



Disaster Preparedness and Response

October 2007 Southern California Wildfires

In October 2007, federal, local, and state disaster declarations were issued due to widespread and destructive wildfires in Southern California. The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated in collaboration with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) to support the local emergency management and incident command. CalRecycle (then known as the California Integrated Waste Management Board or CIWMB) convened a multi-agency coordination group (Debris MAC) on behalf of CalEPA and OES, to assist federal, state, and local agency coordination in the debris removal aspects of recovery from this disaster. CalRecycle also convened a Facility Operator/Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) subgroup to coordinate and facilitate any issues affecting a safe and reliable local solid waste infrastructure for the response and recovery efforts.

Major impacted local jurisdictions (San Diego City and County, San Bernardino County) implemented coordinated debris management programs for the 2007 Southern California wildfires to ensure cleanup of all properties on a timely basis, while maximizing potential matching funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Contractors were hired locally to complete debris removal from private properties. Site access and cost recovery from insurance (if available) was addressed through a voluntary Right-Of-Entry (ROE) Permit process. Property owners were compelled through an abatement process to conduct debris removal on their own or opt into the coordinated program, if necessary, to ensure cleanup of all properties. A separate initial phase of hazard and household hazardous waste assessment and removal from all properties was conducted by the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), U.S. EPA, and county hazardous materials programs. The DTSC and Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) also conducted an ash sampling and characterization study to confirm FEMA eligibility with respect to imminent threat to public health posed by the ash.

- [Witch Fire Incident Information from CALFIRE](#)
- *Assessment of Burn Debris: 2007 Wildfires San Bernardino and San Diego Counties, California, December 27, 2007 and Addendum to the 2007 Assessment of Burn Debris, March 5, 2008.* Prepared for DTSC by Geosyntec Consultants.

Coordinated debris removal programs for the 2007 Southern California wildfires were based in part on the successful program implemented for the 2007 Angora wildfire near Lake Tahoe. Structural debris was removed using CalRecycle-managed contractors from all 256 properties destroyed by the Angora wildfire. The removal was completed on an expedited basis within 40 days of fire containment, and erosion control measures in place before the annual wet season.