



GOVERNORS OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY  
AND FIRE PROTECTION

---

## Cal OES / CAL FIRE Mutual Aid Letter 2026

Dear Fire Chief:

The purpose of this letter is to continue partnership between Cal OES and CAL FIRE, clarifying the State of California's Fire and Rescue mutual aid practices and procedures related to the use of state resources. These guidelines are in accordance with the [California Disaster and Civil Defense Master Mutual Aid Agreement](#).

"Mutual Aid" is utilized when an emergency incident is likely to exceed, or has exceeded, the ability of a responsible entity to control it. The basic assumptions are that a local government entity has taken all actions within its capacity to mitigate a potential or ongoing emergency and has reasonably exhausted local resources before requesting outside assistance through the [California Fire Service and Rescue Emergency Mutual Aid System](#).

Fire service entities have a responsibility to prepare for and respond to emergency incidents by providing trained personnel and appropriate equipment, communications and operating plans. As necessary, they may also enter into agreements for acquiring additional services and resources. Fire service chief officers must be knowledgeable of these responsibilities and agreements, as well as the elements of mutual aid.

In that [Cal OES](#) and [CAL FIRE](#) represent the State of California, we have developed the incorporated guidelines below and encourage you to become familiar with them. Additional documents regarding mutual aid and associated agreements are available from either your [Fire and Rescue Operational Area Coordinator](#) or the [Cal OES Fire and Rescue Division](#).

The [California Fire Service and Rescue Emergency Mutual Aid Plan](#) provides for assistance without reimbursement prior to declaration of a local emergency, as defined in the [California Emergency Services Act](#). A local government entity may request this assistance once it determines its ability to control an incident is unlikely. State resources, regardless of type or kind, may be used to provide this assistance.

State resources may also be made available from the time of initial attack to the time a local government entity determines it is unlikely to be able to control an incident through a variety of mechanisms such as Automatic Aid agreements, Mutual Threat Zones, Annual Operating Plans, etc.



GOVERNORS OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

Absent such agreements, the following guidelines apply regarding the use of state resources for mutual aid:

- Requests for resources for response to an emergency that is beyond the ability of a local government entity to control, will normally be filled by the closest available resources and initiated through proper mutual aid channels.
- Local government agencies receiving mutual aid are responsible for providing logistical support to mutual aid personnel and equipment.
- Mutual aid shall not be used as a mechanism to shift the costs of mitigating an emergency to another entity.
  - The requesting entity should make maximum use of its own equipment, facilities and services during the period of the emergency.
  - The period of emergency constitutes the time during which mutual aid resources are necessary to prevent imminent threat to life and property.
  - Once the emergency condition is mitigated, mutual aid resources should be released or moved to Assistance-By-Hire (ABH).

Federal fire suppression resources, their contractors and sub-contractors are not part of the Mutual Aid System. Assistance provided by these resources will be Assistance-By-Hire, unless obtained through pre-existing agreements.

These guidelines do not preclude the responsibility for fire agencies to develop cost-sharing agreements when emergency incidents involve more than a single jurisdiction. Although inclusion in unified incident command does not obligate all parties to participate in a cost share agreement, unified Incident Commanders of a multi-jurisdictional incident are responsible for ensuring the responsibility for incident-related costs are appropriately determined.

We are committed to a cooperative effort to mitigate the effects of emergency incidents and disasters in California by supporting the spirit of the California Fire Service and Rescue Emergency Mutual Aid System.

Signed by:  
*Caroline Thomas Jacobs*  
A1AED402B83B493...

CAROLINE THOMAS JACOBS  
DIRECTOR

Governor's Office of Emergency Services  
(Cal OES)

DocuSigned by:  
*Joe Tyler*  
CBDA1BA279214A1...

JOE TYLER  
DIRECTOR / FIRE CHIEF

Department of Forestry and Fire  
Protection (CAL FIRE)