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Contact: Jerry Azevedo
(916) 475-2437
www.d-risc.org

Governor, Lawmakers Respond to “New Normal” of Climate-Driven Disasters in 2018 *Fire and Local Government Coalition Acknowledges Progress Made and Remaining Work Ahead*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – With the conclusion of the signing period for 2018 legislation on September 30, the Disaster Readiness for Safer Communities (D-RiSC) coalition today acknowledged the progress made by Governor Brown and state lawmakers in 2018 to combat the “new normal” of climate-driven disasters, expand wildfire prevention activities and enhance the deployment of local government fire and rescue resources through the Mutual Aid System.

“So far in 2018, we have confirmed that the deadly and destructive wildfires of last year were not an aberration, but the ‘new normal’ for California,” said Jeff Meston, president of the California Fire Chiefs Association. “We thank the governor and state lawmakers for recognizing the fact that we can’t prevent or effectively fight these worsening disasters without additional resources, more modern strategies and better collaboration so that first responders can continue to protect our communities.”

In total, Governor Brown signed nearly 30 bills from state lawmakers to strengthen California’s wildfire prevention, response and recovery through enhancements to:

- forest management and fuels reduction
- hazardous materials mitigation
- disaster response and emergency communications
- coordination with electrical utilities and private fire contractors
- community alert notification systems
- disaster recovery programs

D-RiSC called out the following specific accomplishments from the 2018 State Budget and legislative session:

- Enactment of SB 901 (Dodd), a comprehensive package of wildfire prevention and safety measures
- Enactment of SB 833 (McGuire) to implement a consistent statewide protocol for emergency alert notifications and SB 821 (Jackson) to create an opt-out alert system
- \$25 million General Fund appropriation for Cal OES to reimburse the local governments when they pre-position resources during high-risk weather events to speed response to wildfires and other disasters through the Mutual Aid System
- \$25 million appropriation from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund for Cal OES to purchase additional Type 3 engines for mutual aid response, to be staffed by local government personnel
- State Budget funding to increase staffing within Cal OES’ Regional Response and Readiness Branch and training for local agencies in the use of the Situational Awareness and Collaboration Tool

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“Whether it’s catastrophic fire or other disasters, we know that getting mutual aid resources in place ahead of time can save lives and property,” said Brian Rice, president of California Professional Firefighters. “The funding for pre-positioning and other fire and emergency preparations start us down the road, but we can’t be complacent. California needs to commit to a modern disaster response system to meet the changing threat we face.”

“The funding and policy changes approved in 2018 will strengthen the capability of firefighters at the state and local level to respond quickly and with adequate force to wildfires, floods and other disasters,” said Steve Hall, president of Fire Districts Association of California. “Still, change is happening at a rapid pace and we cannot afford to rest. More work needs to be done to ensure funding is spent, as intended, and we are maximizing the benefit of these new laws. We look forward to working with the next administration and lawmakers in 2019 to continue to make our communities safer and more resilient to disaster.”

Currently, D-RISC is working with Cal OES to refine the pre-positioning program to ensure local agencies can deploy in advance of Red Flag Warnings and other high-risk events, particularly during anticipated high-wind events in Southern California during the fall. To date, local crews have pre-positioned 22 times.

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