Los Angeles County

Employee Wildfire Support Guide

Revised 2021

Los Angeles County
DEPARTMENT OF
Human Resources

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This guide has been developed by the Los Angeles County Department of Human Resources to assist County departments and supervisors to support employees impacted by local wildfires. The contents of this Guide have been compiled from various internal and external sources and will be updated on a periodic basis.

It is important to note that the information contained in this Guide is intended for the use of LA County employees and their families only. Some resources listed in the Guide are specific to individual County departments or are tied to the employee's elected healthcare plans; any information aimed at a specific employee population will be noted on that page.

Information about general emergency response and recovery services available to all LA County residents can be found at https://lacounty.gov/emergency.

IMMEDIATE DISASTER SUPPORT

With over 111,000 employees living in all areas of Los Angeles County and surrounding communities, local disasters have the potential to drastically disrupt the lives and functions of our County workforce.

During wildfire season, employees living in impacted neighborhoods may experience direct damage to their properties or be asked to evacuate their residences with little to no warning. Unexpected evacuations can be challenging for many reasons outside of the immediate threat of the wildfire - individuals now have to find temporary housing arrangements; they may need to find care and food for pets; children may have to be absent from school and staff may need to miss some or all of the workday; and normal travel routes may be shut down due to the emergency response.

LA COUNTY INFORMATION

Real time information about sheltering services, including pet shelters, evacuation orders, and recovery response can be obtained through the County's various first response websites and social media outlets.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATES

https://lacounty.gov/emergency

https://twitter.com/ReadyLACounty

https://twitter.com/LACoFDPIO

www.facebook.com/LACoFD

ROAD CLOSURES

https://dpw.lacounty.gov/roadclosures

LOCAL EMERGENCY SHELTERS

www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/find-an-open-shelter.html

ANIMAL SHELTERS

https://animalcare.lacounty.gov

WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

One of the greatest supports departments can provide to employees impacted by wildfires is by remaining receptive to their needs and implementing flexible work arrangements as appropriate.

During an emergency such as a wildfire, where employees may be cut off from normal travel routes or must continue to care for children or family members who have been displaced from their homes or schools, telework can serve as a highly effective tool to allow employees to continue working and prevent unwanted use of benefits time. Telework is not feasible for all County jobs; therefore, managers are encouraged to modify assignments for employees with such jobs as appropriate during these emergency situations. Modifications that might allow the employee to work from home could include a focus on online training; completing administrative tasks, such as paperwork or reports; fielding customer service calls or addressing questions via email; and completing staff development assignments. Modifications should be made within reason and at the manager's discretion.

Impacted employees that wish to engage in an emergency telework arrangement or, conversely, opt to request time off, should contact their Departmental Human Resources Manager.

TELEWORK POLICY AND TOOLS

Telework Material Hub

Telework Procedures Manual

Telework Time Codes

CONNECTIVITY RESOURCES

connect.lacounty.gov

TELEWORK TRAININGS

Telework Time Code Training

County Teleworker Training

Telemanager Training

RECOVERING EMOTIONALLY

Recovery from a traumatic event, such as a natural disaster, can take time. It is natural to feel distress, anxiety and worry, whether directly impacted by a wildfire or having family/friends who are in the disaster zone. Fortunately, there are multiple free and confidential mental health resources available to Los Angeles County employees and their family members. No one needs to manage stress alone.

As a reminder, employees suffering from a serious health condition caused or triggered by traumatic events may be eligible for a protected leave of absence. Employees should be encouraged to speak with their departmental Human Resources office for information on potential leave options.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Department of Human Resources (DHR)'s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers confidential professional consultation and referral to assist employees with grief and a broad range of personal and job-related issues. Consultations are private and confidential, and ***employees can attend their first visit on County time.*** EAP also offers group sessions for workgroups experiencing distress, such as grief due to the loss of a team member.

Both group sessions and one on one consultations are available virtually and are completely free of charge for County staff. For more information on counseling sessions, groups and trainings available, contact EAP Services at **(213) 738-4200**, available Monday through Friday from 8:00am – 5:00pm.

