

BAER Team – Inyo Creek Wildfire.

Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) is an emergency program aimed at managing unacceptable risks to human life and safety, property, or critical natural and cultural resources from post-wildfire damaging events (significant rain events). The BAER Team is sent to fires to assess and prevent damage from rain events on burned areas, not repair damage from either the flames or the floods after they occur.

The BAER team's role will be to assess watersheds on all lands, then inventory values at risk and determine the need for emergency measures and treatments on National Forest lands. The team will assess the watersheds for post-fire rain related impacts such as increased flooding, debris flow potential, and increased soil erosion.

The US Forest Service has requested a BAER team to assess impacts to the Inyo Creek Fire. The team will spend several days conducting burn severity mapping, erosion severity ratings, and inventory values at risk, as well as find ways to mitigate these downstream risks. Fires result in loss of vegetation, exposure of soil to erosion, and increased water runoff that may lead to flooding, increased sediment, debris flows, and damage to critical natural and cultural resources. BAER actions such as: mulching, seeding, installation of erosion and water run-off control structures, temporary barriers to protect recovering areas, and installation of warning signs may be implemented.

Critical Values to be considered during Burned-Area Emergency Response

- Human life and safety on or in close proximity to burned National Forest System Lands (NFS).
- Buildings, water systems, utility systems, road and trail prisms, dams, wells or other significant investments on or in close proximity to the burned NFS lands.
- Water used for municipal, domestic, hydropower, or agricultural supply or waters with special state or federal designations on or in close proximity to the burned NFS lands.
- Soil productivity and hydrologic function on burned NFS lands.
- Critical habitat or suitable occupied habitat for federally listed threatened or endangered terrestrial, aquatic animal or plant species on or in close proximity to the burned NFS lands.
- Native or naturalized communities on NFS lands where invasive species or noxious weeds are absent or present in only minor amounts.
- Cultural resources on NFS lands which are listed on or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- In short, the purpose of the BAER program is to prevent damage, not repair damage after it occurs.