



CALIFORNIA HOMELESS COORDINATING AND FINANCING COUNCIL

Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency
Gavin Newsom, Governor | Lourdes M. Castro Ramírez, Secretary

To: Local Homeless Response Systems and Homeless Service Providers
From: California Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council
Date: August 28, 2020
Subject: Impacts of Fire and Public Health Emergencies in California

The Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC) would like to extend our sincerest hope that you and your community stay safe as the growing fires add new challenges to your efforts to serve people experiencing homelessness. It is likely you are closely monitoring local events, and we would like to ensure our grantees have access to current information regarding disaster preparedness and assistance as you work to protect people experiencing homelessness from harm.

The persistent threat of COVID-19 continues to limit the number of households that shelters can serve. The increased possibility of Public Safety Power Shut-offs indicates programs should have contingency plans in place for interruptions to electrical power. Recently ignited wildfires combined with record-setting heat are affecting multiple communities throughout the state.

These simultaneous events require local homeless response systems and homeless service providers that may be impacted to take action on these top five items:

1. Make concrete evacuation plans for every shelter, both congregate and non-congregate, in the event that wildfires in your jurisdiction require facilities to evacuate.
2. Communicate to program participants the possibility that operations may be impacted by one of these threats and continuously update them on emerging events.
3. Make a clear plan for communicating evacuation orders to individuals currently living in encampments or other unsheltered environments.
4. Closely monitor the fires to note quick changes in growth and direction.
5. Reaffirm robust communications with local public health and local emergency management.

Threatened communities should monitor emerging events through any of the following methods:

- Follow emerging events at California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES): <https://www.caloes.ca.gov/>

- Stay informed about local threats from wildfire through CalFire: <https://incidents.readyforwildfire.org/>
- Sign up for alerts from the California Independent System Operator related to possible electrical service interruption: <https://prepareforpowerdown.com/>

Critical planning is required to adapt evacuation plans and homeless shelter operations to the added threat of COVID-19. As your community moves individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness indoors, please clearly communicate new and changed expectations for frontline workers. Considerations for emergency responders and homeless service staff can be found in several locations online:

- [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Interim Guidance for Homeless Service Providers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [HUD TA Guide: Preventing and Managing the Spread of Infectious Disease Within Shelters](#)
- [American Red Cross: Pre-Landfall Congregate Shelter Operations in a COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

We also want to provide you with some useful resource links, which include information and guidance on homelessness disaster response and recovery:

- [HUD Homelessness DR Toolkit](#) — A series of guides and resources related to planning and disaster response.
- [Preparedness Checklist](#) from the HUD Homeless DR Toolkit. This checklist helps jurisdictions prepare for warnings and notifications to reach everyone in the community, including the most vulnerable and hard to reach.
- [Directory of Disaster Response and Recovery Resources](#) — This directory provides an outline of important programs, projects and other resources available to service providers and homeless individuals impacted by a disaster.
- [Send Red, Not Blue: The Homeless Resident](#) — At the back of this report, you will find a Disaster Plan that can be used as a sample. This report provides recommendations on how to improve communication between local homeless services providers, disaster preparedness planners, and homeless residents themselves. It draws on the experience of two communities that served homeless families and individuals during a disaster.

As you work to ensure your community is safe and prepared, please let us know how we can provide any additional support. Please reach out if there is anything else that HCFC can do to ease the burden you and your community are facing during this incredibly challenging time. Please contact us at HCFC@bcsh.ca.gov if your community needs support.