



News from the Emergency Management Committee Chair (8/18/2023)

Hurricane Hilary Prompts Tropical Storm Watch in Southern California; Flash Flood Danger Ahead for Southwest

[The Weather Channel reports](#) Hurricane Hilary, a powerful storm off Mexico's Pacific coast, has prompted a first ever tropical storm watch in Southern California, where gusty winds and dangerous flash flooding are expected, as well as other parts of the Desert Southwest.

Hilary has rapidly intensified into a major hurricane off Mexico's Pacific coast. Hilary will weaken as it parallels the Baja Peninsula, but will pose a dangerous flash flood risk to parts of California and the Desert Southwest. It also prompted a first ever tropical storm watch in Southern California.

For full details, [click here](#).

California is in Hurricane Hilary's Path. Here's How Rare the Storm Will Be

[The San Francisco Chronicle reports](#) California is in the direct path of Hurricane Hilary, a rapidly-intensifying tropical system off the coast of Mexico.

While Hilary likely won't maintain hurricane strength when it approaches Southern California on Sunday it is expected to arrive as a tropical storm, according to the National Hurricane Center. This means the system would have sustained winds greater than 39 mph but less than the 74 mph needed for hurricane status.

“It has been a very long time since an actual intact tropical-storm-level tropical cyclone has made landfall anywhere in California,” said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at UCLA and the Nature Conservancy during an [online presentation](#) Wednesday.

The last one to do so was in 1939, known simply as the Long Beach tropical storm.

More recently, in 1997, Tropical Storm Nora made landfall in the Baja Peninsula and traversed into Southern California.

Last year, [Tropical Storm Kay](#) approached Southern California, but it weakened to a post-tropical storm upon landfall. Impacts from Hilary are expected to be much greater than Kay. Rainfall records are set to be shattered and tropical storm-force winds are likely.

This time, the National Hurricane Center and the National Weather Service San Diego office have issued a tropical storm watch — the first ever for Southern California — covering the San Diego and Orange County coastline.

For more information, [visit the full article](#).

Hurricane Hilary Forecast Recalls Infamous 1939 Storm that Killed Scores of Californians

[The Los Angeles Times reports](#) Southern California could see a true weather rarity — a tropical storm hitting the coast.

[Hurricane Hilary is churning off](#) the coast of Mexico, and current projections show it could reach the Baja California peninsula by late Sunday.

A weakened storm then might move into San Diego and the Los Angeles area, though officials are still not sure of the exact forecast. Forecasters said the region [could expect heavy rain and winds Sunday and Monday](#).

Hilary has brought back memories of another far bigger and more dangerous tropical storm — nicknamed El Cordonazo or the Lash of St. Francis — that hit Long Beach and San Pedro in September 1939.

It was a storm that went into the history books. The Times' Paul Duginski [wrote a chronicle in 2019 of the event](#).

[Four major system moved into Southern California](#), including a tropical storm that came ashore, dropping torrential rain totaling 5.62 inches on Los Angeles from Sept. 24-26.

It battered Southern California with wind gusts up to 65 mph, damaging boats, structures, utility lines and crops, according to the Los Angeles Times. Forty-five people were killed by flooding throughout Southern California, and an additional 48 died at sea. It's the only tropical storm to make landfall in California during the 20th century.

For full details on how this past storm affected our state, and how experts expect our current weather pattern to, [visit the full article](#).

Biden Harris Administration Provides \$3.8 Million in Assistance for Hawaii Residents in Wake of Devastating Wildfires

[FEMA has announced](#) one week since President Biden declared a major disaster declaration for the state of Hawaii in the wake of the devastating wildfires, the Biden-Harris Administration and voluntary agencies provided survivors with immediate needs such as food, water and shelter and approved millions of dollars in disaster relief.

To date, FEMA has approved more than \$3.8 million in assistance to 1,640 households including more than \$1.57 million in initial rental assistance.

On Wednesday, President Biden made additional disaster funding available to the state of Hawaii. This unlocks the federal government's ability to cover all eligible expenses for debris removal and emergency protective measures in Maui County and assistance for emergency

protective measures for Hawaii County for 30 days of the governor's choosing within the first 120 days of the disaster.

FEMA also opened a joint Disaster Recovery Center yesterday at the University of Hawaii Maui College, located at 310 W. Ka'ahumanu Avenue, Kahului, Hawaii. Survivors can speak to FEMA specialists, get assistance registering for disaster assistance, get in touch with voluntary organizations and have access to other federal and state resources from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. HST seven days a week.

Agencies including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response, the U.S. Small Business Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are all working in tandem to help support the communities impacted by this tragedy.

