

A nighttime photograph of a residential street. In the background, a wildfire is visible, with bright orange and yellow flames rising behind a line of trees. The street is illuminated by streetlights, and a few people and a car are visible in the foreground. The overall scene is dark, with the fire providing the primary light source.

WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

LATINO CONSIDERATIONS



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BACKGROUND

Our nation's greenhouse gas emissions and resulting climate change are leading to higher temperatures, record setting heat waves, and drier and more arid conditions in the West. These conditions matched with underfunded forest management, outdated land use policies and practices, and more people living in fire-prone areas has led to catastrophic wildfires that affect more people. Since 2000, an average of 73,200 wildfires burned an average of 6.9 million acres, a figure which has nearly doubled the average annual acreage burned in the 1990s (3.3 million acres). In 2017 alone, wildfires burned 10 million acres, which is an area larger than the state of Maryland. In addition, a new study has found that approximately 85% of wildfires are caused by human activity and one in three houses in the US resides in the wildland urban interface (approximately 44 million homes).

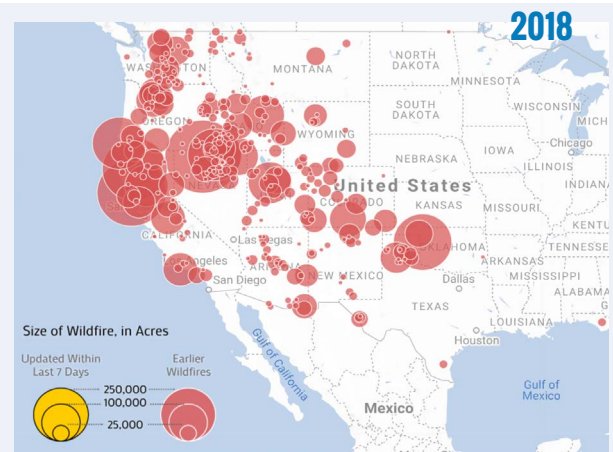
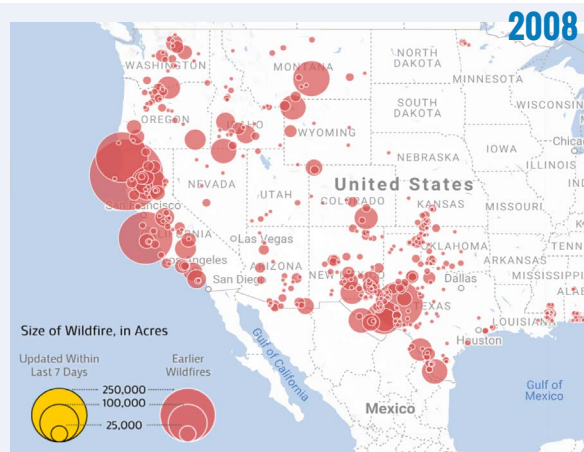
These conditions are having severe consequences on communities, most significantly marginalized and vulnerable communities, such as low-income, disabled, elderly and communities of color. The effects of wildfires range from access to emergency response, disaster relief, and public and mental health services to job security, economic productivity, land use planning and affordable housing.

Latino communities are more vulnerable to experiencing these adverse effects of wildfires and Latino voters are not only aware of these impacts, but are ready for decision makers to take action to address climate change, provide more funding for forest management and community readiness, and ensure communities have access to the services they need to plan for, respond to, and recover and adapt to life with wildfires. Latinos need a seat at the table when funding does come, and when forest restoration projects take place. Overwhelmingly, the forestry field is white and Latinos are virtually unrepresented.

THE SPREAD OF WILDFIRES

COMPARING WILDFIRES AND SIZE BETWEEN 2008 AND 2018.

MAPS PROVIDED BY ECO WEST
[HTTPS://VIS.ECOWEST.ORG](https://vis.ecowest.org)



Certain factors create additional barriers and challenges for Latino communities before, during, and after a wildfire. These may include distrust of government agencies, emergency responders or service providers; language and cultural barriers; access to information or alerts; or socioeconomic factors, such as access to transportation, adequate and affordable housing, income, and eligibility for insurance or government services.

