



U.S. Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region
Los Padres National Forest
6750 Navigator Way
Goleta, California 93117

News Release

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Los Padres National Forest Burned Area Emergency Response

GOLETA, Calif. – Floods and debris flows are common occurrences after large wildfires in and around the Los Padres National Forest. Federal and state agencies are assessing damage and hazards from the Thomas Fire, which will be passed along to Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties for formulation of emergency response plans for their respective communities.

The assessment of federal lands is conducted by a multi-disciplinary group of natural resource specialists called the Burned Areas Emergency Response team (BAER). BAER teams often are composed of hydrologists, soil scientists, biologists, botanists and road engineers from such agencies as the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Weather Service. Non-federal lands are assessed by Watershed Emergency Response Teams (WERT), which often are composed of personnel from CAL FIRE and the California Geological Survey.

The assessments for the Thomas Fire are being organized into four geographical areas:

- **Ojai** – Burn severity and debris flow assessments are completed and have been shared with local government leaders who will assess and respond to risks to the local community. BAER-recommended treatments to improve the stability or reduce erosion from forest roads and trails have been initiated.
- **Santa Paula** – The Forest Service BAER team will provide burn severity mapping to local, state and other federal agencies for use in hazard and risk-mitigation planning.
- **Santa Barbara** – The majority of National Forest System lands is north of the urban interface and is very steep. The Forest Service will partner with local Office of Emergency Services and the state to complete this assessment. The primary work will occur in the Wildland Urban Interface to provide for the life, safety and flood preparedness of the community and mitigation to any fire-related resource damage.

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- **Wilderness and Backcountry** – This area will be assessed as conditions allow, focusing on roads, trails and other affected resources. Recommend treatments will be implemented before any seasonal precipitation can cause damage.

Not every wildfire affects the landscape in the same way, so areas that may not have been flood- or slide-prone previously may now be at risk. County-based emergency service agencies are reviewing assessment reports from the BAER and WERT teams and working on emergency preparation plans for affected communities. After a wildfire, flood risk is usually highest until vegetation returns, which can take up to five years. Flood preparation information is available at:

VENTURA COUNTY

www.readyventuracounty.org/

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

<http://awareandprepare.org/>

www.sbsheriff.org/

www.montecitofire.com/

www.carpfire.com/

www.countyofsb.org/pwd/water.sbc

GENERAL FLOOD PREPAREDNESS

www.ready.gov

www.water.ca.gov

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

www.fema.gov/nfip

www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/93830

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