



MEMORANDUM
COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES
County of Placer

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors DATE: August 31, 2021

FROM: Todd Leopold, County Executive Officer
By: Dave Atkinson, Assistant Director of Emergency Services

SUBJECT: Resolution Ratifying Local Health Emergency Declaration by the Placer County Interim Health Officer Due to the Immediate Public Health Threat Caused by Hazardous Waste and Debris from the River Fire

ACTION REQUESTED

Adopt a resolution to ratify a Local Health Emergency Declaration by the Placer County Interim Health Officer due to the River Fire.

BACKGROUND

Full containment of the River Fire, which started on August 4, 2021, near Colfax, was reached on August 14, 2021. CalFire reported in their final incident update that the River Fire burned 2,619 acres of land, destroyed 102 residential structures, damaged an additional 21 residential structures, and destroyed 39 other structures in Placer and Nevada counties.

As part of the established process for securing state and federal assistance in responding to and recovering from the impacts of disasters, the Placer County Director of Emergency Services proclaimed a local emergency on August 5, 2021. This action was ratified by your Board on August 10, 2021, with the adoption of Resolution No. 2021-280.

In the days following the reopening of the affected area, staff from several county departments and local special districts worked with state and federal agencies to determine the scope and scale of the impacts from the River Fire and the need for state and federal assistance in recovery. Based on an assessment of the data collected from these efforts, on August 24, 2021, the Placer County Interim Health Officer declared the existence of a local health emergency due to hazardous waste in the form of debris and debris ash from fire and the potential contamination of residential food and water supplies resulting from River Fire. This declaration allowed for a formal request to the Director of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services for hazardous waste and debris removal with regard to this local health emergency in order to maximize remediation and recovery efforts to maximize the public's health and safety.

Health and Safety Code section 101080 provides that a local health emergency declared by a local health officer must be ratified by the board of supervisors within seven (7) calendar days of the date said local health emergency was declared to affirm that the emergency conditions continue to exist, and local resources continue to be unable to cope with the effects of said local health emergency, thereby necessitating ratification and continuation of the declaration of Local Health Emergency. Additionally, Health and Safety Code section 101080, requires that once a local health emergency is ratified, it must be renewed by a board of supervisors at least once every thirty days until such time the emergency is terminated.

FISCAL IMPACT

Potential fiscal impact is unknown at this time.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution
Exhibit A: Declaration of Local Health Emergency

Before the Board of Supervisors County of Placer, State of California

**In the matter of: A RESOLUTION RATIFYING THE
DECLARATION OF A LOCAL HEALTH EMERGENCY
DUE TO IMMEDIATE PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT
CAUSED BY HAZARDOUS WASTE AND DEBRIS FROM
THE RIVER FIRE IN THE VICINITY OF COLFAX IN THE
UNINCORPORATED AREA OF PLACER COUNTY**

Resolution No.: _____

The following Resolution was duly passed by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Placer at a regular meeting held August 31, 2021, by the following vote:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Signed and approved by me after its passage.

Chair, Board of Supervisors

Attest:

Clerk of said Board

WHEREAS, California Health & Safety Code sections 101075, *et seq.*, authorize the declaration of a local health emergency by the Public Health Officer for any area of the County affected by hazardous waste which poses an immediate threat to public health; and

WHEREAS, on August 4, 2021, the River Fire started near Colfax, burning 2,619 acres of land and causing significant structural damage to, or the complete destruction of, numerous private structures, resulting in the accumulation of ash debris, much of which is subject to contamination with heavy metals, asbestos, and/or other hazardous waste; and

WHEREAS, on August 5, 2021, the Governor of California proclaimed a state of emergency in Placer County due to the River Fire; and

WHEREAS, on August 5, 2021, the Placer County Director of Emergency Services proclaimed a local emergency; and

WHEREAS, on August 10, 2021, the Placer County Board of Supervisors ratified the proclamation of a local emergency; and

WHEREAS, on August 24, 2021, the Placer County Interim Health Officer declared the existence of a local health emergency due to hazardous waste in the form of debris and debris ash from fire and the potential contamination of residential food and water supplies resulting from River Fire; and

WHEREAS, Health and Safety Code section 101080 requires the Board of Supervisors to ratify the local health emergency declaration within seven (7) days or the declaration will no longer be in force; and

WHEREAS, hazardous debris and ash from fire and the potential contamination of residential food and water supplies resulting from River Fire continues to pose a threat in the in the vicinity of Colfax in the unincorporated area of Placer County; and

WHEREAS, the release or escape of the above-mentioned conditions of hazardous waste poses a substantial immediate threat and hazard to public health and safety unless immediately addressed and managed; and

WHEREAS, there is an imminent and proximate threat of contagious, infectious or communicable disease, chemical agent and/or non-communicable biologic agent, and/or other toxins, due to accumulations of perishable foods and other organic materials that normally require refrigeration but have been left to spoil due to electricity disruption, and also due to potential contamination or destruction of residential and commercial water supply in the burned areas; and

