# Fire Recovery Guide



# **Office of Congresswoman Julia Brownley** California's 26<sup>th</sup> Congressional District



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#### ••• A NOTE FROM CONGRESSWOMAN JULIA BROWNLEY •••

Our community has experienced devastating wildfires that have forced thousands of people to evacuate, destroyed homes, and left many families with nothing.

The Hill and Woolsey fires, which started on November 8, 2018, have burned tens of thousands of acres. To stay up to date on the latest fire evacuation and shelter information, please visit: <a href="https://www.VCEmergency.com">https://www.VCEmergency.com</a> or <a href="https://www.211lacounty.org/fire">https://www.VCEmergency.com</a> or <a href="https://www.211lacounty.org/fire">https://www.VCEmergency.com</a> or <a href="https://www.211lacounty.org/fire">https://www.VCEmergency.com</a> or <a href="https://www.211lacounty.org/fire">https://www.211lacounty.org/fire</a>. You can also sign up for text alerts at: <a href="https://www.lacounty.gov/emergency/alert-la/">https://www.lacounty.gov/emergency/alert-la/</a>. Please share this information with your friends and family.

Funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) may be available to help individuals and businesses rebuild, repair, and replace housing and other property not covered by insurance.

# Individuals who were impacted by the fires should contact their insurance company as soon as possible. Individuals and business that were impacted by the fires can also apply for FEMA assistance. You can apply in the following ways:

- Online at www.disasterassistance.gov; www.disasterassistance.gov/es (Spanish)
- Via smartphone at <u>www.fema.gov; www.fema.gov/esp</u> (Spanish)
- Constituents may call the registration phone number at 1-800-621-3362; those who have a speech disability or hearing loss and use TTY should call 800-462-7585 directly; for those who use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS), call 800-621-3362.

Small Business Administration (SBA) loans may also be available to individuals and businesses to repair or replace disaster-damaged property, inventory, and supplies. Homeowners and renters may also be eligible for SBA loans to repair or replace disaster-related damages to homes or personal property.

After registering with FEMA, businesses and homeowners that would like to apply for SBA loans can do so online at www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/loans-grants/small-business-loans/disaster-loans.

# You can also call my office at 805-379-1779 if you have problems with a federal agency and need additional assistance.

Please know I am committed to working with our local, state, and federal officials to ensure that the federal government provides all necessary resources to support our community. Our district pulls together in tough times. We've overcome challenges before by working together, and we will do so again. Should you need anything, my staff and I are here to help.

Sincerely,

JULIA BROWNLEY Member of Congress

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# ••• QUICK GUIDE •••

**Federal Disaster Aid**: The Administration has approved a major disaster declaration for our community. The declaration provides a number of programs to assist individuals, households and businesses, along with assistance for public agencies and selected non-profits that have participated in response efforts. Families, volunteers, employers or employees facing challenges due to Southern California fires **should register with FEMA** by calling **1-800-621-FEMA** (**3362**), going online at <u>www.disasterassistance.gov</u> or visiting a Local Assistance Center.

**Small Business Administration (SBA):** The Administration also approved U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) loans for homeowners, businesses, and nonprofit organizations. The SBA loans are to help businesses repair or replace disaster-damaged property, inventory, and supplies. Homeowners and renters may also be eligible for SBA loans to repair or replace disaster-related damages to homes or personal property. Businesses and homeowners that would like to apply for SBA loans can do so online at: <u>http://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/loans-grants/small-business-loans/disaster-loans</u>.

# SBA Disaster Recovery Center:

Ventura County Community Foundation Building Economic Development Collaborative 4001 Mission Oaks Blvd., Suite B Camarillo, CA 93012 Hours: Mon-Sat 9am-6pm **\*WILL BE CLOSING 11/30/18**\*

**Unemployment assistance:** People who are out of work due to the fires may be eligible for unemployment benefits. You can file for unemployment benefits online at

<u>https://eapply4ui.edd.ca.gov/</u>. You can also file by phone, Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 12:00 pm by calling:

- English: 1-800-300-5616
- Spanish: 1-800-326-8937
- Chinese (Cantonese): 1-800-547-3506
- Chinese (Mandarin): 1-866-303-0706
- Vietnamese: 1-800-547-2058

# **Crisis Counseling**

Survivors who may be stressed, anxious or depressed following the wildfires can receive free disaster crisis counseling. Survivors who wish to speak to a counselor may call (800) 985-5990 or text Talkwithus@66746. Counseling does not require registering with FEMA.

