

# Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)

## BAER INFORMATION BRIEF

### Preparing for Rain After California Wildfires

#### **POST-FIRE WATERSHED CONDITIONS—KEY MESSAGES**

While many wildfires cause minimal damage to the land and pose few threats to the land or people downstream, some fires cause damage that requires special efforts to prevent problems afterwards.

Summer monsoon thunderstorms and winter rain events in California mountain areas can result in high water runoff and flooding.

Wildfire increases the potential for flooding, post-fire soil erosion and debris flows that could impact campgrounds, fishing areas, homes, structures, roads, and other infrastructure within, adjacent to, and downstream from the burned areas.

Post-fire, watershed conditions will naturally receive and transport water and sediment differently than during pre-fire conditions.

The public and communities adjacent to and downstream from the wildfire areas should expect increased flooding and debris transport during less than average rain events.

#### **SAFETY CONCERNS CONTINUE AFTER THE FIRE IS OUT**

The potential for increased water runoff and debris flows are not just a one-year concern.

We recognize the threat potential of flash floods and debris flows may exist for the next several years, depending on the intensity of these storms.

For life and safety concerns, burned area public land closures are sometimes implemented prior to forecast rain events until the burned area fully recovers.

Residents and visitors should remain alert to weather events and plan ahead when travelling along roads within and downstream from the burned areas.

#### **ASSESSING BURNED WATERSHEDS RESPONSE**

[Forest Service Burned Area Emergency Response \(BAER\)](#) teams work with each of the national forests, to assess the condition of the watersheds on National Forest System (NFS) lands burned by wildfires.

BAER assessment teams identify potential emergency threats to BAER critical values that may be considered at-risk on federal lands such as:

- Human life and safety.
- NFS property, such as buildings, water systems and infrastructure, utility systems, road and trail prisms.
- Critical natural resources such as water, soil productivity and hydrologic function, areas where invasive species or noxious weeds may impact native or naturalized communities and may include critical habitat or suitable occupied habitat for federally listed threatened or endangered species.
- Critical cultural and heritage resources such as pre-historic and historic properties and sites.

BAER assessment teams recommend emergency stabilization response actions that are implemented on federal land to reduce potential post-fire threats.

#### **PREPARING FOR POTENTIAL FLOODING AND DEBRIS-FLOWS FROM WILDFIRE BURNED AREAS**

For values and resources potentially impacted off federal lands, one of the most effective BAER strategies is interagency coordination with local cooperators who assist affected businesses, homes, and landowners with preparing for rain events.

While multi-agency efforts are being taken to reduce the risks to life and safety adjacent to and downstream from the burned areas, nearby residents should develop individual plans to protect themselves and their property.

The USDA Forest Service and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) work together and coordinate with other federal, state and local agencies, and counties that assist private landowners in preparing for increased water run-off and potential flooding impacts.

NRCS and local sponsors prepare damage survey reports for eligible sites on private lands adjacent to and downstream from affected areas. NRCS uses these reports, along with the Forest Service BAER team's assessment report, to

develop emergency measures to reduce the impacts from potential increased water and debris flows, and assist local sponsors to implement recommended emergency measures through its Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program: ([NRCS EWPP Fact Sheet-2021.pdf \(usda.gov\)](#)).

All EWP Program–Recovery projects begin with a local sponsor or legal subdivision of state or tribal government. Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, towns, conservation districts, or any federally recognized Native American tribe or tribal organization. Interested public and private landowners can apply for EWP Program–Recovery assistance through one of those sponsors. For more information on NRCS Disaster Assistance Programs: [Emergency Watershed Protection | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#).

The following links provide information and references for state and local county offices of emergency management promote preparedness through its emergency services programs to assist the public to prepare for, respond appropriately to, and quickly recover from natural emergencies that may impact county residents and visitors:

[Flood After Fire--California Toolkit](#)  
[After the Fire—California Resources](#)  
[California Current Road Conditions](#)  
[Cal-Fire—Fire and Resource Assistance](#)  
[California Governor's Office of Emergency Services](#)  
[California Watershed Emergency Response Team \(WERT\)](#)

Homes or businesses that could be impacted by flooding from federal land that resulted from wildfires may be eligible for flood insurance coverage from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Information about NFIP is available through FEMA at [www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program](http://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program), or [FEMA Wildfire Increases Flood Risk](#). Other flood preparedness information is available at [www.ready.gov/floods](http://www.ready.gov/floods) and [www.floodsmart.gov/](http://www.floodsmart.gov/).

#### **LINKS TO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND WEBSITES**

[NRCS California](#)  
[NRCS Wildfire Disaster Recovery](#)  
[NRCS Post-Fire Disaster Assistance](#)  
[NRCS EWP Recovery Assistance](#)  
[FEMA Wildfire Increases Flood Risk](#)  
[FEMA Flood After Fire—Fact Sheet](#)  
[Recovering from Wildfire-Damage Assessments](#)  
[After the Wildfire Tool Kit](#)  
[Flood Safety Emergency Preparedness](#)  
[Be Ready & Prepare for Emergencies](#)  
[NWS Weather Information—Los Angeles CA](#)  
[NWS-Los Angeles Facebook](#)  
[NWS Weather Information—Sacramento CA](#)  
[NWS-Sacramento Facebook](#)  
[NWS Post-Wildfire Flash Flood-Debris Flow Guide](#)  
[NWS-Flood Safety](#)  
[NWS Burn Scar Flash Flood & Debris Flow Risks](#)  
[After the Flames Resources](#)  
[Red Cross Emergency Preparedness](#)

**BAER SAFETY MESSAGE:** *Everyone near and downstream from the burned areas should remain alert and stay updated on weather conditions that may result in heavy rains and increased water runoff. Flash flooding may occur quickly during heavy rain events--be prepared to act. Current weather and emergency notifications can be found at **National Weather Service** website: [www.weather.gov/lox/](http://www.weather.gov/lox/).*



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