Experts Scrutinize Hawaiian Electric as They Search for the Maui Wildfire Cause

[*The New York Times* reports](#) in the hunt to determine what caused the fire that consumed Lahaina, the focus has increasingly turned to Hawaii's biggest power utility — and whether the company did enough to prevent a wildfire in the high winds that swept over Maui last week.

Lawyers for Lahaina residents suing the utility, Hawaiian Electric, contend that its power equipment was not strong enough to withstand strong winds, and that the company should have shut down power before the winds came. Wildfire experts who have studied the catastrophic fires in California over the past two decades also see shortcomings in Hawaiian Electric's actions.

Nearly a week after the wildfire tore through the island town of Lahaina, state and local officials have not determined a cause for the blaze that killed at least 99 people. But the explosive conditions were similar to those elsewhere in the country where wildfires were sparked by electrical equipment: dry brush, high winds and aging infrastructure.

Many wildfires in the United States occur when poles owned by utilities or other structures carrying power lines are blown down, or when branches or other objects land on power lines and cause them to produce high-energy flashes of electricity that can start fires. That is why utilities in California and other states have at times shut down power in recent years before strong winds arrive.

The National Weather Service expected winds of up to 45 miles per hour last Tuesday, with gusts of 60 miles per hour — conditions that were amplified by Hurricane Dora, which traveled across the Pacific Ocean about 700 miles to the south.

“We allege that many of the regulatory laws that require maintenance of equipment were broken,” said James Frantz, chief executive of the Frantz Law Group, one of several law firms taking action against Hawaiian Electric. “There's got to be some accountability.” He said his firm was representing five Lahaina residents who were filing lawsuits in a Hawaiian state court on Monday.

Shares in Hawaiian Electric lost over a third of their value on Monday, a sign that investors feared that the company would have to pay out large sums to settle lawsuits filed by homeowners and businesses, and spend enormous amounts to try to fireproof its operations.

For more details, [visit the full article](#).

‘There are Bodies Everywhere’: In Devastation of Maui Fire, California’s Past Horrors Lurk

[The Los Angeles Times reports](#) as horrifying details emerge about the [fire that burned through Maui](#), the tragedy echoes the extreme fire behavior and the failed human response to it that have haunted California over the last few decades.

Emergency alert systems that crumple when needed most.

Limited escape routes, leaving some to die in their vehicles trying to flee or sheltered in their homes as flames sweep through.

Impossibly fast winds that send showers of embers leaping from burned home to home, destroying whole blocks in a flash.

Unimaginable damage not just to neighborhoods but an entire city, obliterating homes for multi-generational families. Children, parents and grandparents are [among the dead](#). The death toll now stands at more than 90, making it the [deadliest wildfire](#) in the U.S. in the last century, surpassing the 2018 Camp fire that destroyed the Northern California town of Paradise, where at least 85 died.

“It’s almost like Pompeii, where it was like partners holding each other and parents huddled around children,” Brittany Harris, 37, a Kahului resident, said a friend told her. “It happened very quickly that everything exploded ... cars, buildings, everything was on fire.”

The fire arrived with such fury that even the ocean couldn’t offer refuge. Initial reports [suggested](#) as many as 100 people sought safety in the water amid flying embers and falling ash, as parents [struggled](#) to keep children from being pulled away to sea.

“They jumped in the ocean to escape that, but then there were still people dying of smoke inhalation in the ocean,” Harris said. “My friend, whose husband is a police officer, said there are bodies everywhere, there are bodies in trees.”

Sefo Rosenthal, 37, who has lived on Maui most of his life, said he was furious with the lack of preparation and communication.

“Was there enough warning? I don’t think so. If you have to jump into the water, that’s not enough warning,” he said.

As Hawaii begins to tally the damage and assess how to improve its safety procedures to address extreme fire weather, California can offer many lessons.

A series of deadly natural disasters — [historic](#) fires in [Paradise](#), [Malibu](#) and [wine country](#) and landslides in Santa Barbara County — exposed major weaknesses in local, state and federal emergency responses and outmoded evacuation and alerting procedures.

California responded with sweeping changes, including improved emergency communications, automatic power line shut-offs during windy conditions and more robust warnings of forecasts.

For more details on how the two states' emergencies and response efforts compare, [visit the full article](#).

California Weather: Fire Risk is Now at Its Highest Level of Year

[The San Francisco Chronicle reports](#) a heat wave across the Pacific Northwest is spilling some of its warmth into California this week, bringing above-normal temperatures to the Golden State. Additionally, thunderstorms in the Sierra Nevada are expected, with a chance of some storms spilling into the Bay Area on Monday and Tuesday.

These factors will combine to create the highest fire risk so far this year for Northern California.

A pattern known as a [rex block](#) will continue across the West Coast this week, leading to a heat wave in the Pacific Northwest and thunderstorms in the Southwest. The most unseasonable warmth this week is in Oregon, where August records could be shattered, but some of the heat is also spilling across California.

