

Wildfires Recovery and Resilience Toolkit: 10 Essential Checklists for Rebuilding and Preparedness

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Introduction

Recovering from a disaster like the Los Angeles wildfires can be an overwhelming and complex process, requiring careful planning, organization, and collaboration. To support individuals, families, and businesses directly or indirectly impacted by the wildfires, PMI Los Angeles Chapter (PMI-LA) have developed 10 project management-related checklists designed to guide you through every stage of recovery. These checklists cover critical areas such as emergency preparedness, insurance claims, financial assistance, rebuilding, mental health, and long-term resilience. By breaking down the recovery process into manageable steps, these tools provide a structured approach to navigating the challenges of rebuilding your life, home, or business. Whether you need help documenting losses, accessing resources, or planning for future emergencies, these checklists are tailored to empower you with actionable strategies and ensure a smoother path to recovery.

1. Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation Checklist

- **Purpose:** To ensure readiness for future emergencies and streamline evacuation processes.
 - **Steps:**
 1. **Create a Family or Business Emergency Plan:**
 - Identify multiple evacuation routes in case of road closures.
 - Designate an out-of-area contact person for family or team members to check in with.
 - Include plans for pets or service animals (e.g., carriers, food, and water).
 2. **Assemble a "Go Bag":**
 - Include copies of IDs, insurance policies, medical records, and a list of emergency contacts.
 - Pack a first aid kit, multi-tool, extra batteries, and a phone charger.
 - Add personal items like glasses, medications, and comfort items for children.
 3. **Backup Critical Data:**
 - Use cloud storage services like Google Drive, Dropbox, or iCloud.
 - Store physical copies of important documents in a fireproof safe.
 4. **Subscribe to Alerts:**
 - Sign up for local emergency notifications (e.g., NotifyLA, FEMA app, or Cal Fire alerts).
 - Monitor local radio stations for real-time updates.
 5. **Practice Evacuation Drills:**
 - Test your plan regularly with family or team members.
 - Identify safe zones and practice reaching them quickly.
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2. Insurance Claims and Documentation Checklist

- **Purpose:** To assist in managing insurance claims effectively.
 - **Steps:**
 1. **Obtain a Full Copy of Your Insurance Policy:**
 - Request a digital and physical copy from your insurance provider.
 - Review coverage for "Loss of Use," personal property, and rebuilding costs.
 2. **Document All Damages:**
 - Take high-resolution photos and videos of all affected areas.
 - Include close-ups of structural damage, furniture, and personal belongings.
 3. **Create an Inventory of Lost or Damaged Items:**
 - Use apps like Sortly or Encircle to organize and document items.
 - Include brand names, purchase dates, and estimated replacement costs.
 4. **Track Communications:**
 - Use a dedicated notebook or app to log calls, emails, and letters.
 - Note the names of representatives, dates, and key points discussed.
 5. **Request Advances for Living Expenses:**
 - Ask for immediate funds to cover essentials like clothing, toiletries, and temporary housing.
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3. Financial Recovery and Assistance Checklist

- **Purpose:** To help individuals and businesses access financial aid and manage recovery costs.
- **Steps:**
 1. **Apply for FEMA Assistance:**
 - Register at www.disasterassistance.gov or call 1-800-621-FEMA.

- Provide proof of identity, address, and details of damages.

2. **Explore Local Grants and Relief Funds:**

- Check for programs like the California Wildfire Relief Fund or Red Cross assistance.
- Contact local nonprofits or community organizations for additional support.

3. **Contact Lenders:**

- Request mortgage or loan forbearance to temporarily pause payments.
- Ask about disaster-specific relief programs for credit cards or auto loans.

4. **Track Recovery-Related Expenses:**

- Save receipts for all purchases related to recovery, including temporary housing, food, and supplies.
- Use apps like Expensify or Mint to organize expenses.

5. **Consult a Financial Advisor or CPA:**

- Learn about tax deductions for uninsured losses and disaster-related expenses.
- Explore options for carrying losses back to previous tax years.

4. **Rebuilding and Reconstruction Checklist**

- **Purpose:** To guide individuals and businesses through the rebuilding process.

- **Steps:**

1. **Obtain Necessary Permits:**

- Contact your local building department for permits related to debris removal, erosion control, and reconstruction.
- Verify if your insurance covers permit fees.

