

East Bay Municipal Utility District

Wildfire Preparedness

The East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) is committed to minimizing wildfire risks, securing vital infrastructure, and protecting public safety. Serving over 1.4 million water customers and 740,000 wastewater customers in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, EBMUD has taken actions and leverages partnerships to enhance resilience against increasing wildfire threats.

EBMUD's service area spans over 332 square miles, nearly seven times the size of San Francisco. EBMUD operates and maintains hundreds of facilities including water treatment plants, pumping plants, and treated water tanks. These facilities supply its customers and the hydrants.

EBMUD response to the LA Fires

EBMUD is prepared to support Los Angeles area water utilities to accelerate the recovery of their water system. Our agency is standing by to provide help and has activated our Emergency Operations Team.

EBMUD is part of a statewide mutual assistance network and is connected with the California Office of Emergency Services to provide assistance following natural disasters and other emergencies. This can include mobilizing personnel, equipment, and expertise needed for emergency response and recovery.

Could the LA firestorm happen in the East Bay?

Wildfires are getting worse resulting from higher temperatures and more extreme droughts, as we are seeing in Lahaina, Paradise and now Southern California. The East Bay already experienced and learned many lessons from a firestorm – the devastating Oakland Hills Fire in 1991. We are better prepared today due to operational improvements and enhanced coordination implemented after the Hills Fire, along with strengthened measures to address electrical power loss from the grid. It's important to underscore that a wind-driven fire the size of the ones in Southern California would stress any distribution system and a coordinated effort would be needed to respond.

What has EBMUD done to prepare for major fires and reduce fire risk?

EBMUD employs a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach—encompassing vegetation management, infrastructure investments, emergency preparedness, mutual assistance, staff training, community coordination, and research—to build a resilient water and wastewater system capable of withstanding fire threats and safeguarding public safety.

- **Vegetation Management**

EBMUD manages nearly 60,000 acres in the East Bay and Sierra Nevada Foothills to protect water supply and quality. Year-round vegetation management includes building fuel breaks, cattle and goat grazing, removing dead or dying trees, maintaining fire roads and using prescribed fire to treat the land while training fire fighters. In the East Bay, EBMUD invests \$2.5 million annually in grazing, fire prevention, and forestry programs.

- **Capital Investments and Maintenance**

EBMUD has taken actions to ensure water operations during PG&E power shutoff events with permanent generators at critical facilities and a deployable fleet of portable generators and pumps. In addition, regular valve testing, hydrant maintenance and inspections, hydrant testing, and coordination with fire agencies keep the water system ready for emergencies.

- **Emergency Response**

During wildfires, EBMUD coordinates with local fire districts and CalFire, and can provide water from EBMUD's five terminal storage reservoirs located on watershed land in Alameda and Contra Costa counties – a critical resource for aerial attacks.

To maintain uninterrupted water delivery during PG&E Public Safety Power Shutoffs, EBMUD deploys backup generators to affected facilities. *(continued)*



On Red Flag days, reservoirs are topped off to maximize water availability for firefighting. Regular emergency drills and staff training further enhance EBMUD's readiness for emergencies. As a mutual assistance partner, EBMUD has provided expertise following the Camp Fire in the town of Paradise.

- **Coordination**

Following the 1991 Oakland Hills Fire, EBMUD helped establish the Hills Emergency Forum, which includes parts of Alameda and Contra Costa counties, 20 cities, and 26 unincorporated communities to collaborate with fire agencies and land managers on wildfire mitigation and response. The forum, which includes agencies like CalFire, EBMUD, East Bay Regional Park District, UC Berkeley, and local cities, meets regularly and has standardized hydrant fittings for mutual aid access. Additionally, EBMUD hosts an annual "Fire Forum" to coordinate with fire agencies.

- **Research**

EBMUD collaborated with utilities and the Water Research Foundation to develop wildfire recovery plans, drawing on lessons from California and Colorado, as outlined in the report "Post-Wildfire Distribution System Water Quality Impacts and Potential Responses."

What is the status of the East Bay's fire hydrants?

The EBMUD water system includes about 31,000 public fire hydrants in its 332-square-mile service area in the East Bay. EBMUD repairs or replaces hydrants, as necessary. These repairs are coordinated with local fire agencies. Additionally, EBMUD inspects hydrants in high-risk fire zones to ensure accessibility.

Some fire agencies perform flow tests on EBMUD hydrants to verify flow availability. This data is shared with EBMUD for inclusion in a larger database. Additionally, EBMUD tests hydrants in response to customer water quality concerns.

The loss of hydrant pressure is predominantly caused by demand. Too many hydrants in use in the same area can cause pressure loss. Municipal systems are not designed to maintain flow and pressure when dozens of hydrants are in use at the same time. Following the Southern California fires, EBMUD met with various fire agencies in our service area to review EBMUD's system, coordinate fire preparation and response, and clarify any outstanding questions.

Take Action

EBMUD encourages the community to sign up for emergency alerts, maintain emergency plans and store emergency water.

Sign up for emergency alerts:

Contra Costa County, visit: [CWSAlerts.com/registration](https://www.cwsaalerts.com/registration)

Alameda County, visit: [ACAlert.org](https://www.acalert.org)

EBMUD Alerts, visit: [ebmud.com/subscriptions](https://www.ebmud.com/subscriptions)

Emergency Water Storage Tips

You need at least two gallons per person per day for seven days minimum. Don't forget pets.

Visit [ebmud.com/emergency-preparedness](https://www.ebmud.com/emergency-preparedness)

