

## LA Wildfire Resource Kit

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### Standing with Our Communities: A Statement from President & CEO, Brenda Victoria Castillo

At the National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC), our commitment to Fortifying Human Rights and Building Power drives everything we do, especially in times of crisis. The Southern California wildfires of January 2025 have caused immense pain and destruction throughout Los Angeles County and the surrounding areas. [The Eaton Fire in Altadena has disproportionately impacted historically and intentionally marginalized communities, leaving many vulnerable to information fraud and predatory scams.](#)

In response to these challenges, we are launching this Resources Toolkit to stand in solidarity with the communities most affected. As part of [NHMC's Information Education Movement](#), we aim to empower individuals with the knowledge and tools to protect themselves, their families, and their futures. This toolkit is part of that mission, offering reliable information and critical facts about the wildfires, the resilience of Altadena's communities, scams targeting those in need, and trusted resources to support recovery and safeguard against exploitation. With shared determination, we can turn this moment of hardship into an opportunity to drive lasting change and ensure justice prevails.

### How to Use This Resource Kit

Please share this toolkit with your network to help those impacted by the Eaton Fire access reliable information and protect themselves from scams. Each share strengthens our collective effort to counter misinformation and support recovery efforts.

#### Helpful Links

- [Eaton Fire Incident Update](#)

### Table of Contents

- [Overview](#)
- [Current Status](#)
- [Why This Matters](#)
- [Eaton Fire Impact on Altadena](#)
- [Demographics](#)

## LA Wildfire Resource Kit

---

- [Testimonial](#)
- [Avoiding Eaton Fire Scams](#)
- [Protecting Eaton Fire Survivors](#)

### Overview

In January 2025, multiple wildfires broke out across Southern California due to extreme drought conditions and unseasonably strong winds. The Eaton Fire in Altadena quickly became one of the most devastating incidents, burning over [14,021 acres](#), destroying [thousands of homes](#), and displacing hundreds of families. While firefighters worked tirelessly to contain the blaze, the fire revealed critical gaps in emergency response for marginalized communities.

### Current Status

The Eaton Fire, which began on January 7, 2025, near Altadena Drive and Midwick Drive, is now [100% contained](#). The Los Angeles County Fire Department, Pasadena Fire, and U.S. Forest Service have successfully extinguished the fire, with no remaining active hotspots. Crews will continue monitoring the area to ensure safety.

### Key Facts

- Acres burned: 14,021
- Structures Impacted:
  - Destroyed: 9,418
  - Damaged: 1,073
- Fatalities: 17 civilians
- Injuries: 9 firefighters

Crews are working to extinguish hot spots in hard-to-reach areas near Winters Creek, Mt. Lowe, and Mt. Wilson. Critical fire weather persists, with strong Santa Ana winds and dry conditions increasing the risk of flare-ups and new fire starts. Resources remain on standby to address emerging threats, while efforts to ensure safe reentry for residents and utility teams are underway.

## LA Wildfire Resource Kit

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### Why This Matters

This resource toolkit provides reliable information to help residents navigate recovery, protect against scams, and connect with essential services. From emergency housing to financial assistance, it's a lifeline for those who need it most.

### Eaton Fire Impact on Altadena

Altadena has long been a refuge for Black families, with roots tracing back to the 1920s and 1930s, when the Great Migration brought those escaping Jim Crow laws. The community grew steadily, especially after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which allowed Black families to settle in the area. [By the 1980s, Altadena saw a demographic shift as its Black population grew significantly, from under 4% to 43%.](#) By the 1980s, the Black population had increased significantly, but in recent decades, demographic shifts—including rising housing costs and gentrification—have led to a decline. Today, Black residents make up 17.9% of Altadena's diverse population.

The Eaton Fire has had a devastating effect, threatening both the community's infrastructure and its cultural legacy. As Altadena works to recover, it is critical to support its historically marginalized communities and preserve the legacy of strength and unity that defined the area.


### Demographics:

According to the [census](#), Altadena, California, is a diverse community with the following racial composition:

- White (Non-Hispanic): 42.7%
- Black or African American (Non-Hispanic): 17.9%
- Hispanic or Latino: 12.2%
- Two or More Races: 11.5%
- Asian (Non-Hispanic): 5.0%
- Other (Non-Hispanic): 5.0%
- American Indian and Alaska Native (Non-Hispanic): 0.7%
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (Non-Hispanic): 0.1%

## LA Wildfire Resource Kit

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The community in Altadena, "[remains one of Southern California's most diverse, with a Black population just over 20% and a remarkable homeownership rate of more than 75%.](#)" 

### Testimonial

"On Wednesday morning, around 3 am, I received an evacuation order to leave immediately due to the Eaton Fire. By the time I woke up the house was filled with smoke, and I rushed to grab my family's important documents and evacuate immediately. Unfortunately, my family and I lost everything including two cars, pictures of my sister who passed, and my mother's medical supplies for her dialysis and diabetes treatment (which includes a walker, portable toilet, blood sugar monitor, and more). My mother is a stroke survivor and my sister, and I are the ones to care for her but also to provide for the household." - Christian Lopez via GoFundMe