# **Transitional Sheltering Assistance Program**

Amid the significant challenges for disaster survivors in their recovery from the ongoing California wildfires, FEMA is funding the Transitional Sheltering Assistance (TSA) program. TSA eligibility is limited to eligible FEMA registrants who resided in Butte County before the fires.

TSA is a short-term sheltering solution until other temporary or permanent housing solutions can be implemented. Under TSA, disaster survivors may be eligible to stay in an approved hotel or motel for a limited period, as a bridge to intermediate and longer-term temporary housing. FEMA directly pays the cost of the room and taxes to participating hotels and motels. TSA recipients are responsible for all other costs, including laundry, room service, parking, telephone, food, transportation or other services.

Individuals and households in California may be eligible for TSA if:

- They register with FEMA for assistance, online at DisasterAssistance.gov or by telephone at 800- 621-3362, TTY 800-462-7585.
- They pass identity verification.
- Their pre-disaster primary residence is in Butte County and occupancy is verified.
- They are displaced from and unable to live in their pre-disaster residence.

# **Disaster Legal Services**

FEMA, through an agreement with the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association, provides limited free legal help for survivors. Disaster Legal Services provides assistance to low-income individuals who, prior to or because of the disaster, are unable to secure adequate legal services to meet their disaster-related needs.

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/young\_lawyers/disaster\_legal\_services/

#### **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 them directly:

- California Driver's License:
  - Phone: 800-777-0133
  - Visit a California DMV office to complete an application. Replacement license forms must be delivered in person.
- Green cards:
  - o Phone: 800-375-5283
  - Website: <u>www.uscis.gov</u>
- Medicare cards:
  - o Phone: 800-772-1213; (TTY) 800-325-0778
  - o Website: <u>www.ssa.gov/medicare</u>
- Military records:
  - Phone: 866-272-6272
  - Website: <u>https://www.archives.gov</u>
- Passport:
  - Phone:1-877-487-2778; 888-874-7793 (TTY)
  - Website: <u>https://www.travel.state.gov</u>
- Social Security card:
  - o Phone: 800-772-1213; (TTY) 800-325-0778
  - o Website: <u>https://www.ssa.gov</u>
- U.S. Savings Bonds:
  - Phone: 1-844-284-2676
  - o Website: <u>https://www.treasurydirect.gov</u>
- U.S. tax returns:
  - Phone: 800-829-1040
  - Website: <u>www.irs.gov</u>

# **Rebuilding and Recovery Services:**

As fire survivors begin the process of recovery and rebuilding, the County of Ventura is available to help. <u>Http://VenturaCountyRecovers.org</u> is a one-stop site to help aid the recovery process. Additionally, Local Assistance Centers (LAC) have opened in our area. Thse centers are **one-stop resource shops** that will have representatives from several relevant local, state, and federal agencies to help families and businesses navigate the resources available to them.

#### Local Assistance Centers:

Ventura County	Los Angeles County		
Thousand Oaks Grant R. Brimhall Library	Malibu Courthouse in Malibu Civic Center		
1401 East Janss Road	2352 Civic Center Way		
Thousand Oaks, CA 91362	Malibu, CA 90265		
Hours: M-F 9am-7pm; Weekends: 9am-5pm	Hours: 10am-6pm		
-	-		

<u>VenturaCountyRecovers</u> offers information on:

- <u>Debris Removal</u>
- <u>Rebuilding</u>
- Damaged Property
- Financial Assistance
- <u>Housing</u>
- <u>Recovery Notifications</u>
- Agricultural Assistance
- And more...

For behavioral health services visit:

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

Additional County resources are available at: <u>www.VenturaCountyRecovers.org</u>

<u>www.VenturaCountyRecovers.org</u> is intended to be a comprehensive, one-stop site to aid the recovery process. However, County employees will also be out in the community, personally helping disaster victims, and all of our regular services are still available at the Ventura County government Center and other County locations.

