



Wildfire Season in the time of a pandemic

The peak month of wildfire season is August, when areas become increasingly dry, hot and more susceptible to a wildfire. The intensity and frequency of wildfires have been increasing. In 2019 the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection responded to over 1,500 fires. In 2020, they've already seen more than 2,700. This with the backdrop of COVID-19 presents a truly challenging season. So, what does wildfire season during a pandemic look like?

Nine of the 10 most destructive fires in the state's recorded history have occurred in the 21st century—six of them in the past four years alone. California, Georgia, Texas, North Carolina, Florida, Arizona and Oklahoma have the highest number of wildfires per state. For these hard-hit areas the pandemic makes evacuation, rescue and recovery dangerous activities in themselves. At disaster response centers, temperature checks, increased cleaning schedules, and personal protective equipment are critical to keeping everyone safe. That's a part of the new normal of disaster season. Once people are rescued there's a looming invisible danger all around that everyone must guard against.

Communal meals, briefings, and housing have all had to be modified for this season. In addition, firefighters from around the country that often make travel to assist in large fires have to face travel restrictions, additional exposure and regulations in each state. Though FEMA and American Red Cross have issued updated guidelines to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 through shelters and aid facilities, there are other potential concerns for residence facing past and current trauma including mental health issues, as well as the rise in substance abuse and domestic violence which studies have shown increase after a natural disasters.

As your partner in employee relief, not only do we respond to property damage with wildfires, we also receive applications from some of our clients' employees that were left without power and had to evacuate their homes due to the extended power outages. At times last year, over 800,000 customers were without power in California - some of them for over two weeks. In addition, some of our client's facilities also lost power, leaving employees without income.

Our team at E4E Relief is here for you and your employees, ready to respond, monitoring the implications of this overlay of complexity for wildfire season in the time of a pandemic. Let your relationship manager know if you have any additional questions about getting relief to your employees who may be impacted.