



California in Context

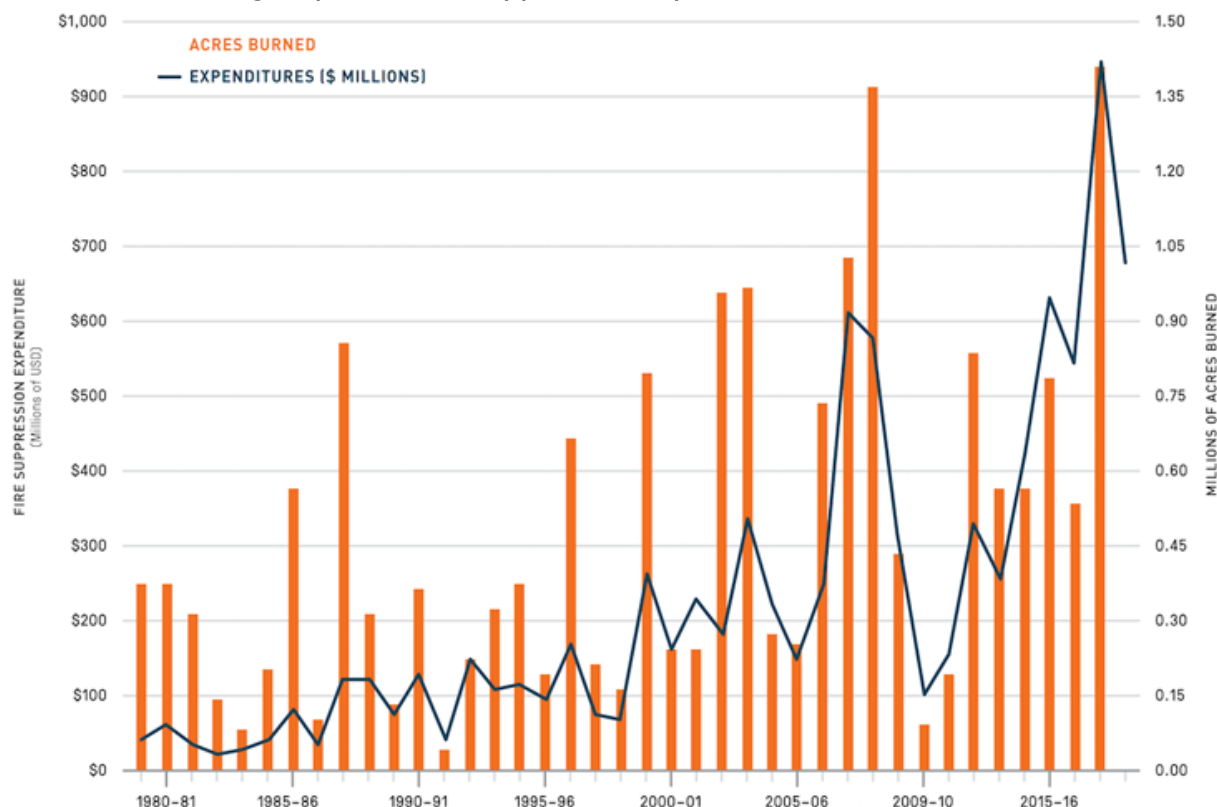
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

While California is no stranger to natural disasters, the most persistent and devastating in recent years have been wildfires. A changing climate has lengthened the fire season in California—it has increased by 75 days across the Sierras—and 2018 brought the largest and most destructive fires in the state’s history. By the end of 2018, wildfires in California killed over 100 people, destroyed more than 22,700 structures, and burned over 1.8 million acres—more than double the most recent 10-year average of acres burned. The 2019 fire season was less destructive, but millions of residents across the state were subject to a series of power shutoffs in order to reduce the risk of powerline-caused wildfires.

More than 25 million acres of state’s wildlands are classified as under very high or extreme fire threat, and high housing costs in more developed parts of the state have pushed more residents into high risk areas. As the state works to address these risks, their ability to adequately prevent and respond to forest fires is complicated by the fact that the state only owns 3% of the 33 million acres of forestland across the state.

The primary agencies in the state tasked with emergency response and preparedness are the California **Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)** and the **California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire)**, which deals with wildfires in particular. The proposed budget includes nearly \$2 billion in state funds (\$2.7 billion total funds) for Cal Fire, an increase of about \$180 million over 2019-20, and \$525 million in state funds (\$1.8 billion total funds) for Cal OES (+\$77 million over 2019-20) in 2020-21.

Emergency Fund Fire Suppression Expenditures & Acres Burned



NEXT 10 CALIFORNIA GREEN INNOVATION INDEX, Data Source: Cal Fire, NEXT 10 / SF - CA - USA

Chart from 2019 California Green Innovation Index

EMERGENCY KEY FACTS

- ✓ **Wildfire Risk:** Of the 20 most destructive fires in state history, 19 of them occurred within the last 30 years and 10 since 2015
 - ▶ 8 were caused by powerlines
 - ▶ More than 2.7 million Californians live in very high-fire risk zones, from the northernmost part of the state down to San Diego County
- ✓ **Cost:** Altogether, the total cost of California's 2018 fire season \$24 billion (including \$1 billion in firefighting costs) primarily from the destruction of homes and infrastructure
 - ▶ The 2017 and 2018 fire seasons together caused an unprecedented \$40 billion in damage
- ✓ **Cal Fire:** Provides resource management and wildland fire protection services covering 31 million acres through 234 state fire stations (and staff 568 local stations that are funded by local governments)
 - ▶ Cal Fire employs over 6,100 full-time fire professionals, foresters, and administrators; 2,600 seasonal firefighters; 2,750 local government volunteer firefighters; 600 Volunteers in Prevention
- ✓ **Conservation Camps:** Cal Fire, in cooperation with the Department of Corrections, operates 43 conservation camps, commonly known as fire camps, across 27 counties that support state, local, and federal government agencies as they respond to natural disasters
 - ▶ Inmates must volunteer for the fire camp program and Cal Fire also employs 2,600 seasonal firefighters

3,100 inmates
working at fire camps currently

6,100 full-time
Cal Fire fire professionals, foresters

NEW IN 2020-21

To help improve capacity for emergency response, the proposed budget includes **\$94 million** from the General Fund in 2020-21 (\$143 million ongoing) to add 294 new positions for firefighting and training academy staff to provide Cal Fire greater operational flexibility, based on fire conditions throughout the year. The budget also includes permanent funding to help improve preparedness by pre-positioning additional firefighting personnel on a portion of engines or staff engines earlier in the spring or later in the fall and winter, as fire conditions warrant, rather than continuing the current practice of adding additional firefighter surge capacity on a year-to-year basis.

The proposed 2020-21 budget includes \$110.1 million (\$26.8 General Fund) to implement a new home hardening program authorized in 2019 that retrofits buildings using ember-resistant building materials.

To mitigate risk of power lines igniting fires, utilities significantly expanded their use of public safety power shutoffs (PSPS) in high fire risk areas in 2019. The budget includes **\$50 million** in one-time funds from the General Fund to support preparedness measures that bolster community resiliency, such as supporting critical services still vulnerable to power outage events—including schools, county election offices, and food storage reserves. The proposal will also support a matching grant program to help local governments prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the impacts of power outages.

*Data from the Governor's proposed budget, LAO, [Cal Fire](#), [California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation](#) (CDCR), [C2ES](#), and [VC Star](#) unless specified otherwise.