### Human Services and Legal Services:

As fire survivors begin the process of recovery and rebuilding, 2-1-1 Ventura County and 2-1-1 Los Angeles County are available to help.

Survivors seeking health and human services and legal assistance can call the following numbers:

**2-1-1 Ventura County** Dial 2-1-1 or (800) 339-9597 Visit: <u>www.211ventura.org</u>

**2-1-1 Los Angeles County** Dial 2-1-1 or (800) 339-6993 Visit: <u>https://www.2111a.org/</u>

For assistance, please contact any of Congresswoman Brownley's offices, or visit her website at <u>https://juliabrownley.house.gov</u>

#### Washington, D.C. Office:

1019 Longworth HOB Washington, D.C. 20515 Phone: (202) 225-5811 Hours: M-F 9-6:00pm EST **Thousand Oaks Office:** 223 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd. Suite 220 Thousand Oaks, CA 91360 Phone: (805) 379-1779

#### **Oxnard Office:**

201 East Fourth Street Suite 209B Oxnard, CA 93030 Phone: (805) 379-1779

# ••• HOW TO APPLY FOR FEMA DISASTER ASSISTANCE •••

# All individuals who were impacted by the Southern California fires should apply for FEMA assistance. Please call 1-800-621-FEMA (3362), go online at <u>www.DisasterAssistance.gov</u> or visit a Local Assistance Center as soon as possible.

Individuals who may be eligible for individual assistance should apply through one of the following options:

- Apply by phone to FEMA: **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)**. Disaster assistance applicants, who have a speech disability or hearing loss and use TTY, should call 1-800-462-7585 directly; for those who use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS), call 1-800-621-3362. The toll-free telephone numbers will operate from 4 a.m. to 8 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time seven days a week until further notice.
- You can also apply online anytime at <u>www.DisasterAssistance.gov</u>.
- By smartphone or tablet, use <u>m.fema.gov.</u>
- You may also visit a Local Assistance Center:
  - Thousand Oaks Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 East Janss Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91362

Please have the following information available when you call:

- A phone number and a reliable alternate in case FEMA needs to call you back;
- Address of the damaged property;
- Social Security number;
- Bank account information (or direct deposit information);
- Insurance information (if you have insurance);
- Brief description of damages;
- Current mailing address; and
- Pen and paper to write down your registration number.

Government disaster assistance only covers basic needs and usually will not compensate you for your entire loss. If you have insurance, the government may help pay for basic needs not covered under your insurance policy.

Disaster-related assistance may include:

- Rental payments for temporary housing for those whose homes are unlivable;
- Grants for home repairs and replacement of essential household items;
- Unemployment payments for workers who temporarily lost jobs because of the disaster and do not qualify for state benefits (self-employed);
- Low-interest loans to cover residential losses not fully compensated by insurance;
- Crisis counseling for those traumatized by the disaster; or
- Advisory assistance for legal veterans' benefits and social security matters.

# ••• LOCAL ASSISTANCE CENTER INFO •••

A local assistance center has opened in our community. The Local Assistance Center is a onestop resource shops that will have representatives from several relevant local, state, and federal agencies to help families and businesses navigate the resources available to them.

# Local Assistance Centers:

Ventura	Los Angeles County
Thousand Oaks Grant R. Brimhall Library	Malibu Courthouse in Malibu Civic Center
1401 East Janss Road	2352 Civic Center Way
Thousand Oaks, CA 91362	Malibu, CA 90265
Hours: M-F 9am-7pm; Weekends: 9am-5pm	Hours: 10am-6pm

# ••• LEGAL ASSISTANCE •••

#### **Disaster Legal Services:**

FEMA, through an agreement with the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association, provides limited free legal help for survivors. Disaster Legal Services provides assistance to low-income individuals who, prior to or because of the disaster, are unable to secure adequate legal services to meet their disaster-related needs.

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/young\_lawyers/disaster\_legal\_services/

#### **Additional Legal Services:**

The Legal Services Corporation grantees and their grantees, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County and Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, are available to help with the process of recovery and rebuilding.