There is a growing body of work, models, and frameworks in addition to grassroots, grassstops, and government efforts regarding emergency management and disaster relief practices to ensure Latino and other diverse communities are prepared for, appropriately respond to, and recover from disasters, such as hurricanes, heatwaves, severe storms and flooding. When wildfires take place, wildfire smoke is widespread and can last for days. Low-income and minority community homes often don't have the necessary air filters or are unaware of the effects of wildfire smoke. During wildfire season, the west typically has the worst air-quality in the nation. It is our job in the west, to acknowledge wildfires as equally catastrophic disasters that have the potential to devastate our communities, especially marginalized and vulnerable populations. Wildfires can also indirectly affect vulnerable populations during mandatory wildfire evacuation orders. Some vulnerable populations will not be able to offset the costs of lodging, transportation, and meals. These costs are oftentimes not covered by insurances. In the face of rising temperatures, a more arid climate, and a growing wildland urban interface, acting now is particularly critical for Latino communities living in these fire prone regions with inequitable access to resources and services.

The resources and tools provided in this toolkit are meant for educational purposes and are not meant to be prescriptive for all communities. Communities across the country are unique and require informed agencies, organizations, and decision makers to make the best decisions for their constituents based on existing models and frameworks of what has and has not worked previously, in addition to active community engagement and collaborative planning for a tailored approach and innovative practices and policies. While this toolkit contains multiple resources, this is not a complete literature review and there are many frameworks, strategies and efforts that may be useful that are not included in this toolkit.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Disproportionate effects of wildfires and natural disasters on marginalized communities

- The Unequal Vulnerability of Communities of Color to Wildfire (<http://bit.ly/2mhMiNN>)
- Filling the Gaps: Inequitable Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief Policies Serving Immigrant and Refugee Communities (<http://bit.ly/2kHGQDp>)
- Greater Impact: How Disasters Affect People of Low Socioeconomic Status (<http://bit.ly/2mLx6J7>)
- Over 85% of Wildfires are Caused by Humans (<http://bit.ly/2metPSq>)
- Wildfires Projected to Burn Twice as Many Acres by 2050 (<http://bit.ly/2mktz4o>)
- The New Normal: Wildfire Risk in the Face of Climate Change (<https://on.edison.com/2mG1KmW>)



For source materials, additional resources and other supporting documentation, please visit hispanicaccess.org/wildfires



REGULATIONS & POLICIES

Land Use Planning & Cost Burdens

Policies and regulations at all levels of government - local, state, and federal - can have profound effects on communities and families before, during, and after a wildfire. It is critical for community members, organizations, agencies, and decision makers to understand the intersectionality of land use planning, zoning, insurance policy, affordable housing, transportation and other urban and rural policies in order to survive, mitigate illness, death, and property damage, and recover from catastrophic disasters such as wildfires. Proactive and integrated policies and regulations particularly matter for our most underserved and marginalized communities that rely on prepared, organized, and coordinated agencies and organizations to provide critical services during emergencies, which already expose these communities to even more vulnerabilities.

Latinos have a higher poverty rate compared to the national average, experience a higher housing cost burden, and have a greater ratio of renters compared to homeowners. Because of these circumstances, Latino communities are at a greater risk of rental gouging and price gouging for goods and services, in addition to difficulty in accessing affordable housing, recovery services, and disaster relief after a wildfire. When discussing solutions for wildfire preparedness and mitigation through policies and regulations, it is also important to consider energy insecurity, poverty rates and low income households, particularly in deciding whether ratepayers, taxpayers, utilities or other funding structures bear the cost burden of preparing for, recovering, and adapting to life with wildfires.

- The amount of Latinos who are “housing cost burdened” — spending 30% or more of household income on housing costs — grew from 42.4% in 2000 to 56.9% in 2015.
- More Latinos rent their homes (54%) than their white peers (28%).

