



## **News from the Emergency Management Committee Chair (5/21/21)**

### **State Officials Brace for Likely Devastating Wildfire Season as Drought Grips California**

[NBC San Diego reports](#) droughts and fires aren't new to Californians – the state has been hit by numerous catastrophic fire seasons in recent years -- but state fire officials say rain and snow falling well below average, combined with state water shortages, have them bracing for a wildfire season potentially worse than last year's, which was the most devastating in state history.

“We're already seeing an increase in fire activity as we move toward peak fire season,” said Cal Fire spokesman, Capt. Frank LoCoco. “We’ve actually seen more activity than we did last year...and being that last year was a pretty catastrophic fire season, burning over 4 million acres statewide, obviously that’s got us concerned.”

As of May 5, California has already seen seven times the number of acres consumed, compared to the same time frame last year.

To make matters worse, drought has returned to the state in a major way -- approximately 30% of the state's population is currently under a drought state of emergency with nearly every county experiencing some level of drought conditions.

Gov. Newsom on Friday [unveiled a revised state budget proposal](#) that includes what his office called record spending for emergency preparation efforts amid the drought crisis.

About \$5.1 billion in a drought resilience package and \$2 billion in wildfire and emergency response is included in the proposal, which Newsom called the “largest investment in California history for new firefighting equipment,” including airplanes and helicopters and land management.

Capt. LoCoco told NBC 7 he recommends California residents use this time to prepare for wildfire season by establishing property evacuation plans and removing flammables from homes.

### **‘Ground Zero for Attrition’: California Federal Fire Crews Understaffed as Fire Threat Rises**

[NBC News reports](#) as Western states head into what experts say could be another catastrophic fire season, federal wildland firefighters are faced with staffing shortages amid a worsening drought and an exhausted workforce.

The problem is especially acute in California, where fire activity is already increasing compared to this time last year. Among the most skilled and experienced teams, colloquially known as hotshots, only 70 percent of crews are expected to be fully staffed this year, said the union that represents federal firefighters. In some cases, understaffed fire engines will go unused, some of them at the Lake Tahoe Basin management unit in South Lake Tahoe near Eldorado National Forest.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, said the state has had 2,436 fires this year through mid-May, compared to 1,554 during the same period last year.

Despite the increased threat, the Forest Service does not expect to meet its goal of hiring 5,200 federal firefighters in California this year.

The gnawing problem of staff shortages has been an ongoing issue for the Forest Service, which classifies firefighters as "forestry technicians" who are not given similar pay or benefits afforded to state, municipal or even utility firefighters. Many are hired as seasonal employees who work six months of the year, often in life-threatening and mentally challenging environments.

Federal firefighters have long complained that they are overworked and underpaid, and some have said they are ready to move on.

Forest Service firefighters' pay is based on the federal pay scale. Most start at the GS-3 level, at which pay tops out at around \$31,000 annually for full-time employees. By comparison, a first-year firefighter with Cal Fire makes nearly twice as much.

Most rank-and-file temporary seasonal workers start at an hourly base salary of about \$13 per hour, plus overtime and hazard pay. California's current minimum wage is also \$13, but it is scheduled to increase to \$15 an hour by 2023, making state or local agencies a more attractive option in a region where the median home price is more than \$800,000, according to the California Association of Realtors.

Wildfires charred more than 4 million acres across California last year, destroying hundreds of structures and blanketing much of the state in heavy, dense smoke for several weeks. This year, the state is already beset by "acute water supply shortages," prompting Gov. Gavin Newsom to declare a drought emergency this month for 41 of the state's 58 counties.

With increasingly worrisome conditions, state and municipal fire departments are beefing up their workforces to prepare for a heightened fire season, offering competitive salaries and benefits that struggling federal firefighters can find hard to resist.

This year, Cal Fire will hire 1,400 more firefighters after Newsom authorized more than \$80 million in emergency funds in March to bolster wildfire response efforts. Newsom has also proposed to invest \$2 billion in his revised budget for emergency preparedness, including buying firefighting airplanes and helicopters, as well as creating a center to forecast wildfire threats.

According to an internal survey conducted by Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, the most common reason engine crews had vacancies last year was that people were leaving for Cal Fire. Municipal and county departments were also listed as drivers for leaving the Forest Service, followed by job opportunities with Pacific Gas and Electric Co., the utility company that pleaded guilty to 84 counts of involuntary manslaughter for causing the deadly, massive Camp Fire in 2018.

Despite a statewide interagency agreement among departments that oversee wildland, California is ultimately paying the price for a shortage of federal crews, said the battalion chief, who asked not to be named because he was not authorized to speak on behalf of the agency.

