



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

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**To:** Local Homeless Response Systems (Continuums of Care) and Homelessness Service Providers

**From:** California Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council

**Date:** August 17, 2021

**Subject:** Planning and Preparation Resources for Fire and Public Health Emergencies in California

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The Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council would like to extend our sincerest hope that you and your communities are staying safe as fires across the state add new challenges to your efforts to serve people experiencing homelessness. It is likely you are closely monitoring local events, so we would like to provide up-to-date information on disaster preparedness and assistance as you work to protect people experiencing homelessness from harm.

Individuals and communities experiencing homelessness are among those at highest risk for adverse effects of regional disasters, weather, displacement, disease outbreaks, and local emergencies, further compounding the daily struggles already associated with experiencing homelessness. The presence of COVID-19 in our communities continues to limit the number of individuals congregate shelters can serve, and the possibility of public safety power shutoffs in response to weather conditions means all programs should have plans in place for interruptions to electrical power.

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

1. Make concrete evacuation plans for individuals in every shelter—both congregate and non-congregate—in case wildfires in your area require facilities to evacuate.
2. Communicate to shelter residents and other homelessness program participants that operations may be impacted by one of these threats, and continuously update them on emerging events.
3. Make clear plans for communicating with and evacuating individuals currently living in encampments or other unsheltered environments. Communities not directly responding to fires may be impacted by poor air quality and therefore should be monitoring smoke forecasts across regions.
4. Closely monitor fires to note changes in growth and direction.
5. Reaffirm robust communications with local and regional public health and emergency management organizations.

Threatened communities should monitor emergency 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 the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection: <https://incidents.readyforwildfire.org/>
- Sign up for alerts from the California Independent System Operator related to possible electrical service interruption: <https://prepareforpowerdown.com/>
- Monitor air quality via the resources provided by the California Air Resources Board: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/topics/air-quality-monitoring>

We also want to provide you with some resources that include information and guidance on homelessness disaster response and recovery:

- [Disaster Guide for People Experiencing Homelessness](#): A compilation of tips and resources from CalOES for how to best prepare and respond to various natural disasters in the state.
- [HUD Homelessness Disaster Recovery Toolkit](#): A series of guides and resources related to planning and disaster response.
- [Preparedness Checklist](#): From the HUD Homeless Disaster Recovery 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 \(PDF\)](#): 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 gives recommendations on how to improve communication between local homeless services providers, disaster preparedness planners, and homeless residents. It draws on the experience of two communities that served homeless families and individuals during a disaster.

Critical planning is required to adapt evacuation and homeless shelter operations to the continued presence of COVID-19. Considerations for emergency responders and homelessness service staff working to distribute vaccines and provide shelter for people experiencing homelessness can be found in several locations online:

1. [Vaccine Preparation for California's Homeless Response System](#)
2. [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Interim Guidance for Homeless Service Providers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
3. [HUD Technical Assistance Guide: Preventing and Managing the Spread of Infectious Disease Within Shelters](#)

As you work to ensure your community is safe and prepared, please let us know if you need additional support. You can contact us at [HCFC@bcsh.ca.gov](mailto:HCFC@bcsh.ca.gov) if there is anything else that we can do to ease the burden you and your community are facing during this incredibly challenging time.