0%	0.5%	45.4%
California	\$66,619	13.4%	4.2%	2.4%	11.7%	0.1%	48.6%
El Dorado	\$69,895	8.4%	3.6%	0.5%	16.2%	0.2%	48.0%

The state estimates spending approximately \$15.5 billion on direct emergency response costs for COVID-19 and 2020 wildfires alone. Of that amount, the net state impact is estimated to be approximately \$2 billion, after accounting for estimated reimbursements and other eligible funding.

As of the enacted 2021-22 state budget, California's total estimated COVID-19 direct emergency response costs are approximately \$12.5 billion, which represents costs incurred in fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21 as well as estimated costs in 2020-21 and projected costs in 2021-22. These expenditures are estimated to have a net state General Fund cost of approximately \$1 billion. The estimated fund split is as follows:

- \$1 billion state General Fund
- \$8 billion Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance Program
- \$2.4 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF)
- \$724.8 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

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<sup>3</sup> "2019 Per Capita Personal Income by County." U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. <https://www.bea.gov/data/income-saving/personal-income-county-metro-and-other-areas>

<sup>4</sup> "2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates." U.S. Census Bureau, 2019. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

<sup>5</sup> "July 2021 Civilian Unemployment Rate." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/charts/employment-situation/civilian-unemployment-rate.htm>

<sup>6</sup> "June 2021 Labor Force Data for Counties." California Employment Development Department. <https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/file/lfrmonth/countyur-400c.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> "Labor Market Employment by Industry." California Employment Development Department. <https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/industries.html>

- \$347.7 million other federal funds and private funds

In addition, the state estimates spending approximately \$3 billion on direct response and recovery costs related to 2020 wildfires and estimates approximately \$2 billion may be eligible for FEMA reimbursement.

### Resource Availability

The California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) authorizes the Director of Cal OES to administer a disaster assistance program that provides financial assistance from the state for costs incurred by local governments as a result of a disaster event; however, CDAA does not provide funding for individual assistance programs.

Numerous private non-profits, faith-based organizations, and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs) are being coordinated through the El Dorado County Emergency Operations Center which has tasked The Regional Center for Volunteerism-Hands on Sacramento and Sacramento Region VOAD with the coordination of volunteers. The air is extremely hazardous in the area (500 AQI) which is taxing and impacting volunteer response.

In addition to the American Red Cross operations evacuation shelters, The Salvation Army, in partnership with a local church, is providing mass feeding at the shelters and they are utilizing the local Lions Club kitchen to prepare food. As with many VOAD groups experiencing limited engagement of volunteers due to exhaustion and COVID-19 concerns, they are in need of volunteers to deliver food to shelter sites.

Sacramento SPCA is providing assistance to three animal sheltering sites and 4H clubs are supporting these as well. They are providing vaccines for the animals in the shelter. Red Rover and Foothills Dog Rescue are also supporting the animal shelters, but there still is a huge need for more volunteers as these shelters are staffed 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The SPCA is on standby to open another shelter in Sacramento and anticipate the need to support animal sheltering on Tahoe side of the fire as Highway 50 is closed and there are limited voluntary resources on that side of Highway 50.

Californians, including first responders across the State, local officials, and volunteer organizations, are exhausted. COVID-19 has severely impacted the number of volunteers available to support those impacted by wildfire. The last several years have taken a toll on the people and the property of this State. While Californians have proven to be resilient, the relentless and repetitive nature of these disasters has exceeded state and local capability, and federal assistance is necessary.

### **UNINSURED HOME AND PERSONAL PROPERTY LOSSES**



It has become increasingly more difficult to obtain fire insurance for homeowners in certain areas within California that have a higher risk of wildfire. Many carriers are dropping insurance coverage for certain high-risk areas or have offered insurance premiums that are cost prohibitive for residents. While the FAIR Plan exists in California as an insurer of last resort, it generally includes minimal coverage and is also often difficult to obtain.

