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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Wildfires Pose Unique Challenges for Persons with Disabilities**

SACRAMENTO CA- With California reeling from recent devastating wildfires, disability experts again stressed the importance of emergency preparedness.

“Fires don’t discriminate, so people with intellectual and developmental disabilities need to take extra precautions, “ said Dr. April Lopez, Chair of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities. “When seconds count, preparation matters.”

The massive Valley fire burned approximately 76,000 acres, while the Butte fire consumed slightly less at roughly 70,000. In both cases, the flames spread rapidly, engulfing entire neighborhoods. Startled residents had little time to pack a few basic essentials and evacuate. Many escaped with only the clothes on their back. Tragically, some lives were lost in the firestorm. One of the more poignant stories was that of a disabled woman in the Middletown area who had no way to escape when the flames approached her home.

“A raging inferno is a terrifying ordeal for anyone to go through, “stated Lopez. “While everyone should have a safety plan in place, people with disabilities need to be especially vigilant.”

The lack of adequate escape routes, rapid accessible transit, and other factors contribute to the critical situation people with disabilities and their families face in times of emergency. Through the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, the following links offer a valuable resource people with disabilities can use to prepare.

Information and Resources:

#### **Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities**

[http://www.redcross.org/museum/prepare\\_org/disabilities/disabilitiesprep.htm](http://www.redcross.org/museum/prepare_org/disabilities/disabilitiesprep.htm)

Disaster Readiness Tips for Persons with Disabilities

[http://nod.org/disability\\_resources/emergency\\_preparedness\\_for\\_persons\\_with\\_disabilities/](http://nod.org/disability_resources/emergency_preparedness_for_persons_with_disabilities/)

Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and other Special Needs

[http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA\\_CustomProductCatalog/m4240199\\_A4497.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4240199_A4497.pdf)

The State Council on developmental disabilities (SCDD) is established by state and federal law as an independent state agency to ensure that people with developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports they need.

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