

# CAL FIRE

## Weather Emergencies

Although CAL FIRE is best known for battling wildfires, the department plays a much broader role in emergency response, especially when it comes to weather related events. Each year, CAL FIRE responds to more than 600,000 emergencies across California's incredibly varied terrain, from coastal communities and mountain towns to deserts and dense urban areas. These calls include not just fires, but also floods, landslides, storms, and other incidents driven by severe weather. As climate change intensifies these events, CAL FIRE's role in protecting lives and property during extreme weather has become more critical than ever.



When California faced devastating floods in 1997 and 1998, CAL FIRE teams were dispatched without hesitation. More than 2,500 personnel swung into action; sandbagging homes and businesses, clearing debris, and rescuing those in danger. Over 150 hand crews led much of that work; backed by three Incident Management Teams, four

mobile kitchens, and four mobile communication centers. Their efforts didn't go unnoticed. Landowners and public officials thanked CAL FIRE for saving lives and protecting property; and nightly news reports showed crews wading through floodwaters to reach stranded residents. But the headlines told only part of the story; behind the scenes, hundreds of acts of bravery unfolded, often at great personal risk.

Fast-forward to 2023, and CAL FIRE was once again on the front lines when a succession of atmospheric rivers brought heavy rain, flooding, and historic snowfall to Northern and Southern California between January and March. Engine companies and hand crews dug out communities buried under snow, while highly skilled CAL FIRE swift-water rescue teams pulled drivers and residents from rising floodwaters. Those back-to-back emergencies reminded everyone why CAL FIRE isn't just California's wildfire agency; it's the state's fire department.

