San Bernardino National Forest

Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)

Post-Fire BAER Assessment

BAER Information: (415) 881-1871

PREPARING FOR RAIN STORMS

Wildfire increases the potential for post-fire flooding, soil erosion and debris flows that could impact campgrounds, recreational areas, homes, structures, roads, and other infrastructure within, adjacent to, and downstream from the burned area. Summer thunderstorms and winter rain events in the San Gabriel Mountains can bring heavy rain storms. Residents and visitors should remain alert to possible flooding when travelling along roads downstream from the burned areas on the **San Bernardino National Forest (SBNF).**

A **Forest Service Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)** team is working with the **SBNF** to assess the condition of the watersheds that were burned in the **Blue Cut Fire**. The **BAER** assessment team identifies potential emergency threats to critical values-at-risk, and recommends emergency stabilization response actions that are implemented on federal lands to reduce potential threats.

One of the most effective **BAER** strategies is the interagency coordination with local cooperators who assist affected businesses, homes, and landowners to prepare for rain events. The **Forest Service** and **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** are working together and coordinating with other federal, state, local agencies and counties that assist private landowners in preparing for increased run-off and potential flooding.

Federal assistance to private landowners is administered by USDA's **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** through the **Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)** program (www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ca/programs/?cid=nrcs144p2_064025). **NRCS** and the **Resource Conservation Districts** work with local governments (sponsors) to implement emergency measures in the wake of natural disasters to safeguard human lives and property. **NRCS** and the local sponsor prepare damage survey reports for eligible sites on private lands adjacent to and downstream from affected areas. **NRCS** uses these reports, along with the **BAER** team's assessment report, to develop emergency measures to reduce the impacts from potential increased water and debris flows, and assist sponsors to implement recommended emergency measures. (www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1045263.pdf).

Multiple agencies work with **BAER** teams and look at the full scope and scale of the situation to reduce the potential threats to human life and safety, and property; however, **BAER** emergency stabilization actions on federal lands cannot prevent all of the potential flooding or soil erosion impacts, especially after wildfires change the landscape.

It is important that residents take steps to protect themselves and their property from flooding and debris flows:

- For their **safety**, communities need to monitor local weather reports and public safety bulletins, local road closures, emergency notifications, weather alerts, follow local county and city advisories, and act accordingly.
- Use a "weather radio" or smart phone "weather app" that monitors "all hazards" alerts issued by the **NOAA-National Weather Service** (www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/).
- **Prepare for rainstorms** by being prepared to evacuate if county or city emergency officials determine that flooding and mudflows are expected which could pose an increased threat to human life, safety, and property.
- Know and be alert to environmental signs of **dangerous weather conditions** and be prepared to take action that can save lives.
- Understand that all drainages within and downstream of the burned areas can produce flooding.
- If you find yourself in a flood, climb to safety (**seek higher ground**).
- Even if the water appears shallow enough to cross, don't try it by vehicle or foot. Water hides dips in the road – worse yet, there may be no road left under the water as flooding can scour away the entire road surface and ground beneath the road.

Interagency Resources for Flood and Storm Preparedness and Emergency Information

Local Counties

The following local California county Office of Emergency Services promotes preparedness through its emergency services program to assist the public to prepare for, respond appropriately to, and quickly recover from natural emergencies that may impact county residents and visitors:

- San Bernardino County: http://www.sbcfire.org/Programs/ReadySetGoFlood.aspx

County communities can register to receive important notices and alerts during emergencies at the following:

- San Bernardino County: http://www.sbcfire.org/oes/AlertWarning.aspx

State Agencies

The **California Office of Emergency Services** provides information emergency preparedness and about flood and storm preparation:

- www.caloes.ca.gov/for-individuals-families
- www.caloes.ca.gov/ICESite/Pages/10-Ways-To-Be-Prepared.aspx
- www.caloes.ca.gov/for-governments-tribal/plan-prepare/pre-disaster-flood-mitigation

The **California Department of Water Resources** provides information to the public regarding flood and safety:

- www.water.ca.gov/nav/nav.cfm?loc=t&id=100
- www.water.ca.gov/floodmgmt/
- www.water.ca.gov/floodmgmt/docs/state-federal_flood_operations_center.pdf

Other Federal Agencies

The **US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) – Los Angeles District** coordinates its **Emergency Management** program with the **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** and local governments to provide engineering services to respond to national and natural disasters in order to minimize damages and help in recovery efforts. Public Law 84-99 enables the **Corps** to assist state and local authorities in flood fight activities and cost share in the repair of flood protection structures. Public Law 93-288 authorizes **FEMA** to task the **Corps** with disaster recovery missions under the Federal Response Plan (www.usace.army.mil/Missions/EmergencyOperations/NationalResponseFramework/FloodControl.aspx).

The **Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012**, signed into law on July 6, 2012 by President Obama, reauthorizing the **National Flood Insurance Program** (**NFIP**) through September 30, 2017, and increasing access for some residents whose homes could be impacted by flooding from federal land that resulted from wildfires. This law may allow residents in these impacted communities to be eligible for an exception from the 30-day waiting period usually required for flood insurance coverage. Additional information about **NFIP** is available through **FEMA** at www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program, or **Flood Smart** at www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/about/nfip_overview.jsp. Other **flood preparedness** information is available at www.ready.gov/floods, and www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/flooding_flood_risks/ffr_overview.jsp.

The **USDI Geological Survey (USGS)** provides "water watch" internet tools and flood information for the **State of California**:

- http://ca.water.usgs.gov/data/waterconditionsmap.html
- http://waterwatch.usgs.gov/new/?m=real&r=ca
- http://waterwatch.usgs.gov/new/index.php?r=ca&id=flood

SPECIAL NOTE: *Everyone near and downstream from the **Blue Cut Fire** burned area should remain alert and stay updated on weather conditions that may result in heavy rains over the burn scar. Flash flooding may occur quickly during heavy rain events. Current weather and emergency notifications can be found at the **National Weather Service, San Diego (SW California)** (http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/sgx/) website.*

Blue Cut Post-Fire BAER Assessment information is available at http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4988/.