

California is in a climate crisis.

Newsom: "Look, the hots are getting hotter. The dries are getting drier."

Brown: "We are standing on dry grass where there should be standing in five feet of snow."

Newsom: "I'm currently 40 feet under water or should be."

Warmer weather and devastating drought are fueling more frequent fires.

The season is now longer and more intense than ever before.

Right now the state's wildfire are outpacing last year's record breaking season and one is currently approaching the burn scar of the Camp Fire where survivors are working to rebuild.

Speri Machuga: "Because it's taken that first instance of joy that you would see in a sunrise or sunset and turned it into a little bit of a trigger. Based on what I saw that morning of the glow with the ash."

Five of the ten largest wildfires in state history happened in 2020 when over 4 million acres burned an area as large as Los Angeles, Orange, and Ventura counties combined.

A rarity just a few decades ago, deadly and destructive wildfires have become California's new normal.

Newsom: "If you are in denial about climate change, come to California."

In 2007, the state first called on CalRecycle to help manage an El Dorado County wildfire cleanup before contaminated runoff could reach Lake Tahoe.

Since then, wildfire cleanups have gotten bigger and much more frequent.

CalRecycle is cleaning up wildfires and taking on the climate crisis.

Coordinating with local, state and federal partners, the department has led the cleanup of over 21,000 properties across 28 counties. This includes the 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise, still the deadliest most destructive wildfire in California history. Also, the record-breaking 2020 wildfire season which spanned 25 counties across the state.

Alan Zamboanga: "When I first started doing these debris cleanups 10 years ago, it would be isolated to individual neighborhoods and this last fire over in Paradise it was neighborhood after neighborhood after neighborhood and then it started going to a whole town and then it started encompassing the whole region."

Anthony Toto: "It's not just one home. And going over multiple properties over and over and over and seeing just the tragedy. The amount of devastation and the things that have completely gone.

Once largely staffed by CalRecycle employees from other programs volunteering to temporarily work on fire projects, the wildfire cleanup program has evolved to become a major function of the department.

In 2019 CalRecycle's Emergency Debris Recovery Office was established to oversee wildfire cleanups year-round.

Zamboanga: "It's hard to imagine what we need to do in the future to prevent forest fires, and I just hope that one day we can put this behind us."

With most of the state in extreme drought and an abundance of dry vegetation that's already catching fire again this year, California is working to address the root cause of climate change and help prevent future climate disasters.

Rachel Machi Wagoner: "With our partners across state government, CalRecycle has been called to the front lines of California's climate crisis. While CalFire and Cal OES work hard to prevent future wildfires, CalRecycle is committed to continuing to help our communities recover and rebuild. At the same time we are doing our part in the fight to take on one of the top climate pollutants by reducing food, yard, and other organic waste statewide."

Moving California toward a future with less climate pollution, more green jobs, and fewer fires.