Moore of the Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region said that when federal crews are down, the agency will call in firefighters from other national forests or state agencies. But as wildland fires increase in frequency and intensity, the agency will continue to struggle to catch up with demand.

"In one regard, that's OK, because it's still the firefighting community here in California protecting California," he said. "But ... we have to continue to hire new, new, new and then train, train, train. We recognize that here in the Forest Service we need to address some of these issues."

### **FEMA Announces Operational Guidance for Disaster Response and Recovery in Pandemic Environment**

[On May 17, FEMA](#) released the "[COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance: All-Hazards Incident Response and Recovery](#)," a document aimed at helping emergency managers plan for disaster response and recovery, while adhering to public health guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

For more than a year, the emergency management community has been operating in a pandemic environment, and FEMA has emphasized the importance of all state, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) governments applying lessons learned from 2020, as they prepare for operations in 2021. To aid in that effort, this document serves as a tool for governments, outlining not only guidance based on lessons learned and best practices, but also guidance related to new priorities that have arisen in recent months. This document builds upon the guidance released last year and:

- Describes continued challenges to disaster operations posed by COVID-19 and planning considerations, based on science and the best available data, for emergency managers in addressing those challenges.
- Outlines considerations for SLTT governments related to planning COVID-19 testing and vaccination operations. This includes an overview of how FEMA supports SLTTs to establish and operate testing facilities and vaccination sites that ensure fair and equitable distribution of vaccines to all individuals who want one.
- Provides updated resources (e.g., checklists, reports, and other guidance) reflecting current lessons learned and best practices for operating in a pandemic environment to enable emergency managers to best adapt response and recovery plans.
- Outlines how FEMA plans to continue adapting response and recovery operations to the evolving COVID-19 risks to ensure prioritization for life safety, life sustainment, workforce protection and to maintain the delivery of FEMA's programs.

FEMA is offering a series of [webinars](#) throughout the month of June to further educate people on the pandemic operational guidance:

- Webinar 1 – 10 a.m. ET, Thursday, June 3.
- Webinar 2 – 3 p.m. ET, Tuesday, June 8.
- Webinar 3 – 11 a.m. ET, Thursday, June 10.
- Webinar 4 – 7 p.m. ET, Wednesday, June 16.

- Webinar 5 – 1 p.m. ET, Thursday, June 17.

FEMA will continue operating under the framework of locally executed, state/tribal managed and federal supported incident response. By creating a shared understanding of expectations among FEMA and state, local, tribal and territorial partners, the nation will be better positioned to achieve operational outcomes in disaster response and recovery efforts.

### **Significant Updates to Cal/OHSA’s Emergency Temporary Standards on the Horizon**

[The National Law Review reports](#) the federal [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC) and [California’s Department of Public Health](#) (CDPH) have loosened restrictions with respect to fully vaccinated individuals, defined as those who are two weeks past their final required vaccination dose (second dose of either Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech, or single dose of the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine). Cal/OSHA now proposes to align itself with this guidance through proposed revisions to its Emergency Temporary Standards (“ETS”), which have been effective since November of 2020, just prior to the pandemic’s winter peak.

Many revisions clarify existing requirements, while others take into account the increased vaccination rates among employees and more relaxed guidance issued by different agencies.

The proposed revisions to the ETS will create new provisions beginning on July 31, 2021, regardless of the ultimate effective date of the revised ETS themselves, including:

- Requiring employers to provide respirators to all unvaccinated employees working indoors.
- Requiring employers to provide COVID-19 testing on paid time to any unvaccinated employees showing COVID-19 symptoms.

Prior to July 31, 2021, employers will still be required to enforce physical distancing requirements, except for employees wearing properly-fitted respirators and at locations where all employees are either fully vaccinated or require a reasonable accommodation under federal or state law, i.e., for medical or religious reasons. Employers must supply respirators for voluntary use by non-vaccinated employees and test those employees for COVID-19 at least once per week (at no loss of pay to or out-of-pocket cost for the employee).

Also prior to July 31, 2021, employers will be required to evaluate the need for respirators in compliance with 8 CCR 5144, the extensive California regulation governing respiratory protection programs. Employers should familiarize themselves with these requirements as even voluntary respirator use by employees comes with certain specific obligations.

Despite recent changes from the federal CDC, Cal/OSHA’s face covering requirements remain in effect, although additional exceptions have been enumerated. Specifically, masks need not be worn:

- If all individuals in an enclosed room are fully vaccinated and are symptom-free.
- If employees are fully vaccinated, are outdoors, and are symptom-free.