- Since 1990, the Latino population in the rural United States has more than doubled. A 2010 study found that overall, rates of Latino segregation were the highest when they settled into new destinations lacking established Latino communities, particularly in suburban and rural areas.
- 12% of US Latinos do not have access to a car, almost double the percentage of their white counterparts (6.5%). Latinos are more likely than any other group to live in a multigenerational household with young and/or aging family members who can't drive themselves to school, work, healthcare and other services. Not having access to a car is especially difficult when the Wildland Urban Interface homes are close to forests/ in the danger of a wildfire, need to evacuate, and not necessarily for wildfires but also evacuations during power outages.

Not only is mobility an issue for rural Latinos to access schools, jobs, healthcare, food, and other daily services and necessities, but it is also a critical component to evacuate and access services, school, and employment during and after a wildfire.

- Historically, utility infrastructure has been responsible for less than 10% of reported wildfires. However, fires attributed to power lines consist of roughly half of the most destructive fires in California history. San Diego Gas & Electric reports that 60% of its lines are buried underground, including rural power lines that run through wildfire prone areas.
- Over 40% of Latino households are energy insecure - they cannot afford the energy required to heat and cool their homes, refrigerate food and medicine, or they make the tough decision between paying their electric bill or paying for food, medical care, and other basic necessities. Loss of food, electronics, etc., during prolonged power outages, such as planned outages during wildfire conditions, or what PG&E calls Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) are often not covered by insurance, adding costs to homes/families. Households experiencing energy insecurity were also more likely to live in homes built before 1990.

With increasing threats of wildfires resulting in higher costs for wildfire damages, liability, recovery, and utility-caused wildfire prevention and mitigation strategies, there are discussions and legislation being introduced across the country regarding the funding structures, and who should be responsible for these costs - utilities, tax payers, ratepayers, or other funding structures. It is critical for communities, decision makers, public utility commissions and legislators to understand the cost burden and impact the resulting policies and regulations will have on low-income and Latino communities.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Land Use Planning to Reduce Wildfire Risk (<http://bit.ly/2kLCj31>)
- Community Wildfire Safety Through Regulation (<http://bit.ly/2mi6hvM>)
- How Do Power Lines Cause Wildfires? (<http://bit.ly/2mMJkRT>)
- The Link Between Power Lines and Wildfires (<http://bit.ly/2lhxaQr>)
- Wildfire Prevention Technologies (<https://on.edison.com/2lDyfCf>)
- How Can Intelligent Power Line Monitoring Mitigate Wildfire Risks? (<http://bit.ly/2lgCl2V>)
- California Alternate Rates for Energy & Family Electric Rate Assistance (<https://on.sce.com/2mzHbc6>)
- Undergrounding: Understanding the Facts (<https://on.edison.com/2myCglh>)
- University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, Forest Stewardship Workshops (https://ucanr.edu/sites/forestry/Forest_Stewardship/ForestStewardshipWorkshops/)

RESEARCH & RESOURCES FOR SOLUTIONS

From prohibiting price gouging, expediting building permits and fees for recovery, implementing power line monitoring, to working with Latino planners and understanding how to build for and with Latino communities - decision makers have the opportunity to incorporate existing and successful land use planning tools and work with organizations and members of their community to plan for, build and adapt their municipalities and states to be more resilient to wildfires and inclusive of all constituents.

- California Has Updated Its Price Gouging Regulations for Disaster Zones (<http://bit.ly/2l1QWzn>)
- Sonoma County Resiliency Permit Center (<http://bit.ly/2mfcKb1>)
- American Planning Association - Latinos & Planning Division (<https://www.planning.org/divisions/latinos/>)
- Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire (<http://bit.ly/2mfdSLN>)
- Latino Lifestyle & The New Urbanism: Synergy Against Sprawl (<http://bit.ly/2mdHZmF>)
- FEMA - Your Role in Fire Adapted Communities: How the fire service, local elected officials, and the public can work together (<http://bit.ly/2l1TX2F>)
- Wildland Hazards & Building Code (<http://bit.ly/2l4llyt>)
- Disaster Safety - Regional Wildfire Retrofit Guides (<http://bit.ly/2kNIZh6>)
- Ready, Set, Go - Talking Points for RSG Adoption by Local Decision Makers (<http://bit.ly/2mMPL7v>)
- Center for American Progress - Before the Fire: Protecting Vulnerable Communities from Wildfire (<https://ampr.gs/2kIKKfj>)
- Washington State Electric Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Task Force, Substitute Senate Bill 5305 (<http://bit.ly/2mJgd5>)
- Power Blackouts to Prevent Wildfires (<http://bit.ly/2l4lqQc>)
- California Approves Power Outages to Prevent Wildfires (<http://bit.ly/2mnwLfn>)



