

# Investing In Our Future: Public Safety and Preparedness

Being prepared is the best form of disaster response. Flooding, extreme heat, and wildfires directly endanger everyone in our region, as well as our economy and our infrastructure - and climate change will worsen these impacts. By preparing today, we can ensure that all communities, and particularly those most vulnerable, are safer, more resilient, and better equipped to recover quickly from future climate-related disasters.

## How Will Climate Change Affect Our Safety?



### Flooding

Capital Region communities are particularly vulnerable to flooding from the American, Sacramento and Cosumnes rivers and local creeks. As a result of climate change, stronger storms may overwhelm critical infrastructure, including dams, stormwater systems, and levees, risking lives and threatening our economy.



### Wildfires

Decreased precipitation, warmer temperatures, dense forests, decades of fire suppression, and prolonged drought have turned our forests into tinderboxes, leading to more destructive wildfires. Wildfires result in hazardous air pollutants, damaged watersheds and habitats, increased landslide and flood risks, and threats to vital infrastructure.



### Extreme Heat

The Capital Region faces more frequent and severe extreme heat days and heat waves, which add additional stress to our aging infrastructure and leads to potentially life-threatening health consequences, especially for vulnerable populations. The region already exceeds the California state average in heat-related illness and death.



### Response and Recovery

Increased numbers of fires, floods and extreme heat can damage or overload critical transportation, communication networks, and health care systems, further endangering public safety by delaying disaster response efforts. Climate change may compound and multiply threats, which could lead to cascading disasters, fast-emerging crises, and reduced recovery time between events.

Photos courtesy of: Lovro Rumiha, State Farm, Andrew Smith

## A Local Perspective



**“As we unfortunately learned from Katrina, it only takes one extreme weather event to devastate a region.** Our flood control system was not originally designed to deal with the type of extreme weather events that have been occurring. It is important now more than ever that we make our system more resilient to these types of severe weather events.”

– **Richard Johnson, Executive Director, Sacramento Area Flood Control Authority**



**“Urban and rural communities must work together to better manage our public and private lands** in order to create reliable and sustainable fire and emergency response plans. Protecting life, property and our environment from the impacts of catastrophic fire is not optional – it is a critical next step for our state.”

– **Jennifer Montgomery, Supervisor, Placer County**

*The Capital Region Climate Readiness Collaborative is exploring strategies and solutions to strengthen the climate resiliency of our region. Join us to learn more! [www.climatereadiness.info](http://www.climatereadiness.info)*



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# Investing In Our Future: Taking Action for a Healthier Community

## Local Solutions for a Stronger Community

### Restoring the Forest to Fire-Resilient Conditions

Placer County is at significant risk for catastrophic wildfire due to a buildup of unnaturally dense vegetation and tree mortality caused by drought and bark beetle infestation. To restore the forest to fire-resilient conditions, the Placer County Air Pollution Control District is finding ways to reduce and reuse dead and excess forest biomass. Solutions include using forest waste for energy; hazardous fuel thinning and defensible space clearing; and developing tools that quantify the value of air pollution reductions and other co-benefits (e.g., reduced firefighting costs and protection of upland watersheds, timber resources, forest ecosystems, and wildlife habitat).



Photo: Placer County Air Pollution Control District.

## CLIMATE CHANGE BY THE NUMBERS



Approximately **188,000** people were evacuated due to an eroded spillway at the Oroville Dam, caused by heavy storms.



Adoption of an advanced outage management system helped Chattanooga's electric utility restore power to its customers nearly **1.5 days** earlier than usual after a severe storm.



Strategic treatment of Sierra Nevada biomass can reduce wildfire acreage by **6-22%**.



Between 1985 and 2004, the federal government spent nearly **15 times as much** on disaster relief as on preparedness.

(Sources: Ganz, Saah, Barber & Nechodom; Fire Behavior Modeling to Assess Net Benefits of Forest Treatments on Fire Hazard Mitigation and Bioenergy Production in Northeastern California; National Electrical Manufacturers Association; Storm Reconstruction: Rebuild Smart; Office of the California State Governor, Request for Emergency Declaration for Direct Federal Assistance; Healy & Malhotra; Preferring a Pound of Cure to an Ounce of Prevention; Retrospective Voting and Failures in Electoral Accountability)

## Become a Leader

### Understand local risks and assess your readiness:

Identify populations, infrastructure, and other resources that are in high-risk areas to assess your current vulnerability and readiness.



### Embrace technology:

Distributed generation, energy storage, microgrids, and other technology increase grid stability, especially for critical facilities like hospitals and emergency shelters.

**Have a plan and be prepared:** Update hazard mitigation and disaster preparedness and response plans to reflect climate impacts. Create policies and prioritize investments that meet the needs of vulnerable populations, reduce risks, provide multiple benefits, and increase resiliency.

**Help the community prepare:** Loss of housing and jobs, displacement, and economic impacts all create significant trauma and mental health issues that last long after the storm event has passed. Help the

Photos courtesy of: Valdosta-Lowndes MPO, Chris Kantos

community develop their own emergency plans by providing multilingual education and training and encourage community members to build and maintain strong social and support networks.

### Elevate and integrate preparedness efforts:

Ensure that planning is all inclusive and crosses multiple sectors and agencies, including public health. Engage in regular simulation exercises, and continuous cross-sector learning with a clear convener.



**Ensure accessibility:** Work with the community to identify and map trusted spaces as emergency shelters. Ensure that they are universally accessible on foot or by public transit, and that transit options are also prepared with backup evacuation strategies.



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