To view the full article including exclusion pay clarifications, changes to exclusion requirements, updates to specific definitions, and updates for outbreak situations, [please click here](#).

## **Target No Longer Requiring Masks for Fully-Vaccinated Customers, Workers – List of Store Policies Amongst Various Businesses**

[ABC News 7 reports](#) Target is joining a list of businesses that say fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear masks in their stores, following the CDC's recommendation.

Target, like Walmart, Trader Joe's, and Costco before it, says the policy only changes if local regulations allow it.

In a statement Monday, a Target spokesperson said, "The health and safety of our guests and team members have been Target's top priority throughout the pandemic, and we've closely and consistently followed the CDC's recommendations over time. Given the CDC's updated guidance last week, Target will no longer require fully vaccinated guests and team members to wear face coverings in our stores, except where it's required by local ordinances."

Target says face coverings will be "strongly recommended" for guests and employees who are not fully vaccinated. The spokesperson said the stores will continue their safety and cleaning measures.

"Target is offering COVID-19 vaccine appointments at nearly all CVS at Target locations for guests and team members. We're also providing paid time to U.S. hourly team members when they get their vaccines and free Lyft rides, up to \$15 each way, for our team to get to and from their appointments," the spokesperson said.

The CDC said Thursday that fully vaccinated people do not need to wear masks or practice social distancing indoors or outdoors, except under certain circumstances such as in healthcare settings, on public transportation, or in areas where governments require masks. The CDC also said people will still need to follow workplace and local businesses' mask guidance.

To read statements regarding masks by various stores including ACME Markets, Costco, CVS, The GIANT Company, Home Depot, Kroger Family of Companies, Macy's, Starbucks, Trader Joe's, Walgreens, and Walmart/Sam's Club, [please click here](#).

## **San Francisco Giants Loosen Coronavirus Rules for Fans**

[ABC News 7 reports](#) starting Friday, May 21, Giants fans seated in socially distanced sections will not be required to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test or vaccination for entry into Oracle Park. Fans sitting in fully vaccinated sections will still be required to show proof they're fully vaccinated.

The latest number of confirmed cases in the U.S. can be found at the [CDC's 2019 Novel Coronavirus in the U.S. page](#). (The CDC updates the webpage on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.)

## **Mandatory Vaccination for International Students in California System**

[Study International reports](#) the University of California wants to prioritize COVID-19 vaccination for international students ahead of the fall 2021 semester. A new policy proposed on April 22 suggests that every student returning from overseas must first receive a vaccine approved by the World Health Organization (WHO) — though the policy will only be finalized once the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves these COVID-19 vaccines.

The UCSD Guardian [quotes Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Alysson Satterlund](#) as saying that most classes will be in person come September. “We understand that there may be some remote instructions available as well because we do have learners from all over the world whose circumstances continue to evolve, but the intention is to highlight and continue to return to in-person learning as many ways as we possibly can,” she explained in a student town hall.

So far, WHO has approved six vaccines for emergency use: Pfizer/BioNTech, Astrazeneca-SK Bio, Serum Institute of India, Janssen, Moderna, and Sinopharm.

California hosts the most international students in the US. Over 160,000 are enrolled in the state’s institutions, with over 8,000 in UC San Diego. An estimated 20% to 25% are studying remotely from overseas during the pandemic, but not all may be returning.

When this policy comes into effect, international students who are not vaccinated will not be allowed back on campus — even if you have a medical condition that prevents you from receiving the vaccine. “There is a need for everyone to realize that lots of international students might not be able to return to the US in time for school,” expressed Associated Students international senator Dakssh Saraf. “To create that remote learning for these students is very essential for the continuation of education.”

One such student is fourth-year Xinyi Zhang from China, who hopes to complete her undergraduate degree remotely come fall. “I wish to have remote learning in the fall. I developed some serious mental problems during the pandemic and I always felt lonely, so I went back to China in the Winter quarter to stay with my parents,” she tells. “The contract for my housing in San Diego will end in July. Having the remote learning option will also save me from finding new housing.”

The University of California network includes ten campuses, five medical centres and three national labs. This public university system also recently made headlines for [dropping SAT and ACT scores](#) from admission requirements for fall 2023 and beyond. Now, its policy of mandatory vaccination for international students could set the tone for American universities.

If you have questions or concerns over this new vaccine policy, get in touch with the University of California Office of President at [CovidVaccinePolicyComments@ucop.edu](mailto:CovidVaccinePolicyComments@ucop.edu). You can also reach out to [ISPO](#) for international travel concerns.

### **California Crash Victim Had Posted Videos Riding in Tesla on Autopilot**

[WDTN News 2 reports](#) the driver of a Tesla involved in a fatal crash that California highway authorities said may have been on operating on Autopilot posted social media videos of himself riding in the vehicle without his hands on the wheel or foot on the pedal.