For the Bay Area, high temperatures Monday through Thursday will be in the upper 60s to mid-70s along the coast while inland areas range between the upper 80s and low 100s. Cooler weather is expected to arrive Friday.

While the high-pressure system across Washington and Oregon is expected to break down by the end of the week, a low-pressure system along the Central California coastline is expected to continue into next weekend. As long as the area of low pressure remains near California, it will continue to draw in [subtropical monsoon moisture](#) and spark afternoon thunderstorms across the Sierra Nevada and even the coastal ranges.

As lightning chances increase, fire risk also increases. The possibility of lightning has prompted the [National Interagency Fire Center](#) to forecast a high risk of significant fire potential across parts of Northern California on Monday.

Although the snowy winter has kept vegetation relatively wet at high elevations of the Sierra Nevada, fuel moisture is seasonably low for elevations below 5,000 feet. Storms will become drier as they drift off the Sierra Nevada, favoring grasslands for dry lightning fire starts.

For further detailed information by region, [visit the full article](#).

Scientists Discover New Details on Weather Phenomenon Behind Some of California's Worst Fires

[The San Francisco Chronicle reports](#) dry lightning — when strikes occur with little or no rainfall — has sparked some of California's biggest and most destructive wildfires. The [August](#)

[Complex](#) of 2020, for example, burned over a million acres, registering as the state's first-ever gigafire.

But a widely used threshold used to define dry lightning doesn't fully capture wildfire ignition risk across the western United States, according to a new multi-institutional [study](#). In parts of Northern and Central California, for example, lightning strikes can trigger conflagrations amid wetter weather.

"It's not as clear-cut as simply (a) one-size-fits-all precipitation amount," said study author Dmitri Kalashnikov, a climate scientist at Washington State University Vancouver.

Lightning-ignited wildfires accounted for nearly half of the acres burned in Northern California from 2001 through 2022, according to data from the [National Interagency Fire Center](#).

Dry lightning occurs when the air beneath a thunderstorm is dry, and raindrops evaporate before reaching the Earth's surface. Lightning flashes can also travel far from where they were generated, said Brian Vant-Hull, a research meteorologist at the City University of New York Remote Sensing Earth System Institute — even [15 miles](#) from the core of a storm.

The result is the ignition of a fire, without rain to extinguish flames. Experts typically categorize lightning as "dry" when it's accompanied by less than 2.5 millimeters of precipitation in a day, or about a tenth of an inch. While this threshold has been in use for decades, it's not clear where it came from, Kalashnikov said.

In the study, the authors analyzed wildfires across the western United States between 2015 to 2020, matching about 3,700 with a lightning strike. The researchers saw stark differences among distinct ecological areas, especially when they distinguished between promptly detected blazes versus wildfires that were detected two to five days following a lightning strike.

"They're extra sneaky," Kalashnikov said of these fires, known as holdovers. "The fire might start out as more of a smolder and then a few days later when things dry out, the winds pick up maybe, it can then blow up to a major wildfire."

While the amount of precipitation associated with promptly detected wildfires ranged from 0.07 to 0.18 inches, holdover wildfires occurred under wetter conditions, sparking despite 0.12 to 0.3 inches of rain.

Places that saw the highest proportion of holdovers were mountainous forest regions. In such locales — including the Sierra Nevada and Northern Coast ranges — dead plant material that's gathered at the base of trees can decompose and create a layer resembling mulch, which can burn with smoldering combustion, glowing like a cigarette.

"That can stay in forest areas for days and days," said Scott Stephens, a professor of fire science at UC Berkeley.

Part of the reason is because tree branches can shelter holdover fires from rain — and from view.

"You have the canopy to actually shield the smoldering for a few days," Kalashnikov said.

In [previous work](#), Vant-Hull had also found regional differences in precipitation associated with dry lightning, and appreciated how the new study went a step further to explore how vegetation might explain the variation.

Different regions could use the distinct thresholds to better prepare and assess whether thunderstorms could ignite wildfires, Kalashnikov said.

Firefighter Injured, Structures Burned as Coyote Fire Forces Evacuations in San Diego County

[The Los Angeles Times reports](#) a brush fire in southeastern San Diego County has burned hundreds of acres, forced evacuations and threatened structures, authorities said Friday.

The fire was first reported at 12:11 p.m. Thursday in the community of Potrero, authorities said.

Dubbed the Coyote fire, the blaze grew from 45 acres overnight to an estimated 466 acres, with only 10% containment as of Friday morning, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Two structures were destroyed and a firefighter was injured.

Firefighters will be working on controlling the perimeter of the fire and extinguishing hot spots throughout the day.