While overall county level data suggests approximately 25% of homeowners are uninsured, the specific areas impacted by the Caldor Fire will have higher rates of uninsured and underinsured as compared to the overall county statistics, which would include areas of the county not impacted by the Caldor Fire with higher rates of insurance. Of those that are insured, recent research shows that 60 to 80 percent of Californians are underinsured<sup>8</sup> by approximately 20 percent of the costs to rebuild after a fire. California's total exposure for underinsurance is greater than \$46 billion. Wildfires often result in a total loss of property, and the destruction caused by these catastrophic events represent a financial tragedy for many families. In addition, disruption of family income, combined with the substantial loss in property value, often results in mortgage default. This is particularly the case if homeowners are underinsured and cannot afford to rebuild. Information from the 2018 Camp Fire shows that 11,000 homes were destroyed in the Town of Paradise and surrounding area. Data from 2018 shows that 80 percent of the homes affected by the 2018 wildfires were underinsured and as of August 2021 only 981 homes have been reconstructed within the Town.

Based on joint FEMA-State Individual Assistance PDAs, the following table depicts the current jointly agreed-to residential structure impacts as of September 9, 2021. This information is compared to average homeowner insurance coverage rates and median home values. As the Caldor Fire continues to burn, additional damage is expected to occur and further assessments will be completed when conditions permit.

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<sup>8</sup> Wildfire victims are largely underinsured | Insurance Business:

<https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/us/news/catastrophe/wildfire-victims-are-largely-underinsured-116580.aspx>

Homeownership, Renter-Occupied, and Insurance						
	Residences Major Damage	Residences Destroyed	Housing Unit Insurance Rate	Median Home Value <sup>9</sup>	Homeowners Avg. Ins. Coverage <sup>10</sup>	Owner Occupied Rate <sup>9</sup>
<b>El Dorado</b>	3	711	75%	\$ 460,900	\$ 631,138	76%

While El Dorado County personnel are currently assessing the address-by-address list of damaged and destroyed residences, 84 percent have been identified as primary residences.

## DISASTER IMPACTED POPULATION PROFILE

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, California's official poverty rate is 11.8 percent, slightly lower than the national 12.3 percent, and ranks 26<sup>th</sup> amongst all states and Washington D.C. When considering an alternate poverty measure that compensates for cost of living and benefits factors, California ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation after Washington D.C. at 17.9 percent, compared to 13.1 percent nationally. In addition, during the second quarter of 2020, nearly three million Californians were unemployed, representing more than 14 percent of the nation's total unemployment. In 2019, California's nonfarm jobs accounted for 11.5 percent of the nation's jobs. These jobs decreased by more than two million or 13 percent in the second quarter, a steeper drop than the 12 percent for the United States, and about 12.5 percent of the nation's job losses.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), El Dorado County has a high level of vulnerability in the category of Minority Status & Language, indicating that there may be segments of the impacted communities that require targeted support to ensure equitable distribution of recovery resources.

Demographic data from El Dorado County indicates significant and disproportionate impacts to vulnerable populations, including individuals at lower income levels, the elderly, disabled, and those that are medically dependent upon electricity. In addition, those at lower income levels are also experiencing higher rates of unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Grizzly Flats, the community suffering the greatest impact thus far, as reports indicate the fire nearly decimated the community, has a greater elderly population (35.5 percent) and a greater poverty

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<sup>9</sup> "2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates." U.S. Census Bureau, 2019. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

<sup>10</sup> "Average Fire Coverage Limits per County as of December 31, 2017." California Department of Insurance, December 31, 2017. [http://www.insurance.ca.gov/0400-news/0200-studies-reports/0250-homeowners-study/upload/D-Average-of-Coverage-A-C\\_v1.pdf](http://www.insurance.ca.gov/0400-news/0200-studies-reports/0250-homeowners-study/upload/D-Average-of-Coverage-A-C_v1.pdf)

rate (8.7 percent) than the broader population of El Dorado County, which is detailed in the 2021 El Dorado County Demographics enclosure.

## **IMPACT TO COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Caldor Fire has had an intense and devastating impact on the residents, communities, and educational system in El Dorado County. The County reported that over 53,000 residents have been displaced during the peak of evacuations, making up over one-fourth of El Dorado County's population. This included 5,466 students and 568 school personnel. Seven of the fifteen school districts are directly impacted, resulting in the closure of twenty schools across the county. The entire town of Grizzly Flats has been decimated, and Walt Tyler Elementary School has been completely destroyed. The trauma of the Caldor Fire, compounded by COVID-19 and the Delta variant, has intensified the prevalent and urgent needs of students, families, and educators.