PUBLIC & MENTAL HEALTH

Many Latinos lack adequate access to healthcare services due to a variety of reasons from being uninsured or underinsured, transportation, linguistic or cultural barriers and literacy, to mistrust of agencies or providers, or inappropriate and inadequate care and follow up. These challenges are exacerbated by emergencies such as wildfires, which lead to increased health risks. Smoke and air pollution from wildfires can aggravate existing health conditions such as asthma, chronic diseases, and disproportionately affect the young and elderly. It is important that communities, decision makers, organizations, and legislators understand the public and mental health risks disproportionately experienced by Latinos during and after a wildfire.

- In 2015, 19.5% of the Latino population was not covered by health insurance, as compared to 6.3% of the white population that is uninsured.
- In 2015, 17.5% of Latinos from all age groups did not have a “usual place to go for medical care”, as compared to 11.2% of their non-Latino white counterparts. Whereas for young adults (aged 19-25), these percentages were 34.9% for Latinos and 25.7% for the non-Latino white population.
- 60% of US Latinos struggle to communicate with a healthcare provider due to language or cultural barriers.
- A 2017 study found that 70% of Latinos list family, friends, churches, or community groups as their main sources of health information and 83% obtain some of their health-related information from media sources (television, radio, newspapers, magazines, or the internet).
- The poverty among Latinos in 2016 was 19.4%, compared to the national poverty rate of 12.7%. This means that 1 in 5 Latinos will not have the economic resources to prepare, adapt, or cope with health issues associated with wildfires and poor air quality.

ASTHMA

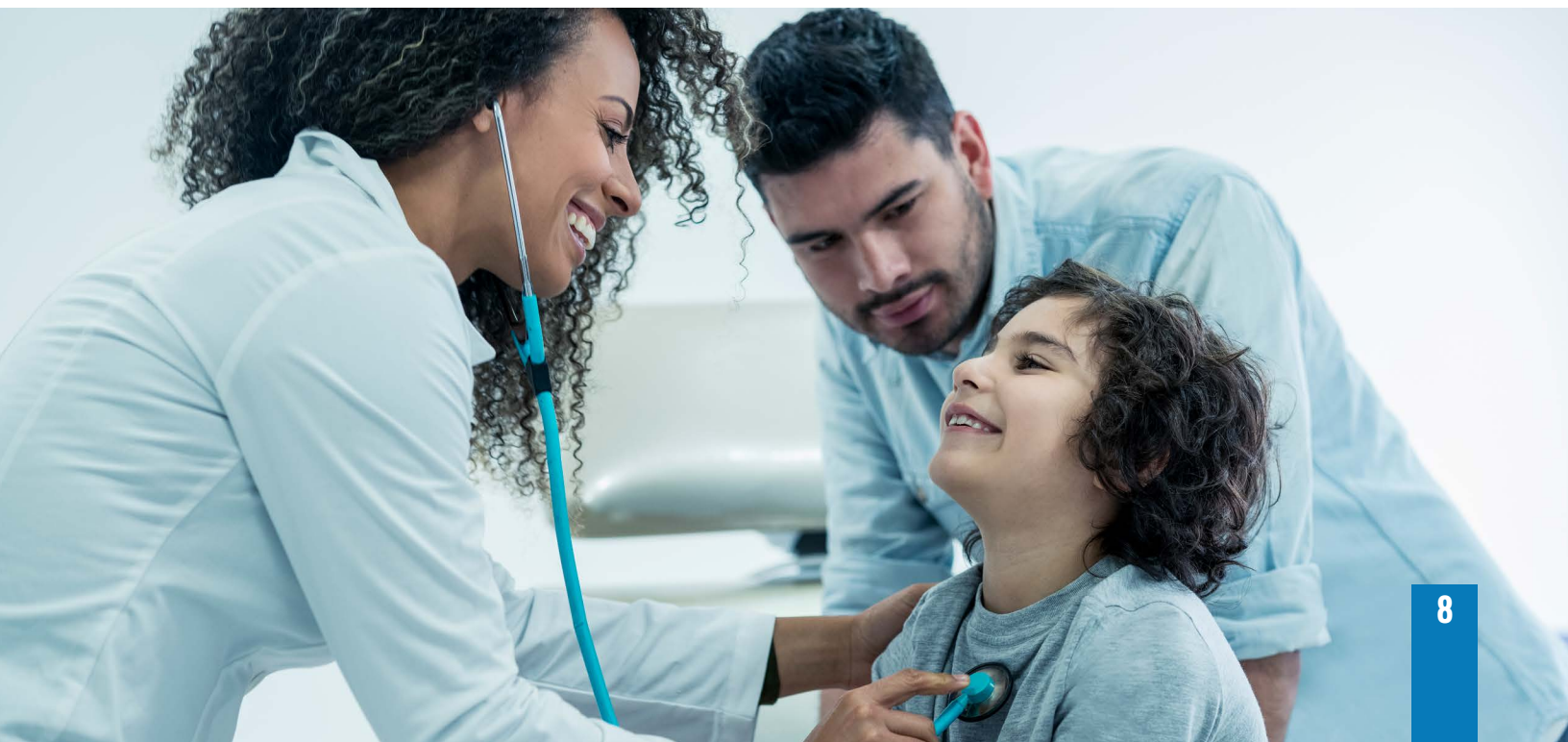
- Latino children are 60% more at risk than their white counterparts of having asthma attacks exacerbated by air pollution. Direct exposure to wildfire smoke can disproportionately affect Latinos already struggling with asthma.
- Compared to non-Latino whites, Latinos with asthma are less likely to be prescribed appropriate asthma medications and less likely to have access to asthma specialists.
- Those that have an asthma emergency that sends them to the ER or hospital are less likely to receive follow-up care or an asthma action plan.

