

ALEX PADILLA

U.S. SENATOR  CALIFORNIA

FEMA Improvement, Reform, and Efficiency (FIRE) Act

The Fire Act is cosponsored by Senators Feinstein, Wyden, Merkley, Murray, Rosen, Heinrich, and Luján. It passed out of HSGAC by voice vote on February 2, 2022.

In light of year after year of increasingly catastrophic wildfires in the West, it has become clear that FEMA's current statutory authorities and practices for helping communities prepare for and recover from wildfires need to be updated to reflect the "new normal" facing Western states.

The *FEMA Improvement, Reform, and Efficiency (FIRE) Act* would help ensure that FEMA's disaster preparedness and response efforts fully address the unique nature of wildfires and their impacts on communities.

What the *FIRE Act* would do:

- **Pre-Deployment of Resources Before Potential Wildfire Disasters:** Direct FEMA to develop recommendations to pre-deploy resources during red flag warnings – periods of high winds and high temperatures, which are the most likely time for catastrophic wildfires to start – just like FEMA already does in advance of hurricane warnings.
- **Improved Relocation Assistance and Consistency in Federal Support:** Help ensure relocation assistance is accessible for public infrastructure in fire prone areas. Ensure that FEMA provides consistency when responding to wildfire-specific damage, such as repairing and mitigating contamination from melted infrastructure.
- **Equity:** Require FEMA to provide effective crisis counselors and case managers to ensure that underserved and disadvantaged communities receive equitable treatment when accessing federal disaster assistance.
- **Tribal Emergency Operations Centers:** Ensure that tribal governments can also access assistance to upgrade their emergency operation centers. This provides tribal governments equal standing with state and local governments.
- **Response Speed:** Require a study to improve the speed of assistance in response to wildfires.
- **Housing Assistance:** Require FEMA to prioritize survivors of disasters when selling portable housing units, and direct FEMA to study how to improve housing assistance for low-income residents who live in multi-family housing or in doubled-up situations.

The Fire Act is endorsed by the International Association of Fire Fighters and the Western Governors' Association