

**ANGELES NF - STATION FIRE  
Burned Area Emergency Response · BAER  
Implementation**

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**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

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In an effort to provide some quick answers to residents and businesses affected by the recent California wildfires, we have prepared the following list of frequently asked questions and grouped them by subject. These questions and answers are designed to be instructive and helpful. While this list is far from exhaustive, some of the most basic questions you may have are included below:

**STATION FIRE INFORMATION**

Q: How and when did the Station Fire start?

On Thursday afternoon, August 26, 2009, the Station Fire started on the Angeles National Forest, approximately 4 miles north of the town of La Cañada Flintridge, along the Angeles Crest Highway (State Route 2) in Southern California. The wildfire was determined to be human caused – to be the act of arson, and has the distinction of being the largest fire in Los Angeles County to-date.

Q: How many wildfires occur on each year on the Angeles National Forest?

This year there have been 162 wildfires on the Angeles National Forest, only 2 of which escaped initial attack (the Morris and Station fires). While these two fires were burning, the Forest had 21 new fire starts -- all of which were caught (fully contained) at initial attack. As with all fires on the Angeles National Forest, the objective for firefighters was to put the fire out as safely and as quickly as possible.

Q: What is the current containment of the Station Fire?

The fire was declared 100% contained on Friday evening, October 16, 2009. Angeles National Forest fire managers do not expect the fire to be fully controlled until after the first winter storm season due to islands of unburned heavy vegetation within the perimeter of the fire.

Q: What is the size of the burned acres for the Station Fire?

The fire burned approximately 161,000 acres. Approximately 154,000 acres of Forest Service System and 6,700 acres of private lands were burned by the fire.

Q: What was the total cost of the Station Fire?

As of October 17, 2009, the cost to fully contain the fire is approximately \$95,300,000.

**FIRE DAMAGE**

Q: How many Forest Service structures were destroyed or damaged by the Station Fire?

Forest Service property that were entirely destroyed or damaged by the Station Fire are: 11 garages; 13 restroom facilities; 5 waste facilities; 1 lookout; 7 barracks; 2

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communication sites; 2 pump houses; 10 water tanks; 6 bridges; 7 residences; 2 retaining walls; and 12 misc. buildings.

Q: Where is the destroyed and damaged Forest Service property located within the burned area of the Station Fire?

All of the Forest Service structures in the Mill Creek area were entirely destroyed. Partially destroyed Forest Service structures were the Big Tujunga Fire Station and structures located in the Clear Creek, Red Box, Shortcut, Monte Cristo, North Fork, Chilao areas.

Q: How many (non-forest service) structures were destroyed or damaged by the Station Fire?

The Station Fire destroyed approximately 89 residences and damaged 13 residences. Approximately 26 commercial buildings were destroyed and 22 commercial buildings were damaged by the fire. Outbuildings that were destroyed by the Station Fire total 94 structures and 22 structures were damaged by the fire.

Q: Were Forest Service campgrounds damaged by the Station Fire?

The Station Fire did damage many Forest Service campgrounds within the burned area of the fire.

Q: Which Forest Service campgrounds were damaged by the Station Fire?

Forest Service campgrounds damaged by the Station Fire are: Monte Cristo, Mt. Pacifico, Messenger Flats, Chilao, Valley Forge, West Fork, Devore, Millard and Gould Mesa. Forest Service picnic areas damaged by the fire are: Wildwood, Vogel Flat, Stoneyvale, Pines and Switzer.

## **FIRE IMPACTS**

Q: How did the Station Fire impact the road system within the burned area?

After the wildfire swept through the burned area, roads were left without guard rails, and regulatory and safety road signage making them unsafe for regular traffic. The damage to the surrounding land and hillsides also made the roads vulnerable to debris flow hazards during rain storm conditions. Because of this public safety danger, roads within the burned area are only open to residents, agency personnel, and construction crews. When storm forecasts for the burned area are issued, access to the Angeles Crest Highway (State Route 2), Big Tujunga Canyon Road, and Upper Big Tujunga Canyon Road may be closed to all traffic except emergency vehicles and Los Angeles County personnel.

Q: How did the Station Fire impact public recreation opportunities?

The fire burned acres within both the San Gabriel and Pleasant View Ridge Wildernesses.

Q: Will the burned area be open to hunters this hunting season?

Hunting in the State of California is regulated by the California Department of Fish and Game. The Angeles National Forest Supervisor issued a closure order for the Station

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Fire area to allow recovery of the impacted watersheds. As long as the Forest Closure is in effect, these public lands are not available for public recreational access, including hunting. For more information, please access the State of California Department of Fish and Game website at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/hunting/deer/fire.html>.

Q: What area of the Angeles National Forest is open to hunters this hunting season?  
Please visit the State of California Department of Fish and Game website to access hunting regulations. As mentioned above, hunters wishing to access the Angeles National Forest should visit the Angeles National Forest website to determine which portions of the Forest are closed to public recreational access.

