

**Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)**

BAER Information: (209) 591-8810

PREPARING FOR RAIN STORMS

SONORA, CA (September 20, 2013) – The **Rim Fire** started on August 17 and burned in steep, rugged canyons on the **Stanislaus National Forest** and the **Yosemite National Park**. The wildfire increased the potential for increased flooding, mud and debris flows that could impact ranches, structures, roads, and other infrastructure within, adjacent to, and downstream from the burned area. Winter in the Sierra Nevada region can bring heavy rain storms and residents and visitors should remain alert to possible flooding when travelling along roads downstream from the burned area of the **Rim Fire**.

A **Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)** team is working with the **Stanislaus National Forest** (www.fs.usda.gov/stanislaus) to assess the condition of the watersheds that were burned in the **Rim Fire**. The **BAER** assessment team identifies potential emergency threats to critical values-at-risk, and recommends emergency stabilization response actions that are implemented on federal lands to reduce potential threats.

One of the most effective **BAER** strategies is interagency coordination with local cooperators who assist affected businesses, homes, and landowners prepare for rain events. The **Forest Service** and the **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** work together and coordinate with other federal and local agencies, and counties that assist private landowners in preparing for increased run-off and potential flooding.

Federal assistance to private landowners is administered by the USDA's **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** through the **Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)** program (www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/). **NRCS** works with local governments (sponsors) to implement emergency measures in the wake of natural disasters to safeguard lives and property. **NRCS** and the local sponsor prepare damage survey reports for eligible sites on private lands adjacent to and downstream from affected areas. **NRCS** uses these reports, along with the **BAER** team's assessment report, to develop emergency measures to reduce the impacts from potential increased water and mud flows, and assist sponsors to implement recommended emergency measures. (www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet?FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1045263.pdf).

Multiple agencies work with **BAER** teams and look at the full scope and scale of the situation to reduce the potential threats to human life and safety, and property; however, **BAER** emergency stabilization actions on federal lands cannot prevent all of the potential flooding or soil erosion impacts, especially after wildfires change the landscape.

It is important that residents take steps to protect themselves and their property from flooding and mudflows:

- For their **safety**, communities need to monitor local weather reports and public safety bulletins, local road closures, emergency notifications, weather alerts, follow local county and city advisories, and act accordingly.
- Use a "weather radio" or smart phone "weather app" that monitors "all hazards" alerts issued by the **NOAA-National Weather Service** (<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/>).
- **Prepare for rainstorms** by being prepared to evacuate if county or city emergency officials determine that flooding and mudflows are expected which could pose an increased threat to life and property.
- Know and be alert to environmental signs of **dangerous weather conditions** and be prepared to take action that can save lives.
- Understand that all canyons within the Rim fire area can produce flash flooding.
- At first sign of a storm, even if it's not right over you, the storm may be up-stream from your location, or if you find yourself in a flood, climb to safety (**seek higher ground**).

Resources to assist with Preparing for Flooding-Mudflows and Interagency Cooperator Information:

Local Counties

Tuolumne County Office of Emergency Services (www.co.tuolumne.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=308) promotes preparedness through its emergency services program to assist the county prepare for, respond appropriately to, and quickly recover from natural emergencies that may impact county residents.

Tuolumne County communities can register to receive important notices and alerts during emergencies at www.co.tuolumne.ca.us/alertcenter.aspx and information regarding evacuation guidelines at www.co.tuolumne.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/751.

Mariposa County Office of Emergency Services (www.mariposacounty.org/index.aspx?nid=215) promotes preparedness through its emergency services program to assist the county prepare for, respond appropriately to, and quickly recover from natural emergencies that may impact the county residents.

Information regarding emergency preparedness is available at <http://ca-mariposacounty.civicplus.com/index.aspx?NID=239> and <http://ca-mariposacounty.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/Home/View/7121>.

Mariposa County communities can register to receive important notices and alerts during emergencies at www.mariposacounty.org/alertcenter.aspx and cne.coderedweb.com/Default.aspx?groupid=8DJt1b8jNYIUOdN58kLEjw%3d%3d.

State Agencies

The **California Office of Emergency Services** provides information emergency preparedness and about flood and storm preparation:

- www.calema.ca.gov/PlanningandPreparedness/Pages/How-You-Should-Prepare.aspx
- www.calema.ca.gov/PlanningandPreparedness/Pages/Floods.aspx.

The **California Department of Water Resources** provides information to the public regarding flood and safety:

- www.water.ca.gov/nav/nav.cfm?loc=t&id=100
- www.water.ca.gov/floodmgmt/
- www.water.ca.gov/floodmgmt/docs/state-federal_flood_operations_center.pdf.

Other Federal Agencies

The **US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) – Sacramento District** coordinates its **Emergency Management** program with the **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** and local governments to provide engineering services to respond to national and natural disasters in order to minimize damages and help in recovery efforts. Public Law 84-99 enables the **Corps** to assist state and local authorities in flood fight activities and cost share in the repair of flood protection structures. Public Law 93-288 authorizes **FEMA** to task the **Corps** with disaster recovery missions under the Federal Response Plan (www.usace.army.mil/Missions/EmergencyOperations/NationalResponseFramework/FloodControl.aspx).

The **Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012**, signed into law on July 6, 2012 by President Obama, reauthorizing the **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)** through September 30, 2017, and increasing access for some residents whose homes could be impacted by flooding from federal land that resulted from wildfires. This law may allow residents in these impacted communities to be eligible for an exception from the 30-day waiting period usually required for flood insurance coverage. Additional information about **NFIP** is available through **FEMA** at www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program, or **Flood Smart** at www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/about/nfip_overview.jsp. Other **flood preparedness** information is available at www.ready.gov/floods, and www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/flooding_flood_risks/ffr_overview.jsp.

The **USDI Geological Survey (USGS)** provides “water watch” internet tools and flood information for the **State of California**:

- <http://ca.water.usgs.gov/data/waterconditionsmap.html>
- <http://waterwatch.usgs.gov/new/?m=real&r=ca>
- <http://waterwatch.usgs.gov/new/index.php?r=ca&id=flood>

Rim Post-Fire BAER Assessment information is available at www.inciweb.org/incident/3726/.