An evacuation order was issued shortly after 1 p.m. Thursday for residents north of Round Potrero Road, east of Horizon View Drive, south of South Boundary Road and west of Potrero Circle. About 78 homes are within the evacuation area, Cornette said. A map of the evacuation area can be found at the county's Office of Emergency Services [website](#).

Round Potrero Road was closed between Yerba Santa Road and Potrero Valley Road. Cal Fire warned that structures along Yerba Santa Road were under the greatest immediate threat.

A temporary evacuation point has been established at Mountain Empire High School in Pine Valley, at 3305 Buckman Springs Road. An animal evacuation area was also opened at the San Diego County Animal Shelter in Bonita, at 5821 Sweetwater Road.

This is a developing story.

ICYMI: Funding Opportunities Ending Soon

- **[Request for Applications \(RFA\) #23-10059 Strengthening Economic Security and Mobility as a Protective Factor for Domestic Violence Prevention](#)**; *health & human services*
 - Funded by: Department of Public Health
 - Deadline: **Monday, August 21, 2023**
 - Total Estimated Funding: \$1.2 million
 - **Full Grant Guidelines**: [linked here](#)
 - **Online Application**: [linked here](#)
- **[Elevate Youth California: Cohort 5 Standard Track](#)**; *health & human services*
 - Funded by: Department of Health Care Services
 - Deadline: **Monday, August 28, 2023**

- Total Estimated Funding: \$41 million
- **Full Grant Guidelines**: [linked here](#)
 - **Online Application**: [linked here](#)
- **Community Economic Resilience Fund Tribal Funding Opportunity Intermediary**; *disadvantaged communities; employment, labor & training*
 - Funded by: Employment Development Department
 - Deadline: **Monday, August 28, 2023**
 - Total Estimated Funding: \$25 million
 - **Full Grant Guidelines**: [linked here](#)

Regional Climate Collaboratives Program Round 2

[The Strategic Growth Council](#) has created this program to help communities establish partnerships, funding pathways, plan and policy readiness, and a local network of TA providers to pursue funding and implement climate projects. RCC funds collaboratives of cross-sectoral and community-rooted partners, seeking to advance both place-based and region-wide climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency efforts.

The Regional Climate Collaborative (RCC) Program is a grant program that provides resources to advance climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience within under-resourced communities. The program funds cross-sector partners to form a Collaborative and conduct various capacity building activities, such as partnership development, project and plan development, data collection, education and training, and the creation of technical assistance hubs to pursue climate investments.

SGC has a total of \$8.5 million available for Round 2 awards and anticipates funding 6 Collaboratives. Round 2 has two funding tracks:

1. Small grants range between \$500,000-\$999,999
2. Large grants range between \$1,000,000-\$1,750,000

The program includes a two-step application process. Both steps are required.

1. Pre-Proposal: Applicants must submit a Pre-Proposal by September 6, 2023 at 5:00 PM PT. The purpose of the Pre-Proposal is to help applicants, TA providers, and SGC assess whether applicants are on track to submit a complete, competitive application that meets all threshold requirements and to identify sections of the application that will need increased support. While Pre-Proposals are not scored, SGC will provide feedback on Pre-Proposals to help applicants strengthen their Full Proposal. Submitting a Pre-Proposal is required to move forward to the Full Proposal phase. (This can be seen as the intent to apply).

2. Full Proposal: Applicants must submit a Full Proposal by December 6, 2023 at 5:00 PM PT. Building off the Pre-Proposal, the Full Proposal requires more detail and final versions of the budget and workplan. Applicants can modify their project between the Pre-Proposal and Full Proposal.

Application technical assistance is available. Please email CACE@sgc.ca.gov to learn more.

Projects may occur on state or federal lands, as long as the project area meets the eligibility requirements. The program has a regional and place-based component. Project Area requirements start on page 15 of the Round 2 Guidelines.

The deadline to apply for this funding is **Wednesday, December 6, 2023**. Total estimated funding available is \$8.5 million. To view the full grant guidelines, [click here](#).

County Drought Resilience Planning Assistance Program

[The Department of Water Resources](#) has created this program with the intent of helping the counties to establish standing drought task forces or to develop the county drought resilience plans, per Senate Bill 552.

The DWR County Drought Resilience Planning Grant Program is offered as a sub-program of the Small Community Drought Relief (SCDR) Program, per the allocation of the Budget Act of 2021, Section 2, Item 3860-101-0001(a). Per Senate Bill (SB) 552 of 2021, counties are required to establish a drought and water shortage task force and develop a drought and water shortage emergency response and long-term mitigation plan for domestic wells and state small water systems (serving 4-14 connections) (CWC Section 10609.70).

California's 58 Counties are eligible to submit applications.

The deadline to apply for this funding is **Friday, December 29, 2023**. Total estimated funding available is \$5 million. To view the full grant guidelines, [click here](#).