

## Post-Fire Flood/Mudslide Safety

Wildfire incidents have become more common, with increasing frequency, range, duration, and severity. Cal Fire reports that as of mid-October, over 4 million acres have burned in more than 8,500 incidents in 2020 in California alone.



Heavy rainfall in recently burned sloped areas (sometimes even years later) can pose additional hazards. Living vegetation that burns away is not able to absorb rainfall, and the burned vegetation and soil (burn scar) create a layer that prevents water from being absorbed into the ground, resulting in water building up then causing flash flooding, debris flows, and/or mudslides which have the potential to cause more damage and be more dangerous than the fire. These often happen with little to no warning (hence the “flash” in flash flood).

The following are just a few of the steps you can take to prepare before a possible flash flood/mud flow:

- Purchase a flood insurance policy; most homeowners and renters' insurance policies do not include flood protection. Water and mud can cause extensive - and expensive - damage. These policies can take up to 30 days to go into effect, so plan ahead! <https://www.floodsmart.gov/> can help you find a provider.
- Sign up for an early warning system, such as the Emergency Alert System (EAS) or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio to get emergency alerts.
- Keep important documents and valuables in a waterproof container, on an upper level if possible. Create digital copies of documents and store them in a separate location or in the cloud.
- Gather supplies (this is also good preparation for earthquakes and other natural disasters). Plan for at least three days of food, water, cleaning supplies and PPE for each person and pet in your household. Don't forget first aid supplies and any needed medications.
- Create an evacuation plan, preferably with multiple routes in case one is blocked. Choose a location that is not prone to flooding and that has not had a recent wildfire. Keep your evacuation site in mind in regards to COVID-19; use a public shelter only as a last resort. You should also prepare in case you need to shelter in place instead (i.e. if flooding cuts off your only route to evacuate safely).
- If you encounter water on your route, **DO NOT** attempt to cross through it. **Turn back!** It takes as little as 6 inches of water to knock someone down and 12 inches to sweep a vehicle away. Avoid wading through deep water, as it may contain dangerous debris, contamination, or be electrified from downed wires.