WHEREAS, the circumstances of the accumulation of this hazardous waste, contaminated debris, perishable items and potential contamination or destruction of water supplies and the need to immediately remove hazardous waste and debris and abate the above referenced conditions are, or are likely to be, beyond the control, capacity, and resources of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of Placer County.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Placer County Board of Supervisors hereby ratifies the declaration of a local health emergency due to the significant, ongoing, and possible undiscovered impacts due to the River Fire in Placer County.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Placer County Board of Supervisors shall review the need for continuing the local health emergency at least every thirty (30) days and shall terminate the local health emergency as soon as local conditions warrant.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this local health emergency and authority derived therefrom is limited to the River Fire incident and the potential health threats articulated herein.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Director of Emergency Services or his designee shall immediately forward a copy of this resolution to the Director of the California Office of Emergency Services, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, and any other state agencies who may be requested or required to provide services with regard to this local health emergency in order to protect the public health and safety.

The foregoing Resolution was duly passed and adopted by the Board of Supervisors for the County of Placer, State of California at the regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors on August 31, 2021 by the vote listed above.

LOCAL HEALTH EMERGENCY DECLARATION BY THE PLACER COUNTY INTERIM HEALTH OFFICER DUE TO IMMEDIATE PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT CAUSED BY HAZARDOUS WASTE AND DEBRIS FROM THE RIVER FIRE IN THE VICINITY OF COLFAX IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREA OF PLACER COUNTY

WHEREAS, California Health & Safety Code sections 101075, *et seq.*, authorize the declaration of a local health emergency by the Health Officer for any area of the County affected by hazardous waste which poses an immediate threat to public health; and

WHEREAS, Health & Safety Code section 101080 provides that a local health emergency declaration shall expire unless ratified by the Board of Supervisors within seven (7) days; and

WHEREAS, on August 4, 2021, the River Fire started near Colfax, burning 2,619 acres of land and causing significant structural damage to, or the complete destruction of, numerous private structures, resulting in the accumulation of ash debris, much of which is subject to contamination with heavy metals, asbestos, and/or other hazardous waste; and **WHEREAS**, on August 5, 2021, the Governor of California proclaimed a state of emergency in Placer County due to the River Fire; and

WHEREAS, on August 5, 2021, the Placer County Director of Emergency Services proclaimed a local emergency; and

WHEREAS, on August 10, 2021, the Placer County Board of Supervisors ratified the proclamation of a local emergency; and

WHEREAS, the interim Health Officer for the County of Placer hereby finds and determines that:

1. The River Fire in Placer County, commencing on August 4, 2021, caused significant structural damage to, or the complete destruction of, numerous private structures, resulting in the accumulation of ash debris, much of which is subject to contamination with heavy metals, asbestos, and/or other hazardous waste.
2. The release or escape of the above-mentioned conditions of hazardous waste poses a substantial immediate threat and hazard to public health and safety unless immediately addressed and managed.
3. There is an imminent and proximate threat of contagious, infectious or communicable disease, chemical agent and/or non-communicable biologic agent, and/or other toxins, due to accumulations of perishable foods and other organic materials that normally require refrigeration but have been left to spoil due to electricity disruption, and also due to potential contamination or destruction of residential and commercial water supply in the burned areas.
4. The circumstances of the accumulation of this hazardous waste, contaminated debris, perishable items and potential contamination or destruction of water supplies and the need to immediately remove hazardous waste and debris and abate the above referenced conditions are, or are likely to be, beyond the control, capacity, and resources of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of Placer County.
5. This declaration will enable the County of Placer to more effectively respond to the immediate public health threat caused by the River Fire, seek and utilize mutual aid, and pursue any available financial reimbursement sources for the costs incurred in responding to this local health emergency.

6. The aforesaid threat to public health necessitates the declaration of the existence of a local health emergency in accordance with California Health & Safety Code section 101075, *et seq.*

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY DECLARED by the Interim Health Officer for the County of Placer that as of August 24, 2021, a local health emergency is threatened to exist in areas burned and impacted by the River Fire due to hazardous waste in the form of debris, debris ash, and the presence of other hazardous materials, and due to the potential contamination of residential food and water supplies.

IT IS FURTHER DECLARED that this local health emergency and authority derived therefrom is limited to the River Fire incident and the potential health threats articulated herein.

IT IS FURTHER DECLARED that state and local agencies are in the process of finalizing a program to remove both hazardous and non-hazardous debris from structures through which the fire burned. Property owners and the community should not enter the burn footprint of structures without Personal Protective Equipment. Until the enactment of additional requirements to address the incident disaster clean up, no clean up activities of burned structures shall commence and no debris bins shall be provided to property owners for the purposes of the removal of fire debris without written authorization of the County of Placer's Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Environmental Health.

IT IS FURTHER DECLARED AND ORDERED that during the existence of said local health emergency the powers, functions, and duties of the Placer County Interim Health Officer shall be those prescribed by state law, including but not limited to the provisions of Sections 101040 and 101085 of the California Health and Safety Code, and by ordinances and resolutions of Placer County, and that this emergency declaration shall expire seven (7) days after its issuance unless confirmed and ratified by the Placer County Board of Supervisors within that period of time.



Robert Oldham, M.D.
Placer County Interim Health Officer

8/24/2021

Date

