

Fire Recovery Guide



**Office of Congresswoman Julia Brownley
California's 26th Congressional District**



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●●● A NOTE FROM CONGRESSWOMAN JULIA BROWNLEY ●●●

Dear Friend,

Ventura County has experienced devastating wildfires that have forced thousands of people to evacuate their communities, destroyed homes, and left many families with nothing. The Thomas Fire, which started on December 4, 2017, burned more than 280,000 acres. The fire destroyed more than 1,000 structures, many of which are homes, and countless people have been displaced.

I remain committed to working with local, state, and federal officials to ensure that the federal government provides all necessary resources to support our community in this time of need. While the deadline for FEMA Individual Assistance programs has passed, I am still here to help. **You can call my [office](#) if you have problems with a federal agency and need additional assistance.** An archived version of this resource guide with FEMA information is available [here](#).

As our community continues to recover, flash flooding and mudslides continue to pose a risk. Please check [VCEmergency.com](#) for the latest evacuation and shelter information.

Together, we will continue to overcome this difficult time, stronger than ever. If you need any assistance, my staff and I are here to help.

Sincerely,



JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress

••• QUICK GUIDE •••

Tax Assistance: Taxpayers may download forms and publications from the official IRS website, irs.gov, or order them by calling 800-829-3676. The IRS toll-free number for general tax questions is 800-829-1040.

Veterans Assistance: If you need information regarding VA death benefits, pensions, insurance settlements, or other information related to VA, contact the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at 800-827-1000 (TDD 800-829-4833), or visit their Inquiry Routing and Information System (IRIS) website at iris.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1703.

Replacing Lost Documents: If you've lost important documents or identification in the fires, many can be replaced. You can learn more about how to replace these common documents by contacting these agencies directly:

- California Driver's License:
 - Phone: 800-777-0133
 - Website: www.dmv.ca.gov
 - Replacement license forms must be delivered in person.
- Green Cards:
 - Phone: 800-375-5283
 - Website: www.uscis.gov
- Medicare Cards:
 - Phone: 800-772-1213; (TTY) 800-325-0778
 - Website: www.ssa.gov/medicare
- Military Records:
 - Phone: 866-272-6272
 - Website: www.archives.gov
- Passport:
 - Phone: 1-877-487-2778; 888-874-7793 (TTY)
 - Website: www.travel.state.gov
- Social Security Card:
 - Phone: 800-772-1213; (TTY) 800-325-0778
 - Website: www.ssa.gov
- U.S. Savings Bonds:
 - Phone: 844-284-2676
 - Website: www.treasurydirect.gov

- U.S. Tax Returns:
 - Phone: 800-829-1040
 - Website: www.irs.gov

Rebuilding and Recovery Services: As fire survivors begin the process of recovery and rebuilding, the County of Ventura is available to help. VenturaCountyRecovers.org is a one-stop site to help aid the recovery process.

[VenturaCountyRecovers](http://VenturaCountyRecovers.org) offers information on:

- [Debris Removal](#)
- [Rebuilding](#)
- [Damaged Property](#)
- [Financial Assistance](#)
- [Housing](#)
- [Recovery Notifications](#)
- [Agricultural Assistance](#)
- And more...

For behavioral health services visit:

English: <http://www.vchca.org/agency-divisions/behavioral-health>

Spanish: <http://www.saludsiemprevc.org/>

For assistance, please contact any of Congresswoman Brownley’s offices,
or visit her website at JuliaBrownley.House.gov

Washington, D.C. Office:

1019 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 225-5811
Hours: M-F 9-6:00pm ET

Thousand Oaks Office:

223 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Suite 220
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
Phone: (805) 379-1779
Hours: M-F 9-5:00pm PT

Oxnard Office:

201 E. Fourth Street
Suite 209B
Oxnard, CA 93030
Phone: (805) 379-1779
Hours: Appointment only

●● USDA ASSISTANCE ●●

USDA is making resources available to help rural people and communities recover from the effects of California Wildfires.

Help for Communities

Rural communities that have been impacted by the fires can receive assistance through the [Community Facilities Program](#) to repair or rebuild essential community buildings and infrastructure and replace damaged equipment. Also, USDA can provide relief through the [Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program](#) to help repair or rebuild rural water and wastewater systems in the aftermath of this disaster.

Help for Businesses

Rural Development can help businesses recover from the damage caused by wildfires by guaranteeing their business loans with eligible lenders through the [Business and Industry Loan Guarantee Program](#). Funds also may be available from Rural Development's intermediary lenders.

Help for Housing

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is taking the lead to provide emergency housing for people who need it in these affected areas. Existing USDA home loan borrowers may qualify for assistance with their loan payments.