2. **Hire Licensed Contractors:**

- Use resources like the California Contractors State License Board (CSLB) to verify licenses.
 - Request detailed contracts outlining costs, timelines, and materials.
- 3. Ensure Compliance with Building Codes:**
- Incorporate fire-resistant materials like metal roofing, stucco siding, and tempered glass windows.
 - Follow local codes for defensible space and fire safety.
- 4. Plan for Erosion Control:**
- Install measures like retaining walls, sandbags, or vegetation to stabilize soil.
 - Consult with a landscape architect or erosion control specialist.
- 5. Monitor Progress:**
- Use project management tools like Trello or Asana to track milestones and deadlines.
 - Schedule regular check-ins with contractors.
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5. Business Continuity and Recovery Checklist

- **Purpose:** To help businesses resume operations and plan for future resilience.
- **Steps:**
 - 1. Update Business Continuity Plans:**
 - Identify critical operations and prioritize their recovery.
 - Develop contingency plans for supply chain disruptions.
 - 2. Notify Stakeholders:**
 - Communicate with clients, suppliers, and employees about operational changes.
 - Use email, social media, or your website to provide updates.
 - 3. Secure Temporary Office Space:**
 - Explore coworking spaces, shared offices, or remote work solutions.

- Apply for grants or loans to cover relocation costs.

4. Apply for Business Interruption Insurance:

- File claims for lost income, payroll, and additional expenses.
- Provide detailed documentation of losses and expenses.

5. Leverage Government and Nonprofit Resources:

- Contact the Small Business Administration (SBA) for disaster loans.
 - Join local chambers of commerce for networking and support.
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6. Mental Health and Emotional Recovery Checklist

- **Purpose:** To support emotional well-being during and after the recovery process.

- **Steps:**

1. Access Counseling Services:

- Contact the LA County Mental Health Department or Disaster Distress Helpline (1-800-985-5990).

2. Join Support Groups:

- Look for local or online groups for wildfire survivors.
- Share experiences and coping strategies with others.

3. Take Breaks from Recovery Tasks:

- Schedule time for hobbies, exercise, or relaxation.
- Avoid burnout by delegating tasks when possible.

4. Encourage Open Communication:

- Talk openly with family or team members about feelings and challenges.

5. Use Mindfulness or Stress Management Apps:

- Try apps like Calm, Headspace, or Insight Timer to manage stress.
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7. Community Engagement and Networking Checklist

- **Purpose:** To foster collaboration and share resources within the community.
 - **Steps:**
 1. **Join Local Recovery Groups:**
 - Participate in community task forces or online forums like Nextdoor.
 2. **Share Knowledge and Resources:**
 - Offer your expertise and learn from others' experiences.
 3. **Volunteer for Recovery Efforts:**
 - Help with cleanup, rebuilding, or organizing donations.
 4. **Attend Workshops or Webinars:**
 - Learn about rebuilding, insurance claims, and disaster preparedness.
 5. **Stay Informed:**
 - Follow local news and updates on recovery initiatives.
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8. Environmental Cleanup and Safety Checklist

- **Purpose:** To ensure safe and effective cleanup of wildfire-affected areas.
- **Steps:**
 1. **Wear Protective Gear:**
 - Use N95 masks, gloves, and boots to protect against debris and toxins.
 2. **Test for Hazardous Materials:**
 - Hire professionals to check for asbestos, lead, or other harmful substances.
 3. **Dispose of Debris Properly:**
 - Follow local regulations for hazardous waste removal.
 4. **Implement Erosion Control Measures:**
 - Use sandbags, mulch, or vegetation to stabilize soil.

5. **Coordinate with Local Agencies:**

- Work with city or county officials for debris removal assistance.
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9. **Data and Technology Recovery Checklist**

- **Purpose:** To restore and protect critical data and technology systems.
 - **Steps:**
 1. **Recover Data from Backups:**
 - Access cloud storage or external drives for important files.
 2. **Replace Damaged Hardware:**
 - Purchase new equipment and ensure compatibility with existing systems.
 3. **Update Cybersecurity Measures:**
 - Install antivirus software and enable two-factor authentication.
 4. **Document Lessons Learned:**
 - Revise IT disaster recovery plans based on the experience.
 5. **Consult IT Professionals:**
 - Seek expert help for system restoration and upgrades.
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10. **Long-Term Resilience and Mitigation Checklist**

- **Purpose:** To prepare for future disasters and reduce risks.
- **Steps:**
 1. **Retrofit Homes or Buildings:**
 - Use fire-resistant materials like metal roofing or stucco siding.
 2. **Create Defensible Space:**
 - Clear vegetation and debris within 30-100 feet of structures.
 3. **Install Air Filtration Systems:**



- Use HEPA filters to reduce indoor smoke exposure.
4. **Develop a Wildfire-Specific Emergency Plan:**
- Include evacuation routes, communication plans, and supply lists.
5. **Participate in Community Programs:**
- Join initiatives like Firewise USA to improve neighborhood safety.