The high rates of asthma among Latino populations in combination with the lack of or inappropriate services and inadequate socio-economic resources, leads to higher risk of illness and death among Latinos when asthma and other chronic diseases are aggravated by wildfire smoke and air pollution.

MENTAL HEALTH

- One study found 36% of Hispanics with depression receive care, versus 60% of whites.
- Approximately 33% of Latino adults with mental illness receive treatment each year compared to the U.S. average of 43%.
- Recent Latino immigrants are at risk for traumatic exposure both before and after migration, PTSD, depression and stress associated with the immigration experience and the challenges of integration versus marginalization in the US. Individuals who come from countries with a history of political violence often have multiple traumatic experiences.

The stress and potential traumatization caused by wildfires, emergency evacuation, or interaction with government agencies during these events, only puts recent Latino immigrants at higher risk of developing or exacerbating mental health issues.



ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURE

- There are 2.5 - 3 million farmworkers in the United States, 80% of whom are Hispanic or Latino.
- Latinos make up the highest percentage of natural resource laborers, 16.8% -more than 6% than any other race/ethnicity. These high rates of outdoor employment leads to higher risks by Latino workers of being exposed to unhealthy levels of smoke and air pollution during and after a wildfire.

For additional information on the effects of wildfires on public and mental health, review: Psychiatric Disorders Among Adults Seeking Emergency Disaster Assistance After a Wildland-Urban Interface Fire (<http://bit.ly/2mNpXI6>).

RESEARCH & RESOURCES FOR SOLUTIONS

Public and mental health resources and services are important for thriving societies. It is critical that decision makers understand how these resources and services can be integrated into wildfire planning, response and recovery plans, particularly in efforts that address the barriers and unique needs of Latino communities and families.