LIFE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Life Assistance Program, offered through Cigna Behavioral Health, provides 24-hour crisis intervention and counseling services **free of charge** to all County employees and their families. Cigna's Life Assistance Program (LAP) features a network of more than 130,000 licensed counselors and is a nationally recognized employee assistance resource. The Life Assistance Program is **confidential and anonymous**, and includes:

- Access to the LAP hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Crisis intervention support with a licensed counselor
- Up to three (3) counseling sessions for you, your spouse/partner, and dependents
- Counseling services delivered via telephone or video for ease of access

For more information, **call (800) 538-3543**.

DMH ACCESS CENTER

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) offers free mental health crisis counseling to all County employees and their families impacted by the local wildfires. These services are available to help employees and their families cope with distress, reactions or feelings about the wildfires. Employees in need of immediate help can call the **24/7 Mental Health Access Center at (800) 854-7771** to receive crisis counseling, assessments and referrals.

Trained DMH staff are available to assist Departments with crisis intervention, education about normal stress response, and techniques for stress management. DMH services and support can be adapted to departmental needs, whether it is to assist one employee or group of employees. When working with a group of employees, DMH staff will always remain after meetings to help any individuals who may still be upset, have questions, or need further assistance.

iPREVAIL - FREE 24/7 ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Courtesy of DMH, all Los Angeles County residents and employees now have access to iPrevail, an 24/7 online mental health resource center. iPrevail brings traditional models of talk therapy to any Internet-connected device or smartphone. LA County residents and employees can sign up for free, take a short assessment and tap into online mental health programs, such as community support groups, on-demand coaching by trained peer specialists and self-paced lessons on a variety of topics to improve wellbeing.

To get more information or to sign up for on-demand mental health support, employees can visit https://lacounty.iprevail.com.

DISASTER DISTRESS HOTLINE

The Disaster Distress Helpline, **1-800-985-5990**, is a 24/7, 365-day-a-year, national hotline that provides immediate crisis counseling for people living through any natural or human-caused disaster. Their compassionate staff provides counseling and support before, during, and after disasters, and connects people to local disaster-related resources for follow-up care and support. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States.

Call **1-800-985-5990** or text '**TalkWithUs' to 66746** to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

Find additional resources at www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline.

SUPPORT FOR FRONTLINE WORKERS

Coping with disaster can be particularly difficult for frontline workers, who may be called to work to support their community while being impacted through evacuation or loss themselves. The following information is offered as additional resources for frontline staff and first responders.

WELLBEING4LA

The DMH + UCLA Public Partnership for Wellbeing offers curated online learning, resource collections and support services targeted to frontline workers and care professionals. The site offers anytime video sessions focused on strategies to support and sustain the wellbeing of County frontline workers and first responders. Topics include: Strategies for Maintaining Wellbeing, Recognizing and Managing Anxiety, Mindful Self-Compassion, and more.

Learn more and get started at **http://learn.wellbeing4la.org/get-support**.

FIRE DEPT. PERSONNEL WELFARE ASSISTANCE

The Fire Department is committed to providing resources and assistance to help Fire personnel and their families through moments of crisis.

Mental Health Professionals
Phyllis L Cohen, LCSW
Primary: (818) 783-0117
Secondary: (818) 788-3663
If no answer, please text

Carl L. King, Ph.D
Primary: (818) 501-5375
Secondary: (818) 359-5732
If no answer, please text

Peer Support
Captain Scott Ross
Office: (310) 970-7974
Cell: (310) 916-5300
Scott.ross@fire.lacounty.gov

Chaplin
Fire Fighter Paramedic Jake Ching
FS 100-B, BN 18 (310) 318-0161
County Cell: (213) 618-7399
Cell Phone: (760) 703-1802
JAChing@hotmail.com

SHERIFF'S PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES BUREAU

The Psychological Services Bureau (PSB) of the Sheriff's Department is available to provide counseling and emotional support services to all Sheriff's Department employees, both sworn and civilian. Services are available to spouses and significant others of employees as well. PSB is staffed by psychologists who specialize in providing solution-focused treatment for a full range of concerns that affect employees and their families and that might occur both on and off the job.