The May 5 crash in Fontana, a city 50 miles (80 kilometers) east of Los Angeles, is also under investigation by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The probe is the 29th case involving a Tesla that the federal agency has probed.

In the Fontana crash, a 35-year-old man identified as Steven Michael Hendrickson was killed when his Tesla Model 3 struck an overturned semi on a freeway about 2:30 a.m.

Hendrickson was member of the Southern California chapter of a Tesla club who posted numerous photos and video on social media of his white Model 3. One video on his Instagram



account showed him riding in the driver's seat without his hands on the wheel or foot on the pedal as the Tesla navigated freeway traffic. The video included the comment: "Best carpool buddy possible even takes the boring traffic for me."

Another man was seriously injured when the electric vehicle hit him as he was helping the semi's driver out of the wreck.

The CHP announced Thursday that its preliminary investigation had determined that the Tesla's partially automated driving system called Autopilot "was engaged" prior to the crash. The agency said it was commenting on the Fontana crash because of the "high level of interest" about Tesla crashes and because it was "an opportunity to remind the public that driving is a complex task that requires a driver's full attention."

"To clarify," a new CHP statement said, "There has not been a final determination made as to what driving mode the Tesla was in or if it was a contributing factor to the crash."

At least three people have died in previous U.S. crashes involving Autopilot, which can keep a car centered in its lane and a safe distance behind vehicles in front of it. Tesla is allowing a limited number of owners to test its self-driving system.

Tesla, which has disbanded its public relations department, did not respond Friday to an email seeking comment. The company says in owner's manuals and on its website that both Autopilot and "Full Self-Driving" are not fully autonomous and that drivers must pay attention and be ready to intervene at any time.

Autopilot at times has had trouble dealing with stationary objects and traffic crossing in front of Teslas.

To view the full article including stories of other Tesla crashes and quotes by experts, [please click here](#).

### **California EV Deal Could Pave Way for a "Strategic Electric Reserve" and Grid Security**

[Tech Republic reports](#) electric vehicles are an increasingly popular choice among drivers, although the recharging infrastructure to support these automobiles still [presents logistical challenges](#) for refreshes on the go. On Thursday, Beam Global, an electric vehicle charging technologies company, [announced](#) a California Department of General Services (DGS) order for more than 50 of the company's solar-powered EV charging systems. The company said the deal could pave the way for an electric energy reserve similar to the petroleum stockpile amassed and stored by the U.S. government.

Overall, the order calls for 52 Beam Global EV ARC charging stations. In a press release about the announcement, Beam describes its EV recharging products as both "transportable" and "off-grid," noting that this equipment requires "no construction, permitting or electrical work, providing fleet vehicles with access to clean, resilient EV charging." Additionally, these stations are "flood-proof" up to 9.5 feet and rated for winds up to 120 mph, per the release.

A grant from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) with the DGS Office of Sustainability's Transportation Unit executing the order "will bolster the state's off grid and resilient EV charging infrastructure for government-owned fleets," according to the release,

adding that these systems will be used to deliver emergency power and offer year-round charging for the state's EV fleets.

The U.S. Office of Fossil Energy describes the Strategic Petroleum Reserve as the "world's largest supply of emergency crude oil," explaining that it was created primarily to "reduce the impact of disruptions in supplies of petroleum products and to carry out obligations of the United States under the international energy program." Stored in "huge underground salt caverns" across four sites, the SPR touts a 714 million-barrel "authorized storage capacity," according to the office, adding that the reserve's "sheer size" makes the SPR "a significant deterrent to oil import cutoffs and a key tool in foreign policy."

Over the last year, the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted fragilities in the interconnected global supply chains with shortages ranging from foodstuffs to semiconductor chips. The recent Colonial pipeline cyberattack that led to production disruptions and gas shortages also highlighted U.S. infrastructure vulnerabilities.

