



WHAT IS A PROTECTING AGENCY?

California has over 101 million acres of land. Wildland fire protection of these lands is a shared responsibility among federal, state, and local agencies. To ensure the most efficient and effective response to wildfires, these agencies work together through formal interagency agreements that define who is responsible for protecting specific areas. The agency assigned to provide fire protection in a given area is known as the protecting agency.

Understanding Responsibility Areas

California's wildland fire protection system is divided into three main types of Responsibility Areas:

- **State Responsibility Area (SRA):** These are lands where the State of California, through CAL FIRE, is financially and operationally responsible for wildland fire protection. SRAs typically include privately owned forestlands, watersheds, and rangelands that are not within local jurisdictional boundaries or federal lands.
- **Federal Responsibility Area (FRA):** These lands are managed and protected by federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, or National Park Service. These areas often include national forests, parks, and other federally owned lands.
- **Local Responsibility Area (LRA):** These are lands under the jurisdiction of local governments, such as cities, counties, or fire protection districts. LRAs often include urban areas, agricultural lands, and other developed properties.

Direct Protection Areas and Interagency Agreements

To avoid duplication of resources and ensure rapid response, agencies enter into agreements that define Direct Protection Areas (DPAs). DPA is the specific area where a Protecting Agency agrees to provide initial attack fire protection. For example, CAL FIRE may agree to provide fire protection on federal or local lands if it is the closest or most capable agency. Likewise, a federal or local agency may agree to protect state lands under certain agreements. These arrangements are formalized through cooperative fire protection agreements, which are regularly reviewed and updated.

CAL FIRE and Contract Counties

In some counties, CAL FIRE does not directly provide day-to-day fire protection services. Instead, it contracts with the county to provide fire protection in the SRA on behalf of the state. These are known as Contract Counties. CAL FIRE contracts with six counties which have assumed this responsibility and provide

direct protection to approximately 3.4 million acres of SRA:

- Kern
- Los Angeles
- Marin
- Orange
- Santa Barbara
- Ventura

Both Public Resources Code and Government Code permit the Director of CAL FIRE to contract with counties for the protection of SRA. Public Resources Code Section 4132 states that for those counties assuming responsibility for the protection of SRA, the State shall allocate funding at least equal to the direct cost of fire protection, which shall include the salaries and wages of suppression crews, lookouts, and maintenance of firefighting facilities. Contract Counties are funded to provide the same level of direct protection as a comparable CAL FIRE Unit as CAL FIRE has no footprint in these counties.

Additional Important Terms

- **Jurisdictional Agency:** Agency having land and resource management responsibility for a specific geographical or functional area as provided by federal, state, or local law. Under no circumstances may a Jurisdictional Agency abdicate legal responsibilities as provided by federal or state law.
- **Protecting Agency:** Agency responsible for providing direct incident management within a specific geographical area pursuant to its jurisdictional responsibility or as specified and provided by contract, cooperative agreement, or other agreement or arrangement
- **Supporting Agency:** Agency providing suppression or other support and resources to a Jurisdictional or Protecting Agency.
- **Direct Protection** consists of Fire Prevention, Pre-Fire Management, Dispatch, and Ground Attack fire suppression resources.



DEFINITIONS OF CALIFORNIA LANDS



- LRA: LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY - 21 MILLION ACRES
- SRA: STATE RESPONSIBILITY - 31 MILLION ACRES
- FRA: FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY - 49 MILLION ACRES
- 101 MILLION ACRES IN CALIFORNIA
- 3.4 MILLION ACRES - SRA PROTECTED BY CONTRACT COUNTIES UNDER AGREEMENT WITH CAL FIRE