- Wildfire Mental Health Collaborative (<http://bit.ly/2lnBmOB>)
- Wildfire & Health (<http://bit.ly/2kOAhYy>)
- Hispanics and Healthcare in the United States: Access, Information and Knowledge (<https://pewrsr.ch/2kPXiBB>)
- A Guide to Choosing and Adapting Culturally and Linguistically Competent Health Promotion Materials (<http://bit.ly/2kTynxd>)
- Mental Health After a Wildfire (Boulder County) (<http://bit.ly/2mnCD8A>)
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network - Wildfire Resources (<http://bit.ly/2lo1ZTY>)
- National Latino Behavioral Health Association (<http://www.nlbha.org/>)
- Visit Air Now for the air quality index in your community (<http://bit.ly/2kVDsoM>)
- Fires and Your Health (<https://www.airnow.gov/wildfires/>)
- Reduce Exposure to Ash After Returning Home (<http://bit.ly/2mqdlGL>)
- Wearing a Respirator Suitable for Wildfire Smoke (N95 Mask) (<https://on.ny.gov/2msJYDW>)
- Latino Worker Safety Center (<https://lwsc.org/>)
- California Worker Safety & Health in Wildfire Regions (<http://bit.ly/2mQ2ypr>)
- California - Protecting Outdoor Workers Exposed to Smoke From Wildfires (<http://bit.ly/2mW57Wd>)
- California Medical Baseline Allowance (<https://on.sce.com/2l6GLJO>)



RESPONSE & RECOVERY

Emergency management systems have historically been built and structured without the needs of Latino communities taken into consideration. Due to this lack of consideration, Latinos are more likely to experience delayed alerts, slow access to information and emergency response services, in addition to inadequate or insufficient disaster relief and recovery resources. In order to truly build equitable emergency management systems, agencies, organizations, and decision makers must proactively collaborate at all levels - local, federal, and state - and plan with their Latino constituents to build response and recovery systems that serve all members of society.

- From disaster damage assessments to final permits on rebuilt homes, the chain of data collections, analyses, and decisions is always complicated, often inconsistently regulated, and likely to leave gaps through which the neediest and most underserved disaster victims can slip.
- One study of Hispanic renters found that 66% do not have renters insurance, 5% do not know, and 29% are insured.
- While 79% of Latino adults in the U.S. believe preparedness is a very important issue, only 39% of Latino households have taken any steps to prepare for an emergency.
- A 2007 study found that of 301 organizational websites on emergency preparedness - including government, private, nonprofit, community, and academic - the vast majority of organizations involved in emergency response preparedness had not integrated the needs of racially and ethnically diverse communities. Of these organizations, 49% made no mention of these diverse communities, 38% made some mention primarily in the context of translated materials, and 13% did focus on these diverse communities.

A Duke University study identified significant barriers and challenges in immigrant communities in the face of emergency preparedness and disaster relief:

- Lack of inclusion of all community members in disaster planning
- Linguistic barriers in disaster preparedness and response
- Lack of readily available translated/understandable preparedness materials
- Lack of easily accessible translated emergency alerts
- Lack of translated signage and culturally sensitive bilingual/multilingual service providers
- Lack of cultural competence by service providers
- Failure to inform immigrants of their right to disaster aid

- Failure to address fears of deportation/public charge and distrust of government
- Discrimination and racial profiling leading to exclusion of individuals from shelters/aid and inquiries about immigration status
- Unique barriers facing immigrants
- Lack of transportation assistance (especially for migrant workers)
- Unclear process for responding to loss of documents (by USCIS)
- Failure to acknowledge structural inequities and different social structures in diverse, rural communities
- Lack of coordination between different government agencies and tiers in disaster response

RESEARCH & RESOURCES FOR SOLUTIONS

As the Latino population continues to grow in both urban and rural communities, decision makers must address how traditional emergency management systems have not equitably served marginalized and vulnerable communities in order to make a proactive shift to ensure all members of society are prepared for wildfires and have equitable access to resources and services to respond to and recover after these disasters.

