

Talking Points for AB 338 - Workforce Development for Wildfire Recovery

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Impact of Wildfires on Los Angeles and Ventura Counties:

- More than 55,000 acres burned, leading to the destruction of over 16,000 homes and businesses during the Southern California wildfires in January.¹
- Total wage losses for local businesses and employees have been estimated at \$297 million. LA county's GDP is projected to decline by 0.48% in 2025, equating to approximately \$4.6 billion in lost economic activity.²
- The fires claimed at least 27 lives and caused economic losses estimated to be between \$76 billion and \$131 billion, with insured losses reaching up to \$45 billion.³

Challenges in Workforce Recovery and the Need for AB 338:

- The wildfires have led to widespread unemployment, especially among low- and moderate-income individuals who were already facing economic instability.⁴
- A skilled workforce is essential to support the rebuilding process in sectors such as: construction, utilities, firefighting, healthcare, social services, education, housing assistance, and disaster response.
- Without targeted workforce development, recovery efforts will be prolonged, and many individuals will continue to struggle to find stable employment.

Supporting Data & Statistics:

- As a result of the fires, health and social services face the largest job losses, estimated between 3,430 and 6,790 job-years. Educational services experience losses of 2,850 to 6,320 job-years, and other services see losses ranging from 3,030 to 5,480 job-years.⁵
- Industries such as construction have experienced employment growth rates between 5% to 10% for at least 18 months following major wildfires, indicating a surge in demand for skilled labor during recovery periods.⁶
- Economic stability significantly reduces long-term trauma effects in disaster-stricken populations.⁷

Benefits of AB 338:

- **Accelerated Recovery Efforts:** By rapidly training and deploying a skilled workforce, the bill facilitates quicker rebuilding of infrastructure and homes.

- **Economic Stability:** Provides stable employment opportunities, reducing economic insecurity among affected populations.
- **Enhanced Mental Health Support:** Addresses increased demand for mental health services post-disaster by developing a workforce equipped to provide necessary support.
- **Community Resilience:** Strengthens the overall resilience of communities by ensuring they have the human resources needed to respond to and recover from disasters.

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End Notes:

- ¹ California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). (n.d.). *Welcome to CAL FIRE*. <https://www.fire.ca.gov/>
- ² California Workforce Development Board (CWDB). (n.d.). *California Workforce Development Board*. <https://cwdb.ca.gov/>
- ³ CalMatters. (2025, January). *L.A. fires left thousands without work. Few got unemployment help*. <https://calmatters.org/environment/wildfires/2025/01/la-fires-workers-lost-jobs/>
- ⁴ LAEDC. (2025, February). *Economic impact of 2025 Los Angeles wildfires* [PDF]. <https://laedc.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/LAEDC-2025-LA-Wildfires-Study.pdf>
- ⁵ UCLA Anderson Forecast. (n.d.). *Economic impact of Los Angeles wildfires*. UCLA Anderson School of Management. <https://www.anderson.ucla.edu/about/centers/ucla-anderson-forecast/economic-impact-los-angeles-wildfires>
- ⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). *Labor market impacts of destructive California wildfires*. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2023/article/labor-market-impacts-of-destructive-california-wildfires.htm>
- ⁷ Xu, R., Yu, P., Abramson, M. J., Johnston, F. H., Samet, J. M., Bell, M. L., Haines, A., Ebi, K. L., Li, S., & Guo, Y. (2019). Wildfires, global climate change, and human health. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 3(7), e252-e253. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196\(19\)30012-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196(19)30012-9/fulltext)