



## **2021 Wildfires Recovery Update**



The [Ventura County Long Term Disaster Recovery Group](#) (VC LTDRG) is a collaborative of more than fifty organizations that have helped more than 1,200 households in Ventura County over the last four years as they work through the many aspects of rebuilding their lives and homes after the Thomas Fire in December 2017 or the Woolsey and Hill Fires in November 2018.

VC LTDRG member organizations provided money, materials, and services to aid the recovery of wildfire-impacted individuals and families – cooperatively working to support households in their recovery planning. Assistance has taken various forms, including: disaster case management, mental health and emotional recovery, support for rebuilding and structural repairs needed to ensure safe, sustainable, stable housing.

### **Coordinating resources for disaster recovery amid COVID pandemic**

For many, the continued COVID pandemic slowed fire recovery due to reduced incomes, availability and cost of rebuilding materials, as well as managing illness and family. Disaster case managers work with residents affected by the wildfires to access programs and assistance available to them, including private and governmental resources; funding for items that include but are not limited to food, housing and appliances; and access to experts for rebuilding advice and financial assistance to help rehabilitate or reconstruct homes.

### **Navigating the rebuilding process**

Building a home is an undertaking even under the best of circumstances. For wildfire survivors it is an even more challenging process. The VC LTDRG has hired a few retired, local building contractors who have built dozens of homes in the area to provide guidance and advice to households that are rebuilding. More than 80 homeowners spoke to the Rebuild Navigators regarding key decisions, like the home design, plans, permits, inspections, cost estimates, hiring a builder, and contracts.

### **Financial assistance**

Local funders, including The Salvation Army, United Way of Ventura County and Ventura County Community Foundation, pooled dollars designated for individual long-term recovery in the VC LTDRG's Unmet Needs Allocation Table. VC LTDRG financial assistance is intended as a last stop – after federal, insurance and other recovery sources. Disaster case managers present requests for clients based on their recovery plan and unmet needs. Funders contribute support to collectively respond to the client needs. Priority consideration has been given to vulnerable populations who do not have adequate personal resources to support unmet



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disaster-caused needs. As of December 2021, more than \$3.2 million in assistance has been provided to 550 Ventura County households impacted by the disaster.

Some partner organizations have provided additional financial support in the past year to impacted households through separate processes and criteria. The VC LTDRG has worked to ensure information about each funding opportunity was shared widely among partners communicating with survivors and to streamline verification of impact.

### **Advocating for Ventura County fire survivors**

While each recovery is unique, there are some challenges that are shared by many and, when helpful, the LTDRG assists with communicating questions, priorities and concerns to local, state and federal programs, including Cal Home, a program for mortgage financing, and ReCover California, an owner-occupied rebuild assistance program..

### **Sharing hard-earned knowledge and experience**

Sadly, many other communities around the state have also had to grapple with wildfire recovery. In coordination with FEMA and Cal Office of Emergency Services, the Group regularly communicates and shares information with others that are forming Long Term Recovery Groups across California and other parts of the U.S.

Additionally, partner organizations are working with the Ventura County Office of Emergency Services and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) to use lessons learned to develop better plans for future disaster responses, greater preparedness and increased community resiliency.



### **Get in touch:** (English or Español)

2-1-1 Ventura is serving as the hub connecting residents to local recovery resources and information – including registration with the VC LTDRG. Email is the best way to reach us.

Email: [drie@icfs.org](mailto:drie@icfs.org) and provide your name, pre-disaster address and phone number and an outreach specialist can be in touch.

### **Find out more**

More information on the continuing efforts and community partners can be found at: [www.VCDisasterRecoveryGroup.org](http://www.VCDisasterRecoveryGroup.org)

The Ventura County Long Term Disaster Recovery Group (VC LTDRG) was created in early 2018 out of the catalytic efforts of FEMA, Ventura County Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VC VOAD), and California Office of Emergency Services as a coordinating body for a collaboration of non-profit organizations, government agencies, and faith-based and community-led groups, as well as local businesses and philanthropy.