Q: What are the effects on wildlife from the Station Fire?  
How do wildfires affect wildlife? Some animals on the edge of wildfires escape the flames by fleeing into unburned areas. Those farther from the fire perimeter probably did not have time to get out of the area successfully. When an intense fire is burning, it is a very confusing and scary place, resulting in panic-stricken animals. If you imagine yourself in a thick fog trying to find your way out, you can see how confusing it would be for animals trying to escape flames and dense smoke. After the Station Fire, Forest Service personnel have found many animals that perished or were severely injured, including bear, deer, bobcats, woodrats, coyotes, and birds. Some were not touched by flames but died from super-heated gases and lack of oxygen. Others lost their lives due to flames themselves.

Q: When will the fire damaged campgrounds be open to the public?  
Most campgrounds can be opened to the public when the Forest Closure is ended, even though some features are fire-damaged. Damaged tables, restrooms, etc. will be repaired or replaced within approximately six to nine months following availability of funds.

Q: How severe did the fire burn the soils and watershed?  
Of the approximately 161,000 acres that were burned by the Station Fire, 18,100 acres were unburned/very low severity; 25,400 acres were low severity; 100,600 acres were moderate severity; and 16,900 acres were high severity burned.

## **FOREST CLOSURE WITHIN BURNED AREA**

Q: Is the public allowed in the burned area of the Station Fire?  
The burned area of the Angeles National Forest is closed to through traffic and the general public, except for residents that live within the burned area, utility companies, and state and local agencies.

Q: How long will the Angeles National Forest be closed to the public?  
The burned area will remain closed through the winter storm season to keep the public out of harm's way from flood/mud/debris flows, falling rocks and raveling hillslopes. We need the public's support to keep out of the burned area for safety, and for watershed protection and recovery.

## **STORM PREPAREDNESS**

### Q: How did the Angeles National Forest prepare for the October 13-14 rain event?

Due to local weather forecasts calling for rain, the Forest Service activated the Angeles NF's newly developed Forest Storm Response Plan and issued **pre-cautionary** health and safety measures by: 1) issuing a 48-hour notice to Forest Service Recreation Cabin residents that the Forest is temporarily suspending their Special Use Permits until it is safe for them to return; 2) ordering Angeles NF employees living in government housing within the Station Fire burned area to temporarily relocate; and 3) temporarily closing and relocating some Forest Service fire stations and equipment from the upper elevations within the burn area.

### Q: What kind of treatments will be effective to maintain storm control?

The BAER assessment team recommended treatments known to be effective such as: coordinating with cooperating agencies to clean and maintain existing storm control structures; installing k-rails and sandbags to deflect flows around structures at-risk; stabilizing areas with hazardous materials to prevent off-site movement and water contamination; installing gates and barriers reinforce area closures to reduce threats to human life, and prevent disturbance of burned lands to allow for quicker vegetative recovery; and conducting detection surveys to identify noxious weeds and invasive animal species that may encroach into the burned areas.

### Q: What are the potential threats from winter storms and rain?

The Forest Service and LA County are looking at the full scope and scale of the situation. The increased potential for floods and debris flows are not just a one-year concern; affected communities could be impacted 3-5 years until the burned area fully recovers.

### Q: What can the public do to prepare for the winter storms and rain?

While multi-agency efforts are being taken to reduce the risks to life and property downstream from the fire, residents in the area should develop individual plans to protect themselves and their property.

The public needs to be alert to the possibility of flooding if it rains upstream from their residences or businesses, monitor weather conditions, and listen to local radio or television stations for public safety bulletins.

The public can learn about debris flow potential and the steps they can take to ensure the safety of life and property, by contacting the CARE group at 800-214-4020. CARE represents Coordinated Agency Recovery Efforts and was established by the Angeles National Forest, Los Angeles County, and other federal, state, and local agencies. CARE will keep officials and the public fully informed of fire recovery and storm preparation efforts, assist with coordinating efforts to minimize potential impacts, and educate the public about flood and debris flow protection and safeguards.

## **STORM IMPACTS**

### Q: How did the burned areas within the Angeles National Forest weather the October 13-14 rain event?

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The early season rain event that occurred on October 13 and 14, 2009, was a beneficial rain in that its intensity and duration were below the trigger points necessary to touch off a landslide or mudflow. We expect this rain event to result in a “green up” from stored seed and resilient fire adapted vegetation that experienced low and moderately intense fire during the Station fire. The early season rain probably did result in higher than normal sediment loading in stream channels within the burn area.

Q: How did the USGS Debris Flow predictions from their Station Fire report compare to the October 13-14 rain event?

The October 13-14 storm delivered 2.4 inches of rain over a 16-hour period to Dunsmore Canyon which is above Glendale, and 5.38 inches of rain over 24-hours at Camp Hi-Hill. The rainfall intensities associated with the storm were not sufficient to trigger debris flows from basins burned by the Station Fire. Storm rainfall intensities were below the threshold values used by the National Weather Service to issue Weather Watches and Warnings from recently burned areas, as well as those used in the USGS debris flow hazard assessment.