Survivors seeking legal assistance can call or e-mail Neal Dudovitz, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County or Silvia Argueta, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles at:

Neal Dudovitz, Executive Director Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County 1102 E. Chevy Chase Drive Glendale, CA 91205 ndudovitz@nls-la.org (818) 834 -7590

Silvia Argueta, Executive Director Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles 1550 W. 8th St. Los Angeles, CA 90017 sargueta@lafla.org (323) 801-7906

LSC's grantees have considerable experience working with low-income constituents in the wake of natural disasters across the United States, and we will keep abreast of the situation in California. LSC staff participate in disaster relief calls with other service providers, including the American Red Cross, FEMA, the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association, and state and local bars to coordinate response efforts and to determine how best to provide assistance to your constituents.

If you have questions or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Mark Slobodien, LSC's Government Relations Counsel, at 202-295-1635 or slobodienm@lsc.gov.

#### ••• 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 1-800-827-1000 (TDD Telecommunications Device for the Deaf 1-800-829-4833), or visit their Inquiry Routing and Information System (IRIS) website at: https://iris.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a\_id/1703

#### **California Department of Veterans Affairs**

Due to a high number of wildfires this season, CalVet has gathered the following resources to help veterans and their families stay informed and get back on their feet following a natural disaster. Veterans may to visit the Ventura County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) at 5740 Ralston Street, Suite 304, Ventura, CA 93003 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for assistance with filing claims, replacing service-related and benefits documents, and receiving job placement assistance.

If you have a California Department of Veterans Affairs (CALVET) loan and have suffered damage caused by a disaster, contact CALVET at 1-800-952-5626; TDD 1-800-324-5966.

# ••• TAX RELIEF & 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. 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-bycase 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: https://www.ttb.gov/webforms/contact\_nrc.shtml

# **Casualty Losses**

Affected taxpayers in a federally declared disaster area have the option of claiming disasterrelated 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 (https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f4684.pdf) and its instructions (http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i4684.pdf).

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 (http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-dft/f4506--dft.pdf), Request for Copy of Tax Return, or Form 4506-T (http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-dft/f4506t--dft.pdf), 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.

# ••• ADDITIONAL SERVICES OFFERED BY THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA •••

<u>www.VenturaCountyRecovers.org</u> is intended to be a comprehensive, one-stop site to aid the recovery process. However, County employees will also be out in the community, personally helping disaster victims, and all of our regular services are still available at the Ventura County government Center and other County locations.

#### VenturaCountyRecovers offers information on:

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

#### 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 local county welfare/social services department. To find your local office visit the website at: <u>http://www.cwda.org/links/chsa.php</u> or for more information on this program, visit the cash aid website at: <u>http://www.cdss.ca.gov/CalWORKS</u>

#### **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 your county mental health department.

# **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 1-877-847-3663 (FOOD) or apply online at: <a href="https://www.benefitscal.org/">www.benefitscal.org/</a> For more information on CalFresh, visit the website at: <a href="https://www.calfresh.ca.gov">www.calfresh.ca.gov</a>

#### **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: <u>http://www.bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov</u>

# **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 1-800-927-HELP (4357); TDD 1-800-482-4833 for assistance. For additional information you may also wish to visit the Department's Web site at: www.insurance.ca.gov

The 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 1-800-952-8356; TDD 1-800-735-2929 or visit the website at: <u>http://www.hcd.ca.gov/</u>

# 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 your county welfare/social services department. To find your local office, visit the Web site at: <a href="http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/CountyOffices.aspx">http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/CountyOffices.aspx</a> 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: <u>http://aging.ca.gov/Programs/</u>

# 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 1-800-852-5711 (TTY/TDD for hearing or speech impaired: 1-800-822-6268) or visit the website at: <a href="http://www.ftb.ca.gov">www.ftb.ca.gov</a>

# Veterans:

California Department of Veterans Affairs - Due to a high number of wildfires this season, CalVet has gathered the following resources to help veterans and their families stay informed and get back on their feet following a natural disaster. Veterans may to visit the Ventura County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) at 5740 Ralston Street, Suite 304, Ventura, CA 93003 from 8am to 5pm for assistance with filing claims, replacing service-related and benefits documents, and receiving job placement assistance.

If you have a California Department of Veterans Affairs (CALVET) loan and have suffered damage caused by a disaster, contact CALVET at 1-800-952-5626; TDD 1-800-324-5966.

# 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: <u>https://www.cdph.ca.gov</u> and click on "Find a Local WIC Agency" under Program Information.