CAJPA WILDFIRE MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

In an effort to assist CAJPA members with the State of California’s Catastrophic Wildfire Prevention and Response efforts, CAJPA is sharing this helpful review of related legislation designed to make the state more resilient to wildfires; and best practices and resources to assist with wildfire mitigation and emergency response.

2019 Legislation signed into law

**AB 836**, Wildfire Smoke Clean Air Centers for Vulnerable Populations Incentive Pilot Program by Assemblymember Wicks (D-Oakland) establishes a program for retrofits of air ventilation systems to create community clean air centers, prioritizing areas with high cumulative smoke exposure burden. Qualified grant program applicants include but are not limited to schools, community centers, senior centers, sports center, and libraries.

**AB 1054**, Public utilities: wildfires and employee protection by Assemblymember Holden (D-Pasadena) requires PG&E to prioritize safety and requires the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to take a number of actions to require investor-owned utilities make investments in wildfire prevention and response. AB 1054’s provisions include:

- Improve the investor-owned utilities’ assessment of wildfire risk and match increased investments to risk reduction through the Wildfire Mitigation Plan process.
- Improve safety expertise, by creating a new wildfire safety division at the CPUC, which will transition to a separate Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety in the Natural Resources Agency in two years. (Combined with **AB 111**, AB 1054’s companion bill)
- Create the California Wildfire Safety Advisory Board, a panel of world-class experts in wildfire risk and utility infrastructure, to advise the wildfire safety division to ensure the strongest possible standards are put in place, and the utilities are held to them.
- Ensure oversight of the utilities’ plans, require utilities to invest in wildfire prevention and eliminate shareholder profit on $5 billion of safety investments.
- Hold utilities to an increasingly stringent safety standard, which includes requirements to tie executive compensation to safety, safety culture improvements and direct reporting to the CPUC by members of the investor-owned utility boards of directors.

**SB 160**, Emergency services: cultural competence by Senator Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) will improve engagement with culturally diverse communities for local emergency planning. A county and city & county shall integrate “cultural competence” into its emergency plan upon the next update.

**SB 190**, Fire safety: building standards: defensible space program by Senator Bill Dodd (D-Napa) includes a specific requirement to develop the best models for defensible space and additional standards for home hardening and construction materials to increase the resilience of communities. The Office of the State Fire Marshal will develop a model defensible space program to be made available for use by a city, county, or city and county in the enforcement of the defensible space provisions.

**SB 632**, California Environmental Quality Act: State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection: vegetation treatment program: final program environmental impact report by Senator Cathleen Galgiani (D-Stockton) sets a deadline for completion of CAL FIRE’s vegetation management environmental review.
Wildfire Prevention Best Practices for Pools

- Evaluate emergency evacuation routes for mass evacuations
- Review or develop Vegetation Management plan
- Conduct public facilities wildfire vulnerability assessment
- Harden infrastructure against wildfire

Resources
Governor Newsom launched a new state website with tools and resources for Californians who have been impacted by wildfires and utility-directed power shutoffs. The website, RESPONSE.CA.GOV, combines emergency response, recovery and resilience information into a single place for easy access by users.

Additionally, there is a new resource guide which outlines resources available for those in areas impacted by wildfires and de-energization areas. Resources include toolkits, shelter information, public health information, counseling and recovering services, and more.

Cal Office of Emergency Services (OES) Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Division is responsible for a comprehensive local and state planning program. Mitigation requires the coordinated effort and participation of a wide range of stakeholders and the public in the planning process. Local Hazard Mitigation Program resources can be viewed on this webpage.

California Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (CalWARN) functions in coordination with (OES) and supports statewide emergency preparedness, disaster response, and mutual assistance processes for public and private water and wastewater utilities.

Disaster Assistance
CAJPA has worked with other public entity groups under the leadership of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) to facilitate direct relief to counties through budget allocations. The 2019-20 Budget includes nearly $51 million in relief for local governments impacted by recent disasters. A significant amount of this funding goes directly to counties. That funding includes $1.5 million for disaster impacted counties- this is in addition to $31.3 million provided in AB 72 (Chapter 1, 2019). The Budget also includes $10 million to support communities impacted by the Camp Fire and $2 million for the Butte County Fire Department, as well as $21 million for local disaster and emergency preparedness plans. There is also additional funding for statewide emergency response which includes funding for public safety power shutdowns- $26 million directly to counties; ongoing funding for the state’s mutual aid system; additional funds to build a statewide public safety radio system; funding for the final phase of the build-out for the California Earthquake Early Warning System; and, funding to support disaster preparedness efforts.

The Governor’s proposed 2020-21 Budget builds on this foundation with proposed investments that further strengthen California’s ability to prevent and respond to fires and provide the state’s first responders with additional capabilities and support. The Budget enhances the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection’s operational capabilities by adding funding for new firefighters during peak fire season, increasing the number of year-round engines, and providing further relief coverage to support state firefighter health and wellness. The Budget also proposes increases in the use of technology by obtaining Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data to better inform resources management and hazard assessment decisions, and establishes a new Wildfire Forecast and Threat Intelligence Integration Center to analyze data on wildfire risk.

More information on Governor Newsom’s budget proposal, including the full budget summary, is available at www.ebudget.ca.gov.