More detailed information on available resources from Rural Development may be found at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/services/rural-development-disaster-assistance>. Additional resources from USDA and other organizations for those impacted by disasters may also be found at <https://www.usda.gov/topics/disaster>.

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; homeownership; community services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov/ca.

Agricultural Assistance

Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides compensation to producers who grow uninsurable crops and have purchased NAP coverage by the crop signup dates.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) compensates producers for livestock death due to natural disasters. Compensation is based on roughly 75 percent of the national average price of livestock by type and age. Report losses within 30 days.

Tree Assistance Program provides financial assistance to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes, and vines damaged by natural disasters. Forests are not eligible.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) compensates producers for a percentage of the pasture or forage loss on private lands due to natural disasters. Payments are subject to a national payment factor. Report losses within 30 days.

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) the Farm Service Agency covers a portion of the cost to replace fence or other conservation practices. This program is contingent on funding available.

Emergency Loan Program is available to producers with agriculture operations located in a county under a primary or contiguous Presidential or Secretarial disaster designation, like Ventura County. These low interest loans help producers recover from production and physical losses.

HayNet is an Internet-based Hay and grazing Net Ad Service allowing farmers and ranchers to share 'Need Hay' ads and 'Have Hay' ads online. Farmers can also use another feature to post advertisements for grazing land or ads requesting a need for land to graze www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet.

Livestock Forage Disaster Program compensates producers who suffer pasture or forage loss due to drought or who have federally managed grazing leases but are not allowed to graze the lease because of wildfire. Report losses within 30 days.

***For more information about these programs please visit <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov> or visit:**

USDA Farm Service Agency

920 E. Stowell Road

Santa Maria, CA 93454

(805) 928-9269

●●● CENTERS FOR MEDICAID & MEDICARE SERVICES (CMS) ASSISTANCE ●●●

CMS has taken the following steps to support the State of California and those residents impacted by wildfires:

Waivers for Skilled Nursing Facilities and Assistance for Hospitals and other Healthcare Facilities: CMS issued a blanket Skilled Nursing Facility waiver, described on the website below; and the Regional Office has provided numerous technical assistance responses to the state, California Hospital Association and providers on specific types of CMS and other HHS program flexibilities that were available with and without waivers. These program flexibilities and waivers work to provide continued access to care for beneficiaries. For more information on the waivers CMS granted, visit www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Wildfires.html

Special Enrollment Opportunities and Medicare Flexibilities: CMS is providing beneficiaries affected by the California wildfires a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) that gives them an additional opportunity through March 31, 2018 to add, drop or change their Medicare health and prescription drug plan in the event they are eligible for an SEP and were unable to make an election during the fall open enrollment period or another election period for which they were eligible. For more information on these special enrollment periods, visit: www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Extension-SE-Period-PR-VI-CA-Wildfire.pdf. When a public health emergency is in effect, Medicare Advantage Organizations in affected areas are required to waive prior authorization and other gatekeeper requirements and to allow care to be provided by non-contracted providers and facilities. In addition, Part D plan sponsors are expected to lift certain limit for drug benefits.

Dialysis Care: Dialysis patients who are unable to receive dialysis services at their usual facility and who need assistance to locate a facility where they can be dialyzed, should call the NW 18 (Southern California) Patient Hotline 800-637-4767 for assistance. The following large dialysis organization hotline numbers are also available for patients: DaVita Emergency Dialysis Services: 800-400-8331, Fresenius Kidney Care Emergency Hotline: 800-626-1297, Dialysis Clinic Inc. (DCI) Emergency Command Center: 866-424-1990, and U.S. Renal Care Emergency Hotline: 866-671-USRC (8772).

Healthcare Provider Hotline: CMS established a toll-free hotline servicing Medicare's Part B providers and suppliers in California. The hotline is intended to assist non-certified Part B suppliers, physicians and non-physician practitioners helping with recovery efforts enroll in federal health programs and receive temporary Medicare billing privileges. CMS is temporarily waiving the application fee, finger print-based criminal background checks, site visits, and in-state licensure requirements usually required for providers to access Medicare billing privileges. The toll-free hotline telephone number is 855-259-2396.

●●● USPS ASSISTANCE ●●●

For Ventura, Ojai, and Oak View residents who lost their homes you can access your mail as follows:

If you live in zip code 93001, you can pick up your mail at the Ventura Main Post Office, 675 E. Santa Clara Street, Ventura, CA 93001.

Hours: Monday - Friday 9AM - 5:00 PM, Saturday 10AM - 3PM, and closed on Sunday
Phone: 805-643-3057

If you live in zip codes 93003 or 93004, you can pick up your mail at the East Ventura Post Office, 41 S. Wake Forest Avenue, Ventura, CA 93003.