Individual, marital, relationship, and family counseling services are available free of charge to members of this department. For an appointment, employees may contact the PSB's main office at **(213) 738-3500**.

DISASTER RECOVERY GUIDES AND RESOURCES

Those directly affected by wildfires and those who have family or friends who are impacted by the disaster are likely to experience a sense of distress or vulnerability.

The **American Psychological Association** provided following tips to manage distress during disasters:

Take a news break. Watching endless replays of footage from the fires can make your stress even greater. Although you'll want to keep informed — especially if you have loved ones affected by the disasters — take a break from watching the news.

Be kind to yourself. Some feelings when witnessing a disaster may be difficult for you to accept. You may feel relief that the disaster did not touch you, or you may feel guilt that you were left untouched when so many were affected. Both feelings are common.

Keep things in perspective. Although a disaster often is horrifying, remember to focus as well on the things that are good in your life.

Find a productive way to help if you can. Many organizations are set up to provide financial or other aid to victims of natural disasters. Contributing or volunteering can be a way to gain a sense of "control" over the event.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery and recognize your strengths. People often learn about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of persevering through hardship. Many people who have experienced tragedy and adversity have reported better relationships later on and a greater sense of personal strength.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mental and Emotional Health After an Emergency: This one-page guide can help you identify common reactions and what you can do for you and your family.

Helping Children Cope with Emergencies: The Center for Disease Control and Protection offers an overview of distress signs in children and tools to help them cope after a disaster.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Offers resources for helping children handle a wildfire disaster and offers tools like an activity guide for children and teens who face evacuation in a disaster and the Help Kids Cope App.

Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event: The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's resource hub for self-care and family support information.

Recovering After a Disaster: Offers guidance and resources compiled by the American Red Cross and partner response agencies.

Headspace: A digital platform designed to help individuals learn the essentials of meditation and mindfulness to help reduce stress, improve sleep, and enhance overall wellbeing. Subscriptions are FREE to County employees and their family members.

LA COUNTY HEALTH AND RETIREMENT PLAN SERVICES

As a member of the County workforce, impacted employees have additional recovery resources through their designated healthcare plan. County and union-sponsored health plans enable employees and their family members to schedule doctors' appointments and to speak with specialists to assess medical care and emotional support services and resources.

For your convenience and ease of reference for our employees, a list of all County healthcare providers and the unique resources they offer are listed below. ***Please note that the services listed below are specific to an employee's elected healthcare plan.***

Additionally, participants of the County of Los Angeles 457(b) Deferred Compensation and Thrift Plan (Horizons), and 401(k) Savings Plan may be able to take a loan or an unforeseeable emergency withdrawal from their Plan accounts. An unforeseeable emergency withdrawal can be taken from the Horizons Plan and the Savings Plan if severe financial hardship results from uninsured loss of or damage to your property due to a casualty or other similar extraordinary and unforeseeable circumstances that result from events beyond our control. Please contact **Empower Retirement at (800) 947-0845** to request a loan or a hardship withdrawal form.

Anthem Blue Cross

Anthem Member Disaster Helpline
Contact (833) 285-4030
Call the number above if you need emergency or urgent care from any doctor or hospital right away, getting refills on prescriptions for medications, medical equipment is lost or damaged, need pre-approvals or referrals, or need to file a claim.

Customer Service
Contact (844) 730-1931
Dedicated customer service number for County of Los Angeles members.

Anthem's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Tools & Services
Free Services. Offers support for stress, help with legal/financial concerns and dependent care needs. Call the EAP crisis line 24/7 at 877-208-8240 or visit www.anthemeap.com, and use the login code: *EAP Can Help*.

ALADS/Anthem Blue Cross

CaliforniaCare Basic/Premier (HMO) & Prudent Buyer Basic/Premier (PPO)
Customer Service
Contact (800) 227-3771

Call the number listed above for assistance with medical appointments or to request prescription refills for medications.

