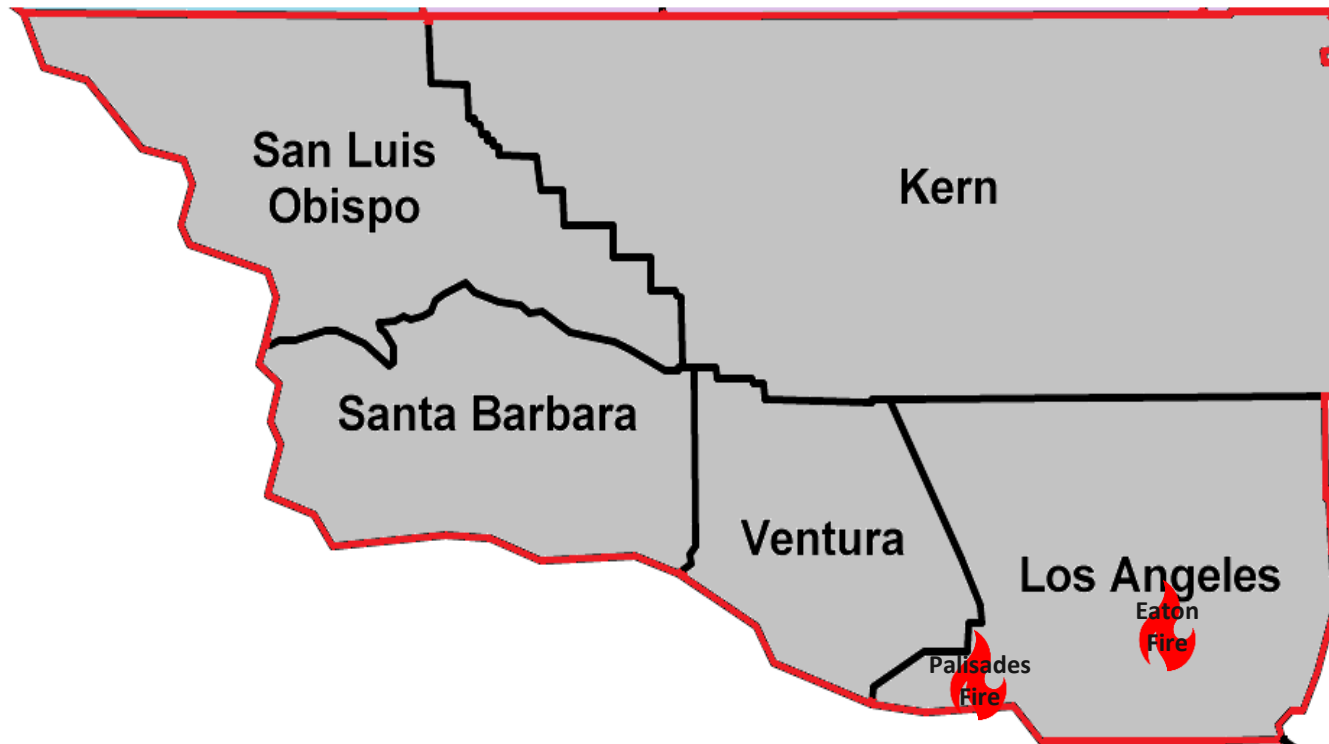




Cal/OSHA Ensuring Worker Safety After a Natural Disaster

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March 12, 2025**

Cal/OSHA Region 4



California Wildfire Timeline:



1,599,640 acres burned
10,868 structures destroyed
47 confirmed deaths



1,975,086 acres burned
24,226 structures destroyed
100 confirmed deaths



4,304,379 acres burned
11,116 structures destroyed
33 confirmed deaths



57,768 acres burned
16,251 structures destroyed
29 confirmed deaths

Cleanup New Release



NEWS RELEASE

Release Number: 2025-15

Date: February 5, 2025

[▶ español](#)

DIR issues critical guidance for worker safety during wildfire cleanup and recovery

Los Angeles — In response to the ongoing wildfire recovery efforts, the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) has posted guidance for employers and workers on how to proceed rapidly and safely as they navigate the risks associated with [fire debris removal and cleanup](#).

Even after fires are extinguished, hazardous conditions persist. Employers involved in recovery operations within fire-damaged areas must assess these risks, address unsafe conditions, and ensure proper training is provided to all workers.

DIR is committed to protecting workers on the frontlines of disaster recovery, ensuring their safety and health as they help restore what has been lost.

DIR offers extensive information about worker health including a [wildfire cleanup training tool](#) in English and Spanish. Additional resources include information on:

State Agencies Working Together





Our role is to ensure worker health and safety by providing outreach, education, and assistance to employers, and other entities involved in cleanup work, as well as to enforce the state's health and safety laws when violations occur.