Hours: Monday - Friday 9AM - 5PM, Saturday 10AM - 3PM, and closed on Sunday
Phone: 805-642-1521

If you live in Ojai, you can pick up your mail at the Ojai Post Office, 201 E. Ojai Avenue, Ojai, CA 93023.

Hours: Monday - Friday 9AM - 5PM, Saturday 9:30AM - 2PM, and closed on Sunday
Phone: 805-646-7904

If you live in Oak View, you can pick up your mail at the Oak View Post Office, 360 Ventura Avenue, Oak View, CA 93022.

Hours: Monday - Friday 10AM - 4PM, and closed on Saturday and Sunday
Phone: 805-649-5395

Please note: All post offices in these areas are open and fully operational. Additionally, USPS is delivering mail to all areas that are accessible.

If you or someone you know is having an issue with the United States Postal Service and local delivery of mail, please contact my office at (805) 379-1779.

●●● TAX RELIEF AND IRS ASSISTANCE ●●●

Following recent disaster declarations for individual assistance issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the IRS announced that affected taxpayers impacted by the fire will be eligible for tax relief.

The declaration permits the IRS to postpone certain deadlines for taxpayers who reside or have a business in the disaster area. Filing deadlines for certain individual and business taxes have been extended to January 31, 2018. Call the IRS disaster hotline at 866-562-5227 for more information on which filings qualify.

If an affected taxpayer receives a penalty notice from the IRS, the taxpayer should call the telephone number on the notice to have the IRS abate any interest and any late filing or late payment penalties that would otherwise apply. Penalties or interest will be abated only for taxpayers who have an original or extended filing, payment or deposit due date, including an extended filing or payment due date, that falls within the postponement period.

The IRS automatically identifies taxpayers located in the covered disaster area and applies automatic filing and payment relief. But affected taxpayers who reside or have a business located outside the covered disaster area must call the IRS disaster hotline at 866-562-5227 to request this tax relief.

In addition, TTB will consider waiving late filing, payment, or deposit penalties on a case-by-case basis for wineries and other businesses whose operations were affected by the fires. To qualify for such a waiver, a taxpayer must:

- Demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the appropriate TTB officer, that the fires directly affected your ability to timely file, pay, or deposit; and
- Contact the TTB National Revenue Center (NRC) at:
550 Main Street, Suite 8002
Cincinnati, OH 45202-5215
Toll-free: 877-882-3277
Online Inquiry: [TTB's National Revenue Center Contact Form](#)

Casualty Losses

Affected taxpayers in a federally declared disaster area have the option of claiming disaster-related casualty losses on their federal income tax return for either this year or last year. Claiming the loss on an original or amended return for last year will get the taxpayer an earlier refund, but waiting to claim the loss on this year's return could result in a greater tax saving, depending on other income factors.

Individuals may deduct personal property losses that are not covered by insurance or other reimbursements. For details, see [Form 4684](#) and its [instructions](#).

Affected taxpayers claiming the disaster loss on last year's return should put the Disaster Designation "California, Wildfires" at the top of the form so that the IRS can expedite the processing of the refund.

Other Relief

The IRS will waive the usual fees and expedite requests for copies of previously filed tax returns for affected taxpayers. Taxpayers should put the assigned Disaster Designation in red ink at the top of [Form 4506](#), Request for Copy of Tax Return, or [Form 4506-T](#), Request for Transcript of Tax Return, as appropriate, and submit it to the IRS.

Affected taxpayers who are contacted by the IRS on a collection or examination matter should explain how the disaster impacts them so that the IRS can provide appropriate consideration to their case.

Taxpayers may download forms and publications from the official IRS website, irs.gov, or order them by calling 800-829-3676. The IRS toll-free number for general tax questions is 800-829-1040.

●●● VETERANS ASSISTANCE ●●●

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

If you need information regarding VA death benefits, pensions, insurance settlements, or other information related to VA, contact the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at 800-827-1000 (TDD 800-829-4833), or visit their Inquiry Routing and Information System (IRIS) website at iris.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1703.

●●● STATE AND LOCAL RECOVERY RESOURCES ●●●

VenturaCountyRecovers.org is intended to be a comprehensive, one-stop site to aid the recovery process.