### **ICYMI: Funding Opportunities Ending Soon**

- **Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP)**; *transportation*
  - Funding by: Department of Transportation
  - Deadline: Thursday, May 27, 2021
  - Total estimated funding: \$90 million
  - **Full grant guidelines**: [linked here.](#)
- **2021-22 Minor's Counsel (MC) Program RFP**; *law, justice, and legal services*
  - Funding by: The Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)
  - Deadline: Friday, May 28, 2021
  - Total estimated funding: \$600k
  - **Full grant guidelines**: [linked here.](#)
- **CAL FIRE Forest Health Research Program (FY2020-21 & FY2021-22)**; *environment & water; science, technology; and research & development*
  - Funding by: Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
  - Deadline: Monday, June 7, 2021
  - Total estimated funding: \$3.8 million
  - **Full grant guidelines**: [linked here.](#)
- **GFO-20-607 – Second Block Grant for Light-Duty Electric Vehicle Charger Incentive Projects**; *energy*
  - Funding by: CA Energy Commission
  - Deadline: Friday, June 11, 2021
  - Total estimated funding: \$500 million
  - **Full grant guidelines**: [linked here.](#)

### **Funding Opportunities**

#### **Regional Park Program (Prop 68)**

[The Department of Parks and Recreation](#) has created the Regional Park program to create, expand, or improve regional parks and regional park facilities. This program is funded by Proposition 68 (2018 Bond Act) which is found in Public Resources Code §80065(a).



Eligible applicants include:

1. Counties
2. Regional Park Districts and Regional Open-Space Districts formed pursuant to Division 5, Chapter 3, Article 3 (commencing with Section 5500) of the Public Resources Code
3. Open-Space Authorities formed pursuant to Public Resources Code Division 26 (commencing with Section 35100)
4. Joint Powers Authorities where at least one of the members is otherwise eligible on this list
5. Nonprofit 501(c)(3)

Projects must qualify as a regional park.

The deadline to apply is **Friday, November 5, 2021**. Total estimated funding available is \$23.125 million. To view the full grant guidelines, [click here](#). To view the online application, [click here](#).

### **2021 Permanent Local Housing Allocation Program Entitlement and Non-Entitlement Local Government Formula Component – Notice of Funding Available**

[The Department of Housing and Community Development](#) has created this program with the principal goal of making funding available to eligible Local Governments in California for housing-related projects and programs that assist in addressing the unmet housing needs of their local communities.

Eligible applicants include public agencies.

The deadline to apply is **Tuesday, November 30, 2021**. Total estimated funding available is \$342.4 million. The full grant guidelines can be found [here](#).

### **Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality Grant Program – Proposition 1**

[The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy](#) has created this program with the goal of improving the environmental conditions of the Delta and Suisun Marsh.

The Proposition 1 Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality Grant Program provides competitive grants for multibenefit ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects in accordance with statewide priorities. Program priorities are: 1) ecosystem protection, restoration, and enhancement; 2) water quality; and 3) water-related agricultural sustainability. Emphasis is placed on projects that use public lands and those that maximize voluntary landowner participation in projects that provide measurable and long-lasting habitat or species improvements in the Delta and Suisun Marsh.

The Conservancy will fund planning projects, which include pilot projects. Allowable activities for planning projects include but are not limited to: project scoping: partnership development, outreach to impacted parties, stakeholder coordination, negotiation of site access and land tenure; planning and design: engineering design, planting plans, identifying appropriate best management practices; environmental compliance: permitting, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) activities, Delta Plan consistency; science: developing adaptive management and monitoring plans, baseline monitoring, biological surveys, and studies that will aid and inform the implementation of an on-the-ground project; application development for Proposition 1

implementation grant (as part of a larger planning grant; cannot be a stand-alone proposal for grant application development).

The Conservancy will fund implementation projects, which includes acquisitions projects. Allowable activities for implementation projects include but are not limited to: construction activities: dredging, earthmoving, construction of infrastructure; habitat restoration and enhancement: planting and revegetation, invasive vegetation removal, implementation of Best Management Practices; acquisition of real property: appraisals (including water rights appraisals), negotiation, due diligence, surveys, escrow fees, title insurance, closing costs; final planning and design; environmental compliance (other than CEQA and NEPA): permitting, Delta Plan consistency; science: developing adaptive management and monitoring plans, baseline monitoring, pre- and post-project monitoring; post-project maintenance within the three-year funding term.

Applicants must submit a concept proposal, as found on the Conservancy's website, before submitting a full proposal. Partnerships are encouraged but not required. Technical assistance is not offered. There are no limitations on number of submissions by organizations. Applications are received via email for concept proposals and by uploading files to a designated site for full proposals. Awards are announced at a Board Meeting and applicants are informed with a letter.

Only California public agencies may apply. An eligible nonprofit's charitable purposes must align with the Conservancy's mission. Tribal organizations must be listed on National Heritage Commission's California Tribal List or federally recognized.

The Conservancy will fund projects within or benefiting the Delta and Suisun Marsh. The Conservancy may fund a project outside the Delta and Suisun Marsh if the Conservancy Board makes all the findings described in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009, Section 32360(g).

The deadline to apply is **Friday, December 31, 2021**. Total estimated funding available is \$2.1 million. To view the full grant guidelines, [click here](#).