



August 27, 2021
Hearing 2021-7-21
**Joint Legislative Committee on
Emergency Management**

NEWS

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Legislative Report Says California Must Act Now to Avoid Inequitable Climate Resilience Strategy

Women and children of color are hit the hardest by climate injustice; community and home-based resilience more effective than top down efforts like cooling centers

For Immediate Release: August 27, 2021

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Sacramento, CA — State Sen. Henry Stern (D-Los Angeles) and Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez (D-Los Angeles) chair and vice chair of Joint Legislative Emergency Management Committee released a report today calling for immediate action and state investment to prevent continuing inequities resulting from mounting climate disasters.

“Despite our historic leadership, California is not investing at a scale that meets the demands of the climate crisis — women, children, and low income Californians, particularly in communities of color, need to be the heart of the strategy not an afterthought,” said Chair Stern commenting on the report issued by the Committee today following its recent hearing examining the failure of the state to adequately protect vulnerable populations from various disasters, especially the rise of extreme heat and wildfire smoke.

“We need to move beyond top-down strategies like cooling centers and invest in resilience at a community scale so the most vulnerable people can survive extreme weather in their homes and neighborhoods. We must put people and care first when it comes to extreme heat, wildfire, floods, and sea level rise,” continued Stern.

The executive summary of the report with detailed findings and recommendations is attached and will be available on the committee’s website [here](#).

The July 21, 2021, joint legislative committee hearing was the first time the Committee examined equity in the context of the climate emergency. The report (hearing??) found that climate injustice hits women and children of color the hardest.

Other findings and recommendations of the report include:

- Wildfire smoke has extremely negative impacts on vulnerable people, including preterm births, lung inflammation, cardiovascular disease, stroke, allergies, autoimmune disorders, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, lower childhood IQ, autism, lung cancer, bladder cancer, and childhood leukemia.
- The most vulnerable residents of California -- the elderly, the poor, those suffering from asthma or other chronic health conditions, those whose reading or understanding of English may inhibit their ability to be reached by existing emergency warning or communication systems -- are not only most likely to be harmed by a climate disaster but also the least likely to have access to the resources to survive it.
- According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Risk Index, Los Angeles County is not only the most populous county but the highest risk county in the country for 18 types of natural disasters.
- Climate change forces a new approach to emergency management, as these disasters are no longer 'emergent,' with extreme heat waves and wildfires becoming commonplace.
- Rather than waiting to respond to disasters as they occur, California needs to marshal a people-first care-driven approach to ongoing climate conditions such as extreme heat and wildfire smoke.
- Community level resilience must recognize the unique vulnerabilities of renters, who tend to lack access to adequate insurance, in-home cooling, insulation against wildfire smoke, and other climate disaster hazards.
- Some ways we can help lower income residents and renters include: Low income weatherization, installation of ultra efficient heat pump and cooling units using the CEC's TECH program, and back-up solar powered electric batteries for those at risk of public safety power shut offs.
- The report also recommends
 - Training and support for caregivers, social workers, in-home support service workers and community emergency response volunteers to assess vulnerabilities, assist vulnerable residents with navigating incentives and emergency preparation, and help improve the connection between county and state emergency services and the people most vulnerable to climate disasters.
 - Low cost retrofits to roofs, parking lots, sidewalks and pavement, shading and urban forestry, park expansion and other efforts that will reduce the urban heat island effect.
 - Rehabilitation and construction of community resilience centers can provide access to drinking water, food storage & distribution, shelter, workforce development, computer connection and economic assistance.

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