The Caldor Fire threatened numerous ski resorts, further jeopardizing the local economy, which is heavily dependent upon ski resorts in the winter months. In fact, ski resorts turned on snow makers in an effort to moisten the ground and create humidity in the atmosphere to slow the spread of the Caldor Fire.

The Grizzly Flats Community Services District has been heavily impacted by the fire including damage to water storage and distribution infrastructure. The district relies on water from surface collection and diversions, both of which are impacted and will result in the loss of water supply to approximately 1,200 customers. The El Dorado Irrigation District (130,000 population) also relies on surface water collection in the area of the fire. They operate a diversion facility and 23-mile conveyance system with wooden flumes (have been damaged) of critical importance for the supply of one-third of the district's water supply. Replacement cost is estimated at \$68 million dollars and over a year to rebuild. SMUD operates 17 dams, 11 reservoirs, nine powerhouses (688 MW generation capacity), and other essential facilities critical in providing power to the Sacramento region. This includes a 69kv transmission line with wood poles, 28 miles of tunnels, penstocks, and canals. The Riverton Maintenance Yard is critical to ensure all equipment is operational.

The critical fiberoptic line relied on for 9-1-1 systems and cellular towers from El Dorado County to Lake Tahoe along Highway 50 has been damaged. Numerous communications sites, including Big Hill, a hub for SMUD, CHP, and several cellular carriers are threatened. This site also includes the ENF's Big Hill fire watchtower. Highways 50, 88, and 89 all have closures in place. These Trans-Sierra highways are vital to commerce, tourism, incident logistical support and emergency evacuation and the impact of their closure is substantial. There are many additional road closures around

the fire area with traffic control points in place.

As of September 10, 2021, an estimated 1,337 customers remain without power in El Dorado County. Furthermore, water use restrictions are in place for nearly 1,300 customers due to the Caldor Fire with an additional 836 without water service entirely.

## **DISASTER RELATED UNEMPLOYMENT**

Historically, wildfires have had devastating impacts to the outdoor tourism industry in the state. As more than half of El Dorado County's working population is employed in leisure, tourism, and other low-wage sectors, the Caldor Fire impacts throughout the El Dorado National Forest and the South Lake Tahoe region will have significant, protracted ramifications on disaster related unemployment. In addition to being deterred by the destruction from the fire itself, visitors are often deterred due to hazardous air quality.

The wildfires have caused significant impacts on California's unemployment rate, which is compounded by the extremely high unemployment resulting from COVID-19. The following table depicts currently available unemployment data.

Workforce Employment Data <sup>11,12</sup>					
Jurisdiction	Agriculture	Leisure and Hospitality	Mining, Logging, and Construction	Self-Employed	Service Industry
National	22,200,000	15,178,000	8,058,000	15,013,780	130,693,400
California	422,900	1,575,500	18,500	2,179,871	14,260,500
El Dorado	200	6,700	200	12,656	5,800

Primary economic impacts are from evacuation orders forcing closures of recreation destinations. This includes ski resorts, numerous campgrounds, hotels, restaurants, and businesses. Recreational sites for camping, hiking, hunting, boating, fishing & horseback riding sites are also impacted. Which these numerous closures and damages, the potential loss of jobs to local businesses with the reduction in tourism and evacuation orders is a cause for concern. Furthermore, cattle grazing lands are impacted, as well as local agricultural risk to numerous vineyards and apple orchards.

## **EMERGENCY WORK AND IMPACTS TO PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

The enclosed agreed-upon joint FEMA-State PDA identifies the per capita impacts for El Dorado County exceeds the \$3.89 federal per county impact indicator.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/charts/employment-situation/employment-levels-by-industry.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/labor-force-and-unemployment-for-cities-and-census-areas.html>

In support, specific examples of confirmed public assistance work are as follows:

