



October 2007

California Wildfires:

An employment and
wage profile of the
affected counties

Issues in Labor Statistics

Employment and wage profile of the counties affected by the October 2007 California wildfires

In late October 2007, several major wildfires engulfed large tracts of land in the southern region of California, forcing the evacuation of half a million people¹. Adverse climatic conditions contributed to the rapid spread of the fire, which has resulted in the loss of lives, the destruction of homes and other property, and the disruption of business activities. Out of 98.8 million acres², 0.5 percent of California's land area has been affected.

On October 24, 2007, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties as eligible to receive public assistance for the wildfires³ (see Chart 1). These seven counties comprise 26.2 percent of California's total land area and house 57.9 percent of the state's population (see Table 1). As of October 29, 2007, the fires had burned 518,000 acres in those counties, or two percent of those counties' total land area. By then, 369,000 acres had burned in San Diego County, accounting for 71.4 percent of the burned acreage in the counties eligible for federal aid⁴

The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program publishes county-level industry data on establishments, employment, and wages based on a virtual census encompassing 96.4 percent⁵ of civilian employment in the United States. This profile presents county-wide QCEW data for 2006 for the areas affected by the wildfires. Only a very small percentage of the employment in the FEMA-designated counties may be directly affected by the fires. (QCEW data for the fourth quarter of 2007, which will reflect the impact of the wildfires, will be available in July 2008.) A map with economic data on the burned areas is available on the State of California website at <http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/maps/Southern-CA-Fires-2007.pdf>.

Establishments. As of 2006, more than half (55.4%) of California's business establishments were located in the seven disaster counties (see Table 2). The 701,081 worksites operating in these counties represented eight percent of the national total. Over half of these establishments were located in Los Angeles County, which had 390,766 worksites. Orange County had the second largest number of businesses, with 95,046 establishments. San Diego County was a close third with 91,732 worksites. The business establishments in these three counties represented 6.6 percent of all establishments in the country and accounted for 82.4 percent of the establishments in the seven counties eligible for public assistance due to the fires.

Employment. In the seven FEMA-designated counties, employment was at 8.8 million in 2006. This total represented 56.6 percent of California's employment and 6.6 percent of national employment. Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego Counties are among the ten counties with the largest employment levels in the nation. The seven million workers employed in these three counties alone accounted for 79.6 percent of the employment in FEMA-designated counties. San Diego County, which had 13.7 percent of its land area burned, had 1.3 million workers in 2006.

Wages. California employers distributed \$750 billion in wages in 2006, or 13.2 percent of the nation's total wages. The \$405.6 billion in wages disbursed in 2006 within the counties eligible to receive disaster assistance accounted for 54.1 percent of California's wages and 7.1 percent of all wages paid in the United States. Los Angeles County workers received slightly less than half of these wages. The average annual pay for employees in the group of counties receiving federal disaster aid was \$46,192; this was 4.5 percent below the State's average annual pay of \$48,345, but 8.6 percent higher than the national average annual pay of \$42,535. Among the seven counties, Orange County had the highest average annual pay, \$49,126; Riverside County had the lowest: \$36,251.

Industry employment distribution. The trade, transportation, and utilities supersector was the largest sector in the seven-county area in terms of private industry employment, with 1.7 million jobs accounting for 10.8 percent of California's total employment and 1.2 percent of national employment. Nearly 60 percent of this employment was found in the retail trade sector. The second largest employment total in the area was in the professional and business services supersector, which employed 1.3 million workers and accounted for 8.3 percent of California's employment. The nearly 923,000 workers in the manufacturing supersector in the seven counties represented six percent of the jobs in California. Jobs in education and health services (893,851) and leisure and hospitality (893,333) each accounted for 5.8 percent of the State's total employment.

Industry wage distribution. Within the private sector in the affected counties, the professional and business services supersector had the largest total wage payments in 2006—\$67.5 billion. These wages represented 9 percent of the State's total wages and 1.2 percent of national wages. The trade, transportation, and utilities supersector followed closely with \$65.6 billion in wages disbursed, which represented 8.8 percent of California's wages. Wages in the manufacturing supersector in the disaster counties accounted for 6.6 percent of the State's wages. The information supersector had the highest average annual pay in the area, \$80,352, which was 88.9 percent higher than the national average for the same time period. The next highest average annual pay (\$71,424) went to workers in the financial activities supersector. The other services supersector had the lowest average annual pay: \$23,315.

Government. The federal, state, and local governments in California's affected area employed 1.2 million workers in 10,005 worksites. This employment represented eight percent of all of California's workers. The average annual pay these government workers received was \$50,853 in 2006 with the disbursement of \$62.9 billion in total wages.

These establishment, employment, and wage data are from the QCEW program in the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Data presented here are for all workers covered by State and Federal unemployment insurance programs. For more information on the impact of California fires on BLS programs, please visit <http://www.bls.gov/californiafires>. For

additional information regarding QCEW data, contact Robert Viégas, an economist in the Division of Administrative Statistics and Labor Turnover, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics. E-mail: viegas.robert@bls.gov. Telephone: 202-691-5162.

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Notes:

¹ 500,000 Flee Raging California Fires (Associated Press), see <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/10/24/ap/national/main3400923.shtml>.

² Census 2000 Summary File 1 (U.S. Census Bureau), see http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GCTTable?_bm=y&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U&-CONTEXT=gct&-mt_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_GCTPH1_US9&-redoLog=false&-caller=geoselect&-geo_id=&-format=US-25|US-25S&-lang=en.

