

# ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

## EXTERNAL MEMO

**To:** Leon Page, County Counsel  
**From:** Michelle Anderson, County Emergency Manager *MLA*  
**Date:** May 14, 2025  
**RE:** Status Report, Item 75 for May 20, 2025 Agenda: Review the Need for Continuing the Local Emergency



The Airport Fire began on September 9, 2024 and was deemed 100% contained on October 5, 2024.

### County Proclamations and Ordinance Status

- The Orange County Board of Supervisors proclaimed a Local Emergency on September 10, 2024, and continued the local emergency proclamation at the November 5, 2024, December 17, 2024, February 11, 2025, and April 8, 2025 meetings.
- The Orange County Health Officer proclaimed a Local Health Emergency on September 13<sup>th</sup> and renewed it on 20<sup>th</sup>; the Orange County Board of Supervisors ratified the health emergency proclamation on September 24, 2024, and continued the local health emergency on November 5, December 3, December 17, January 14, February 11, March 11, April 9, and May 6. The continuation of the local health emergency is be considered by the Board of Supervisors on the May 20<sup>th</sup> agenda as Item 28.
- On October 8, 2024, the Orange County Board of Supervisors adopted an Urgency Ordinance for the Airport Fire Debris Removal Program.

### Costs

The costs in the table below will increase in the future as debris removal activities continue. Estimated response costs and damages for public agencies include:

| City/District                            | Estimated Response<br>Costs & Damages<br>Reported 4/3/25 | Estimated Response<br>Costs & Damages<br>Reported 05/14/25 | Change |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Orange County Fire Authority* (OCFA)     | \$1,130,000                                              | \$1,130,000                                                | 0      |
| Orange County CEO                        | \$45,640                                                 | \$45,640                                                   | 0      |
| Orange County Community Resources (OCCR) | \$19,269                                                 | \$19,269                                                   | 0      |
| OCCR - OC Animal Care                    | \$42,840                                                 | \$42,840                                                   | 0      |
| OCCR - OC Parks                          | \$152,825                                                | \$152,825                                                  | 0      |
| Orange County Counsel                    | \$47,778                                                 | \$47,778                                                   | 0      |
| Orange County Health Care Agency (HCA)   | \$51,412                                                 | \$51,412                                                   | 0      |
| Orange County Public Works (OCPW)        | \$20,533,449                                             | \$20,533,449                                               | 0      |
| Orange County Sheriff-Coroner (OCSD)     | \$1,934,877                                              | \$1,934,877                                                | 0      |
| Orange County Social Services Agency     | \$46,657                                                 | \$46,657                                                   | 0      |
| Orange County Waste and Recycling        | \$6,592                                                  | \$6,592                                                    | 0      |
| Rancho Santa Margarita                   | \$36,338                                                 | \$36,338                                                   | 0      |
| Trabuco Canyon Water District            | \$1,001,000                                              | \$1,001,000                                                | 0      |
| Operational Total                        | \$25,048,677                                             | \$25,048,677                                               | 0      |

\* OCFA entered into a cost share agreement with the United States Forest Service (USFS), the State of California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire), and the Riverside County Fire Department for costs related to this incident. Because they are a separate government entity, no additional information is included here; it can be obtained through a request to OCFA.

In April, the Sheriff-Coroner and OCFA Fire Chief sent a joint letter to the Director of the California Office of Emergency Services providing additional information on the timeline of the Airport Fire and the requests for Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) support; requesting an appeal; and requesting that the Director conduct an investigation into what occurred. No response has been received at the time of this status report submission.

The County continues to facilitate the submission of County costs and supporting documentation to the Cal OES Recovery Unit in pursuit of FMAG-alternative funding through the California Disaster Assistance Act or Federal Emergency Management Agency Public Assistance. No eligibility determination has been made at the time of this status report submission. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, Cal OES advised that no eligibility determination has been made at the time of this status report submission.

### **Recovery Efforts**

Phase 1 (Hazardous Debris Removal): Completed; no change from previous report.

Phase 1.5 (Watershed Protection): Completed; no change from previous report.

Phase 2 (Private Property Debris Removal [PPDR]): Direct assistance was not available through Cal OES so the County has proceeded with County resources, including contractors and coordinating with volunteer organizations.

- **OC Debris Removal**
  - Long Canyon debris removal continues thru the end of May.
  - Holy Jim debris removal pending reopening of Trabuco Creek Road in mid-June
  - El Cariso debris removal pending asbestos testing. Continue to work with Procurement to issue work order to contractor
- **Riverside County (RC) Debris Removal**
  - Pre-job walkthroughs with property owners are ongoing.
  - CEO and County Counsel completed an addendum to Right of Entry form for requests to salvage large items during debris removals.
  - Supplemental ASR for RivCo debris removals going to Board on 5/20/25.
- **Other OCPW Activities**
  - Operations and Maintenance crews began working to reopen Trabuco Creek Road on 5/5/25. Anticipate completion by mid-June.
  - They continue to provide support to secure Holy Jim cabin areas while Trabuco Creek Road is inaccessible.
  - OCPW continues to coordinate to provide a 24/7 security guard.
  - Installed hard road closure using k-rail about 500 feet past the creek crossing.
  - Once the roadway to the Forest is cleared enough, k-rail will be placed to prevent trespassing.
  - OCPW continues to work on plan for the future installation of permanent gates at the entrance to the road and past the Flyers Club.

**Post Fire Debris Flow Planning**Watershed Emergency Response Team Report (WERT; private lands)

CalFire and the California Geological Survey published the Watershed Emergency Response Team (WERT) 2024 Airport Fire (CA-ORC-127883) on October 25, 2024. This report presents the results of a rapid evaluation of post fire geologic and hydrologic hazards to life-safety and property (i.e., collectively known as “Values-at-Risk” or “VARs”) for private lands affected by the Airport Fire. These threats can include flooding, debris flows, erosions, and other hazards. The report includes preliminary emergency protective measures needed to avoid or minimize threats to life-safety and property. The full report is available to the public at:

<https://app.box.com/s/11tq7s11ogov37ceshxa5kbdhxi pfmu/file/1683004722491>

**Recommended Action**

Approve continuation of Local Emergency for the Airport Fire; and order review to determine need for continuing local emergency for June 24, 2025, 9:30 a.m. and every 60 days thereafter until terminated.

cc: Interim County Executive Officer Michelle Aguirre  
Clerk of the Board Robin Stieler  
Undersheriff Jeff Hallock, Sheriff-Coroner Department