



# PROTECTING COMMUNITIES AGAINST THE NEXT DISASTER

## BUILDSTRONG CALIFORNIA

Californians face extreme disaster risks. BuildStrong California is working to establish a state framework to prioritize and invest in resilience and ultimately save the lives and livelihoods of all Californians. A diverse and inclusive coalition of professional, academic, and institutional stakeholders, BuildStrong California is committed to enhancing state, local, and tribal capacity to reduce disaster risk and protect homes, businesses, and communities against the next disaster.

## THE CHALLENGE...

Since 2017, California has experienced year-over-year increases in wildfires, with more frequent and more catastrophic events ravaging communities across the state. *Last year, 9,639 wildfires burned nearly 4.4 million acres*; the August Complex burned more than 1 million acres over seven counties alone and destroyed more than 10,000 structures at a cost of more than \$12 billion. Wildfires not only result in an unnecessary loss of life and property but are a significant impediment to the state meeting its ambitious climate change goals, negatively impact public health, and are devastating to the natural environment.

**IN 2020  
OVER 9,600 WILDFIRES  
BURNED NEARLY  
4.4 MILLION ACRES**

## ...REQUIRES A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

The wildfire crisis presents a historic, existential threat to all Californians and the economy, environment, and overall quality of life in the Golden State. As the federal government considers new coordination of wildfire forestry policy and aid via the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program and other FEMA programs, the time is now for California to commit to a long-term, comprehensive funding and policy strategy to address the causes of catastrophic wildfires.

California can use its current fiscal resources as well as policy levers to build a more resilient future for itself and its nearly 40 million residents. BuildStrong California advocates for a comprehensive approach to wildfire-related disaster preparedness, mitigation, and resiliency.

## THIS INCLUDES:

- 1** Robust and consistent state and federal investment to expand appropriate forest management and create fuel breaks,
- 2** Support and funding for community and home hardening with appropriate oversight to ensure meaningful mitigation before the next disaster, and
- 3** Investing in more resilient lifeline infrastructure and home hardening to withstand wildfires when they do occur.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFELINE INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESIDENTIAL RESILIENCE →**

# SPOTLIGHT ON RESILIENT LIFELINE INFRASTRUCTURE

Communities across California are experiencing significant and costly damage to lifeline infrastructure resulting from wildfires. Lifeline infrastructure enables the continuous operation of critical business and government functions and is essential to human health, safety, and economic security. While home and community hardening are key preventative mitigation efforts, a critical but often over-looked element in reducing wildfire loss and hazards to residents and first responders is heat-resistant, noncombustible infrastructure.

## WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Wildfire damage to water conveyance infrastructure can interfere with firefighting efforts. When those systems are melted, ruptured, or compromised the result is loss of water or water pressure to hydrants and sprinkler systems. Once damaged, the systems are susceptible to contamination. Recovery efforts are significantly more difficult when communities lack access to uncontaminated drinking water. Compromised wastewater pipelines can also result in contaminated soil and groundwater, further complicating and increasing the expense of recovery efforts.

## ELECTRIC POWER

Electric power infrastructure is especially vulnerable to wildfire. Traditional wooden poles are highly susceptible to fire damage and, when compromised, can become fire hazards themselves. Disaster mitigation focused on resilient electric power distribution will drastically reduce the costs of repairing that infrastructure in the wake of a natural disaster, as well as the much more significant derivative costs arising from loss or damage to that infrastructure. With the growing threat of wildfires, the state should ensure that distribution poles are made from noncombustible materials.

# SPOTLIGHT ON RESIDENTIAL WILDFIRE RESILIENCE

In the wake of the 2018 Camp Fire, Californians learned that newer homes built to the state's strong wildfire-resilience standards were more likely to survive the fire than older homes. In 2021, the California Governor signed a \$536 million wildfire package enabling the state to take urgent action on projects that support wildfire suppression, improve forest health, and build resilience in communities to help protect residents and property from catastrophic wildfires. California will take bold action by dedicating \$30 million of these funds specifically to home hardening efforts.

## SYSTEM-WIDE RESIDENTIAL RESILIENCE

While there is no catch-all solution for residential resilience against wildfires, by relying on wildfire science, building codes and standards, risk analysis and projects, we can help communities take targeted actions to improve the strength of their homes and communities. These mitigation actions taken at the individual homeowner's level, as well as the neighborhood and community levels, will make the most impact and drive down wildfire risk and losses.

## ABOUT THE BUILDSTRONG COALITION

The BuildStrong Coalition is a national organization of firefighters, emergency responders, insurers, engineers, architects, contractors, and manufacturers, as well as consumer organizations, code specialists, and many others committed to building a more resilient America. Learn more about how we have been working to build a stronger nation for over 10 years at [buildstrongamerica.com](http://buildstrongamerica.com).



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