Q: How did Los Angeles County DPW decide when to notify the public that county roads were to be closed during the October 13-14 rain event?

Recent road closures by Los Angeles (LA) County followed a decision by the Angeles National Forest to temporarily suspend Special Use permits for Forest Service recreation cabin residents, relocate Forest employees living in government housing, and close and relocate some higher elevation Forest fire stations and equipment within the burned area of the Station Fire due to public safety concerns. As a result, the Angeles Crest Highway (State Route 2), Big Tujunga Canyon Road, and Upper Big Tujunga Canyon Road were closed to all traffic except emergency vehicles and LA County personnel.

Q: What are the potential impacts from the past wildfires to the foothill communities in the San Gabriel and San Fernando areas?

The Forest Service and local cooperating agencies are looking at the bigger picture - the fires from 2006 to present and the potential cumulative impacts during rain events. The foothill communities below the fire areas should expect significantly increased flooding potential during less than average rain events.

## **FOREST SERVICE INTERAGENCY COORDINATION & COOPERATION**

Q: How is the Forest Service keeping public officials and residents informed of their fire recovery efforts?

The Angeles National Forest and Los Angeles County established the Station Fire Coordinated Agency Recovery Effort (CARE) group. The CARE group is coordinating public and media information regarding potential flood, mud and debris flow preparedness for communities that are located downstream from the Station Fire burned areas.

The CARE group is working together to keep interagency and government officials, and residents fully apprised of recovery efforts; assist with coordinating efforts to minimize

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potential impacts; and expand educational outreach about flood and debris flow protection and safeguards.

The public and media contact for information regarding the Forest Service BAER Implementation program, LA County DPW, and NRCS preparedness should be directed to the Station Fire CARE group at [la.care09@gmail.com](mailto:la.care09@gmail.com), by calling (800) 214-4020, or accessing their website at [www.dpwcare.org](http://www.dpwcare.org).

The Department of Agriculture, through the Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is working cooperatively with Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (LA County DPW) and cities adjoining the Station Fire burned area to evaluate potential threats to specific businesses, homes, and neighborhoods. Technical and financial assistance for installing flood prevention measures is provided to private landowners through NRCS and the federal Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program ([www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/)).

The Forest is actively working with LA County and other local agencies to coordinate their individual jurisdictional emergency preparations and responses during the upcoming storm season. It is recognized that the threat of flood, mud and debris flows may exist for the next 3-5 storm seasons, depending on the intensity of the winter storms.

**Q: How does the burned area impact water quality for Southern California residents?**

The Forest shared the BAER assessment team's findings with Los Angeles (LA) County and local water companies and agencies regarding the predicted watersheds response and potential effects to water supply facilities.

The highest concern in relation to post-fire water quality in LA County is mobilization of ash and fine sediment and its effect on municipal water supply and groundwater infiltration.

LA County Flood Control is confident that their flood control infrastructure will hold as long as they manage reservoir levels and debris basin cleaning during and after storms.

The Forest is implementing BAER treatments to stabilize and contain hazardous materials discovered within the burn perimeter resulting from facilities burned during the fire. These treatments seek to protect water quality and downstream water resources.

## **BAER EMERGENCY STABILIZATION TREATMENT EFFORTS**

**Q: What did the federal team of scientists assess in the Station Fire burned area?**

The BAER assessment team evaluated soil burn severity, slope steepness, and treatment opportunities to reduce erosion, sedimentation and flooding. The team found that large scale mulch or seeding treatments would not be effective for most of the burned area due to steepness, unstable soils and burn severity.

**Q: What are the emergency treatments recommended by the BAER specialists?**

The following BAER treatments will be implemented within the Station Fire burned area by the Angeles NF: ordering and installing gates and signs for the Forest closure; stabilizing hazardous material sites; salvaging threatened and endangered species; and

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developing contract specifications for other emergency stabilization projects such as Forest Service structure protection, Forest closure patrol and enforcement, and stabilization of cultural resource sites.

Q: How can the public increase their understanding of the BAER findings and potential impacts to communities this winter storm season?

The public and media is encourage to watch an approximately 7-minute video (Google Earth Movie) that describes the effects of the Station Fire and how the BAER assessment determined the potential impacts to life, property and natural resources.

## **LONG-TERM RECOVERY EFFORTS**

Q: What does the Forest Service plan to do for the recovery of the burned area of the Station Fire?

The Forest Service utilizes non-emergency actions that are done within 3-years or more after fire containment to improve fire-damaged lands that are unlikely to recover naturally and to repair federal structures damaged by the fire that are not critical to life and safety. These actions may include restoring burned wildlife habitat, replacing burned fences, interpreting cultural sites, treating pre-existing noxious weed infestations, and installing interpretive signs.