County	Confirmed Public Assistance Damage	Validated Impact
El Dorado	711 destroyed residential structures requiring debris removal at \$70,000 per lot, and approximately 10,820 hazardous trees on county right of way and 7,600 hazardous trees on residential lots.	\$64,522,500
	Approximately 24' wide x 100' long bridge, including beams, concrete abutment, wood deck, and 100' of guardrail; 182 destroyed signs and 300 guide markers.	\$596,600
	Destroyed multiple wooden water flumes (356'x12', 400'x12', 266'x12', and 150'x12'); wooden entrance portal for water siphon (15'x6'); and metal fencing and poles.	\$23,445,000
	Destroyed 2009 John Deere Loader (624K type), 2-floor wood kit house (24'x39'), tin roof shed (24'x33'), SCADA system, wiring, communication, and solar panels.	\$255,000
	Wood retaining wall (100'x3'), wood frame building (10'x30'), 3 booster pumps, numerous gauges, pipes, controls, and electrical. Loss of a 2,500 and a 3,000-gallon hydropneumatics tank, two 200,000-gallon steel tanks. Loss of shed (40'x5'), 60' of 12" PVC pipe. Loss of meters (3'x2' boxes) for 450 residences.	\$3,062,500

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

California continues to recover from multiple, consecutive disasters that received Major Disaster Declarations in recent history, including the 2021 wildfires (FEMA-4610-DR-CA). The 2020 wildfires (FEMA-4558-DR-CA and FEMA-4569-DR-CA) were historic events that consumed over 4.2 million acres statewide and destroyed over 17,000 structures, including over 10,000 homes. These fire impacts devastated large swaths of arable land and affected crops, including the vital vineyard industries of Napa and Sonoma Counties, forestry operations, and even the homes of agricultural workers – all of which are further impacted by exceptional drought conditions.

Between 2017 and 2019, California received five Major Disaster Declarations that included the February 2019 flooding and mudslides (FEMA-4431-DR-CA and FEMA-4434-DR-CA), the Carr and Mendocino Complex Fires in the Summer of 2018 (FEMA-4382-DR-CA), the Hill, Woolsey, and Camp fires in November 2018 (FEMA-4407-DR-CA),

and the Thomas Fire and subsequent Montecito debris flow (FEMA-4353-DR-CA) in 2017. Collectively, these significant events have claimed lives, destroyed thousands of homes, and disrupted the economic viability of numerous communities across the State, whose long-term recovery will be adversely affected by the ongoing fire siege.

In addition to the recent fires, California is still very much engaged in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic (FEMA-4482-DR-CA), which has far-reaching impacts statewide. As COVID-19 cases continue to increase due to the Delta variant, El Dorado County has an ICU capacity of only one bed available.

The compounding impacts of the multiple successive and, in many instances, simultaneous devastating disasters over the past several years cannot be overstated.

### **CERTIFICATION**

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.

### **CONCLUSION**

In recent years, despite investment of billions of dollars on fire prevention and mitigation efforts, the overwhelming challenges of wildfires continue to expand. As demonstrated above, the communities impacted by the Caldor Fire have a high rate of poverty, elderly, and disabled residents, as well as recipients of government assistance. Coupled with the significant impacts to already vulnerable communities and the inevitable loss of homes and critical infrastructure, the Caldor Fire will have devastating economic and infrastructure impacts within the affected communities. This fire represents another relentless and successive disaster to strike California, coming during the surge of the Delta variant of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and in the immediate aftermath of record-breaking wildfires in 2020 and the multiple significant wildfires currently burning throughout California.

Pursuant to 44 CFR § 206.36(b), the incident is of such magnitude and severity that effective response and recovery is beyond state and local capability, requiring supplementary federal assistance to save lives and protect property, public health, and safety. Due to the Caldor Fire, the State of California is specifically requesting a Major Disaster Declaration for El Dorado County to include Individual Assistance, all Categories of Public Assistance, and Direct Federal Assistance, as well as Hazard Mitigation statewide.

As this disaster progresses, subject to additional programs warranted, we reserve the ability to amend this request for additional federal assistance.

I have designated the Director of the California Governor's Office of Emergency

Services, Mark S. Ghilarducci, as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. Mr. Ghilarducci will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency in continuing to assess damage and may provide more information or justification on my behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gavin Newsom', with a stylized, cursive script.

Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California

Enclosures:

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

2021 El Dorado County Demographics

2021 El Dorado County Social Vulnerability Index

2021 El Dorado County Yellowsheet

Stafford Act and State Disaster Declarations for Last 24 Months

List of Federally Recognized Tribes in California