³ Designated Counties for California Wildfires (Federal Emergency Management Agency), see <http://www.fema.gov/news/eventcounties.fema?id=9045>.

⁴ Southern California Fires at a Glance (State of California), see <http://gov.ca.gov/index.php/issue/wildfires/#activity>.

⁵ Percentage of the Current Population Survey's total wage and salary workers employment estimate covered by QCEW employment totals in 2006.

Chart 1. Counties designated by FEMA as eligible to receive public assistance



Source: Disaster Summary For FEMA-1731-DR, California. October 24, 2007.

Table 1. Population and land area for FEMA-designated counties for California wildfires

Area	Population			Land area (in thousands of acres)		
	July 2006 Census estimate	Percentage of State	Percentage of US	Amount ¹	Burned ²	Percentage of area burned
United States	299,398,484	-	-	2,263,961	-	-
California	36,457,549	-	12.2%	99,814	-	-
Los Angeles County	9,948,081	27.3%	3.3%	2,599	104	4.0%
Orange County	3,002,048	8.2%	1.0%	505	28	5.5%
Riverside County	2,026,803	5.6%	0.7%	4,613	1	0.0%
San Bernardino County	1,999,332	5.5%	0.7%	12,834	14	0.1%
San Diego County	2,941,454	8.1%	1.0%	2,688	369	13.7%
Santa Barbara County	400,335	1.1%	0.1%	1,752	1	0.0%
Ventura County	799,720	2.2%	0.3%	1,181	0 ³	0.3%
Total Affected⁴ Area	21,117,773	57.9%	7.1%	26,171	518	2.0%

NOTE: Totals may not add up because of rounding.

1. Census 2000 Summary File 1 (U.S. Census Bureau).
2. Southern California Fires at a Glance, Oct. 29, 2007 (State of California).
3. Thirty-five acres were burned in Ventura County.
4. Totals for affected counties, not burned areas.

Table 2. Establishments, employment, and wages for FEMA-designated counties for California wildfires, 2006 annual averages ¹

Area/Industry	Establishments			Employment			Wages			
	Annual Average	Percentage of State	Percentage of US	Average Annual Employment	Percentage of State	Percentage of US	Total Wages (in millions)	Percentage of State	Percentage of US	Average Annual Pay
United States	8,784,027	-	-	133,833,834	-	-	\$5,692,569	-	-	\$42,535
California	1,265,069	-	14.4%	15,503,144	-	11.6%	749,505	-	13.2%	48,345
Los Angeles County	390,766	30.9%	4.4%	4,161,761	26.8%	3.1%	201,918	26.9%	3.5%	48,517
Orange County	95,046	7.5%	1.1%	1,514,873	9.8%	1.1%	74,419	9.9%	1.3%	49,126
Riverside County	42,760	3.4%	0.5%	633,940	4.1%	0.5%	22,981	3.1%	0.4%	36,251
San Bernardino County	45,568	3.6%	0.5%	654,679	4.2%	0.5%	24,270	3.2%	0.4%	37,072
San Diego County	91,732	7.3%	1.0%	1,313,949	8.5%	1.0%	60,157	8.0%	1.1%	45,784
Santa Barbara County	13,561	1.1%	0.2%	184,981	1.2%	0.1%	7,460	1.0%	0.1%	40,326
Ventura County	21,648	1.7%	0.2%	317,030	2.0%	0.2%	14,414	1.9%	0.3%	45,467
Total Affected Area	701,081	55.4%	8.0%	8,781,213	56.6%	6.6%	405,620	54.1%	7.1%	46,192
Private Sector	691,080	54.6%	7.9%	7,543,560	48.7%	5.6%	342,681	45.7%	6.0%	45,427
Natural Resources and Mining	3,614	0.3%	0.0%	87,923	0.6%	0.1%	2,696	0.4%	0.0%	30,668
Construction	39,598	3.1%	0.5%	514,191	3.3%	0.4%	24,341	3.2%	0.4%	47,339
Manufacturing	29,693	2.3%	0.3%	922,790	6.0%	0.7%	49,151	6.6%	0.9%	53,263
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	108,653	8.6%	1.2%	1,670,834	10.8%	1.2%	65,601	8.8%	1.2%	39,262
Information	13,015	1.0%	0.1%	301,322	1.9%	0.2%	24,212	3.2%	0.4%	80,352
Financial Activities	56,345	4.5%	0.6%	554,027	3.6%	0.4%	39,571	5.3%	0.7%	71,424
Professional and Business Services	93,335	7.4%	1.1%	1,292,224	8.3%	1.0%	67,509	9.0%	1.2%	52,242
Education and Health Services	56,204	4.4%	0.6%	893,851	5.8%	0.7%	38,659	5.2%	0.7%	43,250
Leisure and Hospitality	49,793	3.9%	0.6%	893,333	5.8%	0.7%	21,307	2.8%	0.4%	23,851
Other Services	240,665	19.0%	2.7%	412,623	2.7%	0.3%	9,620	1.3%	0.2%	23,315
Unclassified	169	0.0%	0.0%	449	0.0%	0.0%	15	0.0%	0.0%	33,391
Government	10,005	0.8%	0.1%	1,237,656	8.0%	0.9%	62,938	8.4%	1.1%	50,853

NOTE: Totals may not add up because of rounding.

1. Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Bureau of Labor Statistics.