### ⚠️⚠️ Avoiding Eaton Fire Scams ⚠️⚠️

Many families affected by the wildfires have been targeted with scams and fraudulent schemes. Unfortunately, many use disasters and the emotional states of families to engage in scams. They often obtain names, social security numbers, addresses, and other personal information. Scammers are approaching many families through various channels such as in-person visits, telephone calls, emails, and claiming to be FEMA workers. Being alert and informed about these different forms of scams is critical. Below are various ways that scammers are engaging with families:

#### FEMA Applications & FEMA Impersonators

[The Federal Emergency Management Agency's](#) (FEMA) mission is to support and coordinate a response to disaster occurrences in the United States, regarding resources for both local and state levels. Wildfire survivors are encouraged to apply to FEMA, however, each household is only allowed to apply for one application. If you suspect fraud, call the [FEMA Helpline](#) at (800) 621-3362. In addition, sometimes this leads criminals and con artists to take advantage of communities where they impersonate FEMA workers ([FEMA](#)).

## LA Wildfire Resource Kit

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- **Impersonators have been claiming to be federal and local disaster workers**, where they claim to promise a disaster grant in return for a payment. Do not disclose personal information to individuals claiming to be FEMA or federal employees via unsolicited calls or emails. If you suspect someone is impersonating a FEMA worker, ask to see ID badges. Scam artists may also pose as government officials, aid workers, or insurance company employees.
- **Be wary of unexpected phone calls or visits** to your home from people claiming to be FEMA housing inspectors or saying they work for FEMA.
- **FEMA does not hire or endorse specific contractors** to fix homes or recommend repairs. A FEMA housing inspector's only job is to verify damage.

### Price Gouging

Price gouging during a state of emergency is illegal ([Los Angeles Department of Consumer and Business Affairs](#)). Businesses and landlords take advantage of families by increasing the price of essential items such as food, emergency and medical supplies, housing, or gasoline. They are not allowed to increase by more than 10% for 30 days after the emergency declaration issued on January 7. This also includes rent increases and hikes in hotel and motel prices for evacuees who are seeking emergency housing. If you believe you have been improperly overcharged for goods, services, or housing, keep your records and receipts.

### Legal Services

Legal services and advice fraud can be committed by non-attorneys, such as "notarios," or by licensed lawyers ([The State Bar of California](#)). Many immigrant and non-English speaking communities are prone to falling for this type of scam. The public—and attorneys—should know that California law prohibits lawyers from soliciting clients either by phone calls or mailing and electronic communication.

### Fundraising/Charity Scams

[Cal OES](#) has warned the general public of scammers and fraudulent organizations that have been falsely claiming to be charities or nonprofits aiding fire victims. They might attempt to solicit assistance from disaster survivors by phone, email, letter, or face-to-face. Scammers are most likely to target individuals, immigrants, and

## LA Wildfire Resource Kit

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non-English speakers. Ensure to ask for their charity's name, address, phone number, and website, and then confirm with said charity with the information provided.

### Protecting Eaton Fire Survivors

#### Department of Consumers and Business Affairs

As Los Angeles declares a state of emergency, certain businesses must adhere to California's anti-price gouging law (Penal Code 396). The LA Department of Consumers and Business Affairs has a website in which you can report any price gouging. "If you believe you have been improperly overcharged for goods, services, or housing, keep your records and receipts, and file a price gouging complaint using DCBA's [online complaint reporting tool](#). There, you can report the location of the incident and upload documents directly to DCBA's investigators for follow-up. You can also reach DCBA by phone at **(800) 593-8222**." Businesses are advised to keep records of pricing before and after the fires to ensure adherence to the law.

#### Office of Attorney General, Rob Bonta

Attorney General Rob Bonta is also lending a hand and creating an avenue in which victims can report any price gouging. To create a strong case, the Attorney General Bonta recommends the following steps:

1. Visit [oag.ca.gov/LAfires](http://oag.ca.gov/LAfires) or call our hotline at: (800) 952-5225.
2. Include screenshots of all correspondence including conversations, text messages, direct messages (DMs), and voicemails
3. Provide anything that shows what prices you were offered, when, and by whom.
4. If you're on a site like Zillow, you can also send screenshots of the price history and a link to the listing.
5. Include first and last names of the realtors, listing agents, or business owners you spoke to. Be sure to include phone numbers, email addresses, home and business addresses, websites, social media accounts.
6. Don't leave out any information that can help us find and contact the business or landlord.

#### Joint Regional Fire Crimes Task Force



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## LA Wildfire Resource Kit

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In hopes of protecting Californians, the Los Angeles department started a task force to focus on Fire Related crimes. This task force is to stop victims from being taken advantage of. They are going to focus on fraud, arson, looting, and impersonations of first responders. To report a fraud or financial crime that falls under this umbrella, Eaton fire survivors can reach the National Center for Disaster Fraud at (866) 720-5721 or [NCDF Disaster Complaint Form](#).

### CA Department of Insurance

To rebuild and recover from the fires, individuals may be tempted to make haste decisions on property or home repairs. In order to avoid scam artists, you can always check a contractor's license by calling the Contractors State License Board at 1 (800)-321-2752. More information can be found on their comprehensive website: [CSLB](#).

### U.S. House of Financial Services Committee

Congresswoman Maxine Waters has an [informative resource](#) in which survivors can find assistance on a number of topics such as immediate housing relief, affected businesses relief, fraud, and Spanish language FEMA information.

**This Resource Kit will be updated as new or more accurate information becomes available.**