VenturaCountyRecovers offers information on:

• Debris Removal	• Rebuilding
• Damaged Property	• Financial Assistance
• Housing	• Recovery Notifications
• Agricultural Assistance	• Safety Updates
• Road Closures	• Air Quality

Additional State and Local Recovery Resources:

CalWORKs:

Provides cash aid to eligible needy California families to help pay for housing, food, and other necessary expenses. For more information contact your Ventura County Human Services Agency at 888-472-4463. For more information on this program, visit the cash aid website at: www.cdss.ca.gov/CalWORKS

Crisis Counseling:

Short-term counseling may be available for emotional or mental health problems caused by the impacts of a disaster. For more information, contact the Ventura County behavioral health department at 866-998-2243, English: www.vchca.org/agency-divisions/behavioral-health
Spanish: www.saludsiemprevc.org/

CalFresh:

If you have been affected by a disaster and are in need of food assistance, you can apply for benefits through the CalFresh Program. To find out how to apply for benefits in your county, please call the toll free number 877-847-3663 (FOOD) or apply online at www.benefitscal.org/. For more information on CalFresh, visit the website at www.calfresh.ca.gov.

Health Information:

For information on health concerns related to a disaster you can contact 916-650-6416 or visit the California Department of Public Health website at www.bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov.

Insurance and Rebuilding:

California Department of Insurance – CA Department of Insurance provides assistance on insurance issues, such as claim handling delays, additional living expenses, underinsurance disputes, etc. The Insurance Commissioner wants to make sure that the claim process moves as smoothly and as quickly as possible and that any underinsurance issues are investigated. If you are experiencing difficulty with the processing of your claim or wish to have an underinsurance issue investigated, contact the officers at the Department's Consumer Hotline at 800-927-HELP (4357); TDD 800-482-4833 for assistance. For additional information you may also wish to visit the Department's Web site at www.insurance.ca.gov

Contractors State License Board (CSLB) verifies contractor licenses, investigates complaints, and provides helpful information about hiring a licensed contractor. For information on hiring or filing a complaint regarding a contractor, disaster victims may call CSLB's Disaster Hotline M-F from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. at 1-800-962-1125, or the 24-hour automated telephone response system, 1-800-321-CSLB (2752). Licenses can also be checked online at: www.cslb.ca.gov or www.CheckTheLicenseFirst.com. You can also view a video, “[Rebuilding After a Natural Disaster](#)” on the CSLB Web site.

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) can assist with manufactured housing questions including repairs, installations and/or registration and titling. For information on obtaining construction permits for manufactured homes or parks contact the Riverside Area Office at 951-782-4420 or the Sacramento Area Office at 916-255-2501. For information concerning Registration and Titling call 800-952-8356; TDD 800-735-2929 or visit the website at: www.hcd.ca.gov/.

Medi-Cal Health Coverage:

Medi-Cal is a public health insurance program that provides comprehensive medical, dental and vision care coverage to low-income individuals, including families with children, seniors, persons with disabilities, pregnant women and low-income people with specific diseases, such as tuberculosis, breast cancer, or HIV/AIDS. For more information, contact the County of Ventura’s Human Services Agency. To find your local office, visit the Web site at: <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/CountyOffices.aspx> or call 916-552-9200.

Services for Seniors:

The California Department of Aging contracts with and provides leadership and direction to Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) that coordinate a wide array of services to seniors and adults with Disabilities. You can locate an AAA in your area by calling (800) 510-2020; TTD (800) 735-2929 or visit the website at <http://aging.ca.gov/Programs/>.

Tax Advice and Assistance:

California Board of Equalization - For questions regarding sales and use, property and special taxes, contact the Board of Equalization at 1-800-400-7115 (TTY: 1-800-735-2929) or visit the website at: www.boe.ca.gov.

Employment Development Department – *Assistance for Employers*: CA employers who are directly affected by a state of emergency may request up to a 60-day extension to file their state payroll reports and to deposit state payroll taxes with the Employment Development Department (EDD), without penalty or interest. For further information, call EDD Taxpayer Assistance Center at 1-888-745-3886; TTY 1-800-547-9565 or visit EDD’s website at: www.edd.ca.gov

The Franchise Tax Board (FTB) provides guidance in obtaining tax relief for disaster casualty losses. Contact FTB at 800-852-5711 (TTY/TDD for hearing or speech impaired: 800-822-6268) or visit the website at www.ftb.ca.gov.

Veterans:

California Department of Veterans Affairs - If you have a California Department of Veterans Affairs (CALVET) loan and have suffered damage caused by a disaster, contact CALVET at 800-952-5626; TDD 800-324-5966.

Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program:

The Woman, Infants, and Children (WIC) program helps low-to-moderate-income pregnant women, new mothers and their babies and young children to eat well and stay healthy. WIC provides:

- Special checks to buy healthy foods such as milk, juice, eggs, cheese, fruits, vegetables, baby foods and whole grains;
- Information about nutrition and health;
- Breastfeeding support and referrals to health care and community services.

For more information, call 1-888-942-9675 or visit the website at: www.cdph.ca.gov and click on “Find a Local WIC Agency” under Program Information.