

FAQS: HOW REALTORS® CAN HELP CLIENTS WITH RECOVERY AND REBUILDING AFTER WILDFIRES

As a REALTOR®, your expertise extends beyond placing the right client in the right home. You have the ability to anticipate needs your clients may not yet be aware of. When it comes to recovering from the recent wildfires, applying this knowledge can lessen their anxiety and increase their efficiency. Below, we've gathered frequently asked questions to help your clients recover and rebuild from the wildfires.

How can I help my clients with the initial steps of displacement, recovery, and rebuilding?

[LA Recovers](#) is LA County's digital headquarters for all things recovery and rebuilding. The site is constantly updated with information for those impacted by both the Eaton Canyon and Palisades fires, from damage maps to city-specific permitting information and debris removal.

C.A.R. has created a collection of relevant Consumer Fact Sheets to offer your clients. They are listed on the Smart Zone website's [CA Wildfires Resources page](#). These include [7 Steps to Navigate Insurance Issues After the Wildfires](#), [A Renter's Guide to Recovering from the California Wildfires](#), [Health and Safety: Returning Home After Wildfire](#), and [Mortgage Relief After the Southern California Wildfires](#), among others.

What grants or assistance programs are available to help my clients with wildfire-related expenses?

For immediate needs, LA County is accepting [applications for funds](#) for workers and small businesses impacted by the wildfires through February 24. For help with food costs, apply for Disaster CalFresh [here](#). Temporary housing resources can be found in our [Renter's Guide to Recovering from the California Wildfires](#).

Thanks to a generous \$1 million grant from the REALTORS® Relief Foundation (RRF), eligible households may receive up to \$1,000 to help cover housing-related costs. This [program](#) is available to full-time California residents who are U.S. citizens or individuals legally admitted for residence in the U.S. and who have experienced displacement or damage to their primary residence due to the wildfires. Applications are open from February 10, 2025 through April 30, 2025.

What are the city or county's estimated rebuilding timelines following the Eaton and Palisades fires?

According to an EPA official quoted in this CNN [article](#), "The hazardous waste clean-up alone could take three to six months." The good news is that LA County has already enacted a two-phase [debris-removal process](#) that's well underway.

Many variables are in play that impact the timeline for each structure, lot and community. For questions about rebuilding timelines in the City of Los Angeles, the City Planning Staff is available seven days a week at the [West LA Disaster Recovery Center](#) and by email at Planning.PalisadesRebuild@lacity.org. In Los Angeles County, including the city of Malibu and cities in the San Gabriel Valley, you can contact a county planning [field office](#) with questions.

How can I help clients decide if rebuilding/repairing their home on their existing lot or relocation is the best option?

This choice depends on many complex factors, including your clients' insurance payouts, financial positioning, and lifestyle goals. As their REALTOR®, you can direct them to resources that might help them make informed decisions.

First, they may want to take immediate action to receive reassessment for their current property taxes. The County Assessor recommends filing an Application for Reassessment of Property Damaged or Destroyed by Misfortune or Calamity (M&C) claim, Form ADS-820 within 12 months from the date the property was damaged or destroyed. The County Assessor has created this [FAQ](#) for property owners impacted by wildfires.

The *Los Angeles Times* has written this comprehensive article on the [tax benefits](#) available to residents rebuilding or purchasing a new home after wildfire.

For those considering rebuilding, FEMA is offering [free individualized fire mitigation plans](#), and the U.S. Census Bureau has created [Community Resilience Estimates Datasets](#) to analyze risk of natural disasters in U.S. counties. C.A.R. has created a fact sheet to help clients mitigate wildfire risk: [How to Fire-Harden Your Home](#). CalFire has created [this guide](#) to "defensible space," a buffer zone around your home to help guard against wildfire.

The award-winning LAist podcast *Imperfect Paradise* just released a timely episode, "[Is It Possible to Build a Fire-Proof House?](#)"



What are the major changes in building and permitting ordinances enacted after the recent wildfires?

To expedite the rebuilding process, the City of Los Angeles has issued an [Executive Order](#) that allows for the demolishing of fire-damaged buildings without the need for permits. This order pertains to structures impacted by the Palisades, Sunset, Kenneth, Archer and Hurst fires. This order requires that rebuilding permits for wildfire-impacted structures receive expedited reviews. It also states that certain projects in the Coastal Zone are exempt from the requirements of a Coastal Development Permit, and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is suspended for impacted areas. The full [order](#) contains additional directives regarding debris removal, watershed mitigation, and certificates of occupancy, among others. The City has issued additional orders on tax relief and other issues, all of which can be viewed [here](#).

For those impacted by the Eaton Canyon fire, residents of Pasadena can receive free [virtual consultations](#) on permitting for rebuilding. Residents of Altadena can consult LA County's Disaster Recovery ordinances [here](#).

On July 7, 2025, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order [N-29-25](#). The Order includes expansions of the CEQA suspension, exemptions of the Solar Ready requirement, and suspensions of the changes to building code requirements.

How can clients avoid scams and frauds from vendors, housing providers, and speculators after wildfires?

C.A.R. has released these Consumer Fact Sheets to help clients protect themselves: [Avoiding Scams and Fraud](#) and [What You Need to Know About Price Gouging After a Natural Disaster](#).

Governor Gavin Newsom has also issued an Executive Order making it temporarily illegal to make unsolicited, below fair market value offers to an owner of real property located in certain zip codes impacted by the January wildfires in Southern California. For more details, consult C.A.R.'s [Legal Quick Guide](#) on the matter.

Consumer advocacy group United Policyholders is a valuable resource for all clients facing damage from wildfire. Read their list of best practices and scenarios to watch out for [here](#).

Want to learn more about how you can be better prepared for a natural disaster? C.A.R. Education is happy to offer the course, Role of the REALTOR® in Disasters, to C.A.R. Members for free. This course will cover valuable information that is helpful to anyone in disaster scenarios and it will count towards the Disaster Preparedness and Knowledge Certification. Members can use this information to be prepared in their home, office, and anywhere they practice and as a result, become a resource to their community. Be sure to link your member account with store.car.org and use the code PREPARE at checkout to [take this class for free](#).