Behavioral Health Services Holman Group, a service company of ALADS/Anthem Blue Cross
Contact (800) 321-2843

The Local 1014 Fire Fighters Health Plan

www.local1014medical.org

Contact (800) 660-1014
medicalplan@local1014.org

Call the number above for assistance with medical coverage, medical appointments or prescriptions. Access 24 hours a day LiveHealth online or Member XG.

CAPE/Blue Shield

Customer Service
Contact (855) 256-9404
Call the number listed above for questions or assistance on your medical coverage, for emergency or urgent care, or to request prescription refills for medications.

Mental Health Service Administrator
Contact (877) 263-9952

LifeReferrals 24/7
Free service for members. Connects you with a team of experienced professionals who can help you with stress, grief, relationship problems, and you can request face-to-face sessions with licensed therapists. Three face-to-face counseling visits are included in a six-month period.

Call LifeReferrals 24/7 at (800) 985-2405 or visit www.lifereferrals.com and enter the access code: *bsc*.

Cigna

Customer Service
Contact (800) 244-6224
Call the number above for assistance with medical appointments or to request prescription refills for medications lost in the fire.

Behavioral Health Services
Contact (800) 244-6224

Employee Assistance Program 24/7
Contact (866) 912-1687

Free service for any member of the community who does not have health benefits through Cigna. Connects you with a qualified representative who can help you deal with the stress of this tragedy.

Kaiser Permanente

Appointment and Advice Call Center
Contact (833) 574-2273
Call the phone number above to schedule a video, telephone or in-person medical appointment.

SCAL Behavioral Health Hotline (for members)
Contact (800) 900-3277

Membership Service Contact Center
Contact (800) 464-4000 (English)
(800) 788-0616 (Spanish)
(800) 757-7585 (Chinese dialects) TTY:711

Call if you have questions regarding your benefits and prescription refills. You can also go to any Kaiser pharmacy if you need a prescription refilled.

UnitedHealthcare

Membership Services
Contact (800) 367-2660

Call the number above for assistance with medical appointments or to request prescription refills for medications lost in the fire.

Optum, a service company of UnitedHealth Group
Contact (866) 342-6892

Free emotional-support helpline to anyone in the community. Services are available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Emotional-support resources and information are available online at www.liveandworkwell.com.

LONG-TERM RECOVERY RESOURCES

The impact of wildfires can be long-lasting, and the recovery process can be convoluted. Fortunately, there are multiple resources readily available to assist with the physical, financial and emotional recovery process both within LA County and nationally.

FINDING HELP

The Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has compiled a comprehensive list of preparedness and recovery resources to support individuals through all phases of a disaster response. A snapshot of key recovery resources is provided below, and the full Emergency Survival Guide can be viewed on OEM's website.

WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ABOUT…	AGENCY	CONTACT INFORMATION
Clearing and repairs to County maintained roads and bridges?	LA County Department of Public Works	800-675 HELP (4357) www.dpw.lacounty.gov
Road closures and conditions for State Highways?	Caltrans	213-897-0383 www.dot.ca.gov
Fire Department requirements for damaged structures?	LA County Fire Department	323-881-2481 www.fire.lacounty.gov
Building inspections and permits?	LA County Department of Public Works Building & Safety Division	800-675 HELP (4357) www.dpw.lacounty.gov
County-provided emergency social services including CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, and General Relief?	LA County Department of Public Social Services	866-613-3777 dpss.lacounty.gov
Assistance with injured animals and information on animals displaced by a disaster?	LA County Animal Care and Control	562-940-6898 www.animalcare.lacounty.gov

Schools and school districts in the County?	LA County Office of Education	www.lacoe.edu
Organizations that provide response and recovery assistance in the event of a disaster?	211 LA County	2-1-1 www.211lacounty.org
Questions or reports about outages?	Southern California Edison	800-684-8123 www.sce.com
	Southern California Gas Company	800-655-4555 www.socalgas.com
Emergency Financial First Aid Kit?	FEMA	www.ready.gov/financial-preparedness
Disaster loan and grant information?	U.S. Small Business Administration	800-659-2955 www.sba.gov
Questions About Property insurance?	California Department of Insurance	800-927-4357 www.insurance.ca.gov

Additional recovery resources customized to Los Angeles County residents' needs can also be found on the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management's public-facing website at https://lacounty.gov/emergency.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Providing a summary of information contained in this departmental resource guide

For your convenience, listed below are questions frequently asked by departments seeking to support their employees during an emergency event.