- NALEO National Policy Institute on Emergency Response & Management (<http://bit.ly/2lpjC5q>)
- National and Seasonal Farmworker Emergency Preparedness Planning Guide (<http://bit.ly/2mwqHRJ>)
- National Resource Center on Advancing Emergency Preparedness for Culturally Diverse Communities (<http://bit.ly/2kVWhlq>)
- A Guide for Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness Planning (<http://bit.ly/2mUbl9X>)
- A Mobile Medical Care Approach Targeting Underserved Populations in Post-Hurricane Katrina Mississippi (<http://bit.ly/2kUEZeL>)
- Disaster Aid Eligibility Processes Risk Cutting Out Low-Income Households in Need (<https://urbn.is/2mpoql8>)
- Center for American Progress - After the Fire: Vulnerable Communities Respond and Rebuild (<https://ampr.gs/2mXxR1R>)
- Problems with damage assessments can keep disaster victims from receiving the help they need (<https://urbn.is/2kRoNYv>)
- How Better Data Can Inform Decisions and Improve Disaster Recovery (<https://urbn.is/2kRPxLD>)
- National Low Income Housing Coalition: Disaster Recovery Coalition - 7 Principles of Disaster Recovery (<http://bit.ly/2mmJCyt>)
- National Low Income Housing Coalition: Disaster Housing Recovery Educational Resources (<http://bit.ly/2mUeLJP>)
- Google Crisis Map: Weather, Hazards & Emergency Preparedness (<http://bit.ly/2kRwGQJ>)
- Fire, Weather & Avalanche: Active Fire & Weather Maps (<http://bit.ly/2kWojAy>)
- FEMA's Failure to Address Long-Term Housing Needs of Survivors (<http://bit.ly/2kUIW35>)
- Disaster Rental Assistance Programs at FEMA and HUD (<http://bit.ly/2lozoir>)
- Addressing the Needs of Immigrants and Limited English Proficient (LEP) Communities in Disaster Planning and Relief (<http://bit.ly/2mr5Uz4>)



MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

Providing alerts, updates and communicating with the public is critical for successful emergency management systems. Ensuring these communications are accessible to all members of a community, including individuals with limited English

proficiency, is not only good practice, but it is also the law under Title VI of the Civil Right Act of 1964. Historically, however, emergency management systems have overlooked Latino communities that speak Spanish and indigenous languages. An overlooked strategy to quickly and efficiently engage Latino communities before, during, and after a wildfire is through Spanish language media outlets, church postings and other media platforms commonly used by Latinos. It is critical that decision makers proactively survey and engage Latino populations in their communities to ensure that emergency response communications strategies accurately reflect the unique needs of Latinos and other diverse communities in their jurisdiction.

- 95% of Hispanic consumers tune into the radio in an average week.
- In 2010, the number of US Latino households with TV sets increased by 3.1%, which was three times more than all households in the U.S. general market, and television advertising grew 10%, doubling the bounce that network TV overall received.
- More than 90% of Hispanics under 50 use the Internet, compared to 67% for those 50 to 64 and 42% for those 65 and over. 94% of U.S. Latinos who speak primarily English use the Internet, compared to 86% of those who are bilingual and 74% of those who speak primarily Spanish.
- In a 2018 survey of Spanish-speaking participants about their experiences during the wildfires in northern California, over 60% of respondents turned to TV outlets, over 40% to Facebook, over 40% to Nixle, over 30% to radio outlets, over 20% to websites, and less than 10% to newspapers for information when the fires first broke out.

RESEARCH & RESOURCES FOR SOLUTIONS

Proactively engaging Latinos in emergency management planning and communication systems will ensure critical emergency response and recovery information reaches all members of a community. Latino communities are diverse and the manner in which families and communities share information and communicate can vary depending on their primary language, national origin, socioeconomic status and access to technology, and preferred media platforms. It is essential for decision makers, agencies and emergency response managers to understand the unique communication patterns among Latinos in their communities to adequately and efficiently communicate with all members of society.

- Desconectado: How Emergency Information Got Lost in Translation During the Northern California Wildfires. (<http://bit.ly/2kRBF3U>)
- Reaching and Engaging with Hispanic Communities: A Research-Informed Communication Guide for Nonprofits, Policymakers, and Funders (<https://bit.ly/3Ptod1u>)
- Ready, Set, Go - Media Advisory Template (<http://bit.ly/2lrXt6m>) Spanish template (<http://bit.ly/2mXl4MR>)
- Wildfire Safety Social Media Toolkit (<http://bit.ly/2mrdhGV>)



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