

San Diego Firestorm 2007 Report

Fire Impact on Farmworkers & Migrant Communities in North County



Report prepared by

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Agriculture Weights and Measures-County of San Diego
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
American Red Cross
Border Angels
California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA)
Center for Social Advocacy
Coalition for Peace and Justice (Vista)
Community Housing Works (CHW)
CSUSM Anthropology Department
Fallbrook Family Health Center
Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB)
Health Initiative of the Americas
Interfaith Community Services (ICS)
Mexican Consulate in San Diego
Migrant Education - San Diego County Office of Education
Mission San Antonio de Pala
National Latino Research Center (NLRC)
Neighborhood Health
North County Health Services (NCHS)
Paradise Community Services
Planned Parenthood-San Diego and Imperial Counties
Project Concern International
San Diego 211
The California Endowment (TCE)
US-Mexico Border Program
Vista Community Clinic (VCC)
Vista Human Rights Committee

Also, the following individuals provided invaluable assistance throughout the research process: Sandra Carmona, Rosemary Lopez, Dorothy Johnson, Craig Jones, Ana Ardón, Gloria Santos, Daisy Alonso, Fabiola (Soto) Gastelum, Patti Hamic-Christensen, Leticia Jimenez, Neil Joyce, Jim DiFrancesca, Cristina Magaña, Julio Quintero, Fernando Sañudo, Elva Leal, and Suzanne Pohlman.

The authors also thank the *Poder Popular lideres comunitarios*-community leaders who dedicated countless hours in communities throughout North San Diego County collecting data, organizing relief efforts, meeting with families to assess fire impact, and working with emergency relief organizations to coordinate delivery of resources to impacted communities. Through a grassroots community-mobilization approach, they orchestrated an unprecedented coordination of resources for farmworkers and migrants and today continue to support families who would otherwise receive little or no assistance from mainstream relief sources.



FIGURE 1: PODER POPULAR COMMUNITY LEADERS AT DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD & CLOTHING

Additionally, we thank hundreds of community volunteers and donors including foundations like The California Endowment, Project Concern International, and the San Diego Foundation for providing resources for farmworkers and migrants during the fires.

Lastly, though equally important, the NLRC would like to thank Brenda Quintana for serving as a key liaison to the Governor's Office and for representing the governor's interest and leadership in the area of farmworker health and well-being. Her concern for understanding the challenges and successes farmworkers experienced during the fires made this research project possible.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES

NATIONAL LATINO RESEARCH CENTER

