

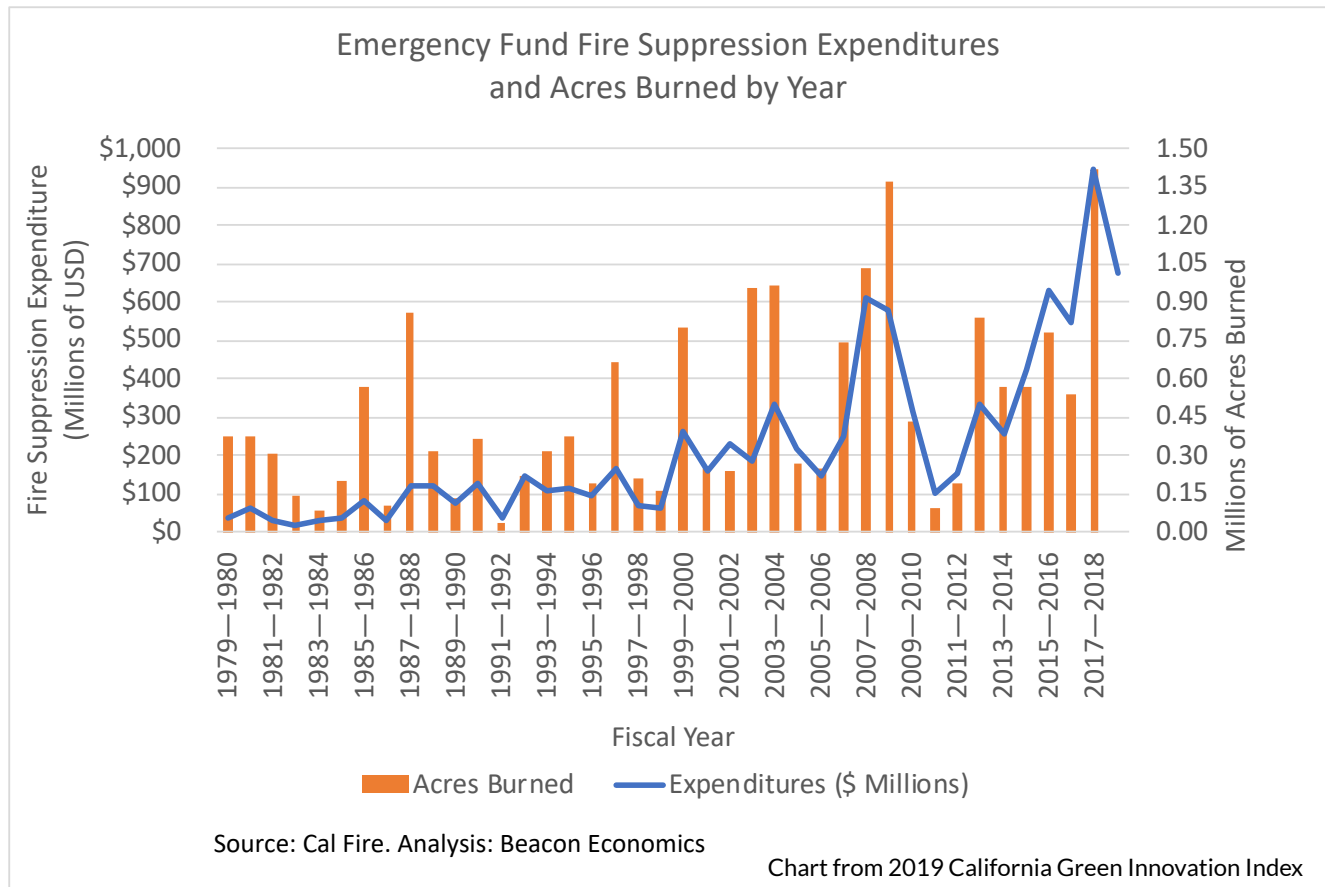


Emergency Preparedness

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 the 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 owns only 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.



WHAT'S IN THE 2020-21 BUDGET

California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES): Although the state is experiencing significant economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and a decrease in state revenues, the final budget reflects an additional \$117.6 million for Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to enhance the state's emergency preparedness and response capabilities. This includes \$50 million to support community resiliency during power shutoffs and \$11 million for critical cybersecurity infrastructure.

Cal Fire: The final budget reflects an additional \$90 million General Fund (\$93.2 million ongoing) to further enhance Cal Fire's capabilities for the 2020 fire season and beyond. Most of the new funding, \$85.6 million, is for relief staffing and early ramp-up of 2020 fire season surge capacity. There is also \$4.4 million to enable Cal Fire to implement the new wildfire prediction and modeling technology that was already procured.

Lastly, a bill in the Legislature titled [SB 45](#) would put the Economic Recovery, Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2020 on the November 2020 ballot. If approved by the voters, it would authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$5.51 billion to finance projects for an economic recovery, wildfire prevention, safe drinking water, drought preparation, and flood protection programs. The bond would have a total cost of approximately \$8.99 billion — \$5.51 billion in principal and \$3.48 billion in interest. Debt service costs would increase by \$300 million General Fund annually until the bond is paid off.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS 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
 - ▶ Eight were caused by power lines and 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
- ➔ **Fire 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
 - ▶ Several fire camps have been placed on lockdown as a result of the pandemic and outbreaks of COVID-19—until the lockdown lifts, only 30 of the state's 77 inmate crews are available in the northern part of the state

*Data from the 2020-21 enacted budget, LAO, [Cal Fire](#), [California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation](#) (CDCR), [C2ES](#), [Sacramento Bee](#), and [VC Star](#).