What Cal/OSHA is Doing

- Protecting workers on the Frontline
- Educating the employer community
- Informing and educating Homeowners



Potential Hazards

Respiratory Hazards



Slip and Trip Hazards



Heat-Illness Related Exposure



Employer Requirements

- Establish an effective plan to identify hazards on site and communicate them to workers;
- Provide workers with proper PPE, including respiratory protection; and
- Ensure that workers have completed a 40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training;



Strategic Approach

We recognize the importance of having a strategic approach that incorporates:

- Outreach & Publications for the Public, including employers
- Consultation Services for Employers
- Cal/OSHA enforces Occupational Safety and Health rules and regulations

Outreach & Publications

WORKER SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR WILDFIRE CLEAN-UP



Planning and Training

Before commencing fire clean-up, demolition or related activities, employers must establish an effective plan to identify and mitigate hazards at the site (Title 8 California Code of Regulations [T8CCR], sections 1509(a), 1510(c), 3203, 5192(c)). Employers must train workers to identify and prevent exposure to those hazards (T8CCR 1509, 1514, 1521, 1528, 1529, 3203, 5192(c)). Fire cleanup work, including ash and debris removal and cleaning of fire-damaged structures, is not household domestic service, and employees performing this work are covered by Cal/OSHA health and safety standards. For more information on Cal/OSHA's worker safety requirements during fire cleanup, see:

Site safety and health: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/wildfire/worker-health-and-safety-during-fire-cleanup.html>

Respiratory protection: https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/fire_resp_protection.html

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/wildfire/Protective-Equipment-During-Fire-Cleanup.html>

Examples of Potential Hazards

- Electricity, downed power lines, solar panels that may still produce power
- Unstable structures, objects, trenches, and trees
- Asbestos insulation, tiles, and siding
- Toxic ash and dust, pesticides, fuels, chemical products
- Compressed gas cylinders, aboveground and underground fuel tanks
- Enclosed spaces with low oxygen and toxic atmospheres
- Coccidioides spores in soil (Valley Fever)
- Heavy equipment and vehicular traffic
- Heat illness
- Carbon monoxide from the use of gasoline-powered equipment in enclosed spaces



Respiratory Protection

Employers must comply with the respiratory protection standard (T8CCR 5144) and provide NIOSH-approved respiratory protection to workers who enter burned areas to perform clean-up, removal, demolition, or related activities, as follows:

- Provide elastomeric air-purifying respirators (APRs) equipped with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter combined with an organic vapor (OV), and formaldehyde cartridge (T8CCR 5144). A P100, N100 or R100 filter may be used in lieu of a HEPA filter.
- Provide N95 respirators to workers in areas where vegetation or untreated wood alone has burned, in lieu of an elastomeric APR (T8CCR 5144).
- To avoid counterfeit products, please visit the [NIOSH Certified Equipment List](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nppt/topics/respirators/cel/default.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nppt/topics/respirators/cel/default.html>).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

In addition to respiratory protection, employers must provide PPE that properly fits each worker, as follows:

- Hardhat
- Eye protection
- Hearing protection
- Full-body Tyvek or equally effective coveralls
- Hand protection
- Foot protection and covers
- Chaps and other PPE for chainsaw work
- Fall protection when working at elevated locations

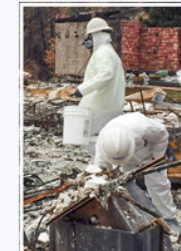
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For more information, contact the Cal/OSHA Call Center at 833-579-0927, Monday–Friday, from 9 a.m.–7 p.m. Complaints about workplace safety and health hazards can be filed confidentially with Cal/OSHA district offices.

www.dir.ca.gov/dosh | www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Worker-Health-and-Safety-in-Wildfire-Regions.html



WORKER SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR FIRE CLEANUP SITES



Fire cleanup, removal and demolition work is dangerous. It can expose workers to toxic ash and debris, asbestos, chemical substances, unstable structures and other hazards. Under Cal/OSHA's workplace safety regulations, employers are required to identify these hazards and provide workers with proper training, personal protective equipment (PPE) and other protections. Fire cleanup work, including ash, soot, and debris removal and cleaning of fire or smoke-damaged structures, is not household domestic service. Employees performing this work are covered by Cal/OSHA's health and safety standards. For more information on Cal/OSHA's worker safety requirements during fire cleanup, see:

Site safety and health: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/wildfire/worker-health-and-safety-during-fire-cleanup.html>

Respiratory protection: https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/fire_resp_protection.html

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/wildfire/Protective-Equipment-During-Fire-Cleanup.html>

PLANNING AND TRAINING

Before starting work, employers are required to:

1. Establish an effective plan to identify hazards on the site and communicate them to workers;
2. Ensure that workers have completed a 40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training; and
3. Provide workers with proper PPE, including respiratory protection.

EXAMPLES OF SITE HAZARDS

- Electricity, downed powerlines, solar panels
- Unstable structures, trenches, and trees
- Asbestos insulation, tiles, and siding
- Toxic ash and dust, pesticides, fuels, chemical products
- Compressed gas cylinders, aboveground and underground fuel tanks
- Enclosed spaces with low oxygen and toxic atmospheres
- Coccidioides spores in soil (Valley Fever)

- Heavy equipment and vehicular traffic
- Heat illness
- Carbon monoxide from the use of gasoline-powered equipment in enclosed spaces

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Employers are required to provide workers with the following PPE at fire cleanup, removal and demolition sites. Workers must be trained in the use, maintenance and limitations of the PPE.

- ☐ An elastomeric air-purifying respirator (APRs) equipped with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, combined with an organic vapor (OV) and formaldehyde cartridge. A P100, N100 or R100 filter may be used in place of a HEPA filter (T8CCR 5144).
- ☐ To avoid counterfeit products, please visit the [NIOSH Certified Equipment List](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nppt/topics/respirators/cel/default.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nppt/topics/respirators/cel/default.html>).
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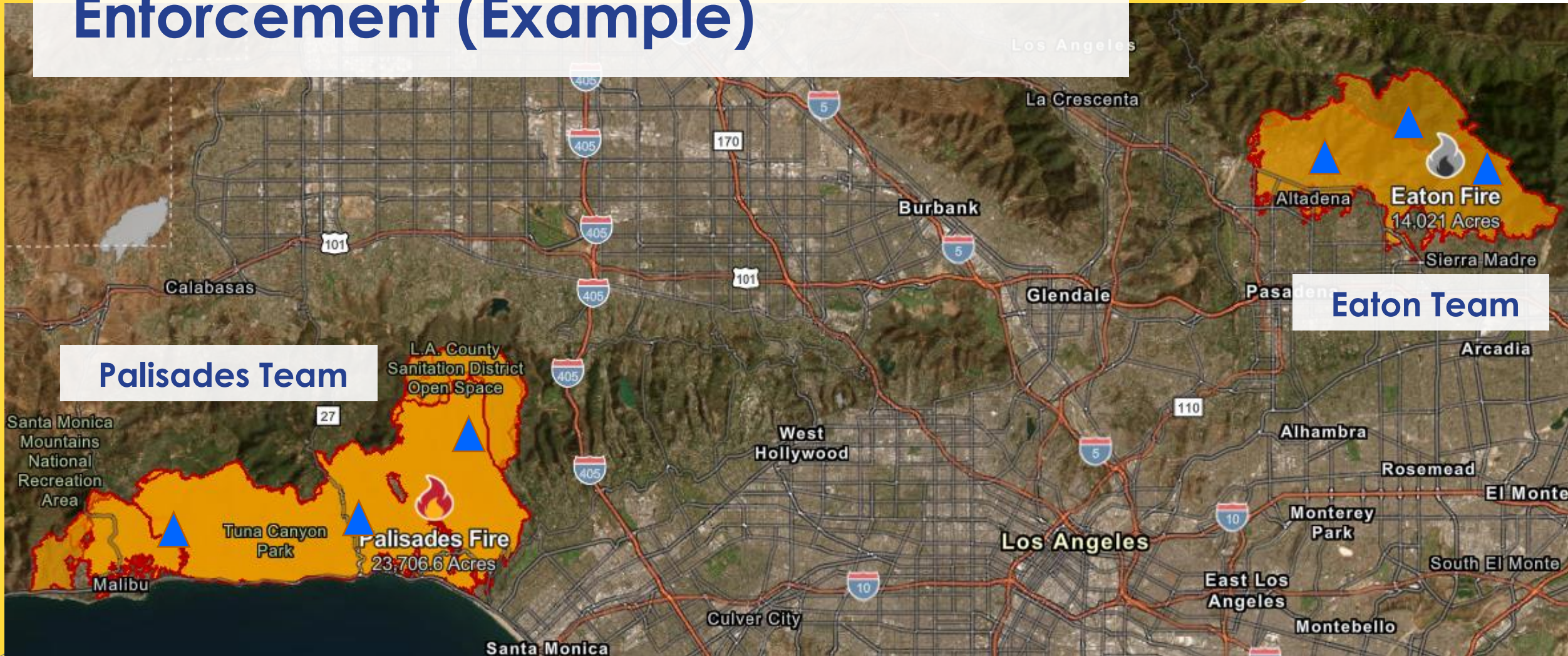
www.dir.ca.gov/dosh | www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Worker-Health-and-Safety-in-Wildfire-Regions.html



Consultation Services and Call Center



Enforcement (Example)





Thank you!

Cal/OSHA Consultation Services
1-800-963-9424 or
InfoCons@dir.ca.gov

Call 833-579-0927 to connect with a live Cal/OSHA representative between the hours of 9 am and 7 pm to ask questions related to health and safety in the workplace. Bilingual representatives are available.