1. **An employee just let us know that they may need to evacuate their neighborhood soon. What immediate response information can we support them with?**

   The most pressing needs in an evacuation is the safety and housing of self, family and pets. Residents of Los Angeles County can find information on human and animal shelters, as well as live emergency updates, online at https://lacounty.gov/emergency. County social media pages are another outlet to receive immediate information and real time updates, particularly the LA County Fire Department (https://twitter.com/LACoFDPIO) page.

2. **How should an employee code their timecards if they are impacted by a wildfire?**

   If departments receive inquiries or requests regarding approval of temporary reassignments or requests for time-off related to the wildfires, the following timecard codes should be used:

ACTION	EVENT CODE
Assign staff to alternate worksites	099
Permit telework	099
Approve time-off requests	Benefit Time

   Staff who are supporting the emergency response through direct or administrative activities may be assigned a disaster-specific event code for billing and tracking purposes. This information will be disseminated to departments directly if deemed appropriate.

3. **What options does a department have if the impacted employee does not regularly participate in telework?**

   Departments are encouraged to remain as flexible as possible to support employees impacted by wildfires or other local emergencies. Departments may consider assigning alternate assignments, such as online training, professional development activities, or administrative functions, that facilitate temporarily working from a remote location.

4. **How can we assist employees who are unable to come into the office due to road closures or mandatory evacuation zones?**

   Departments are encouraged to consider temporary telework assignments for employees that are indirectly impacted by wildfires through the closure of freeways or commute routes.

If the employee does not have access to proper equipment or their role is not conducive to telework, departments may also consider assigning them to a temporary alternate worksite that is not impacted by road closures.

5. **Living through a disaster is stressful – are there any crisis counseling services we can offer an impacted employee?**

   There are multiple free and confidential mental health resources available to LA County employees and their families. The **Employee Assistance Program** (EAP) offers free counseling sessions to current employees and the first visit can be conducted on County time. Appointments can be made by calling **(213) 738-4200 Monday through Friday**. The **Life Assistance Program** also offers 24/7 counseling and crisis intervention service for all County employees and their family members. Services can be reached at **(800) 538-3543** every day of the week**.**

   iPrevail offers LA County residents and employees free access to a customized online support program through self-guided lessons, one-on-one chats, and support groups. Sign up for on-demand mental health support and resources at https://lacounty.iprevail.com.

   Additional mental health and wellness resources may also be available to employees through their elected benefits plan and through public-facing programs, such as DMH's 24-hour Mental Health Access Center (**1-800-854-7771**) and the National Disaster Distress Hotline (**1-800-985-5990).**

6. **What additional resources are available to frontline workers and first responders?**

   The **Wellbeing4LA website**, offered through the DMH + UCLA Public Partnership for Wellbeing, provides self-guided learning aimed at the County's first responders and frontline workers. Featured topics include stress management, overcoming burnout, leveraging resilience and more. See all featured topics at http://learn.wellbeing4la.org/get-support.

   Several County departments also offer support services specific to the unique functions and needs of their personnel. For example, the Fire Department offers mental health, peer support and chaplain services to its staff, and the Sheriff's Psychological Services Bureau (PSB) provides counseling and emotional support services to all Sheriff's Department employees, both sworn and civilian. Employees should contact their Human Resources unit to find out what services may be available to them.

7. **Where can impacted employees find financial recovery resources?**

   Recovery information for LA County residents affected by local emergencies, including information about Local Assistance Centers and community partnership programs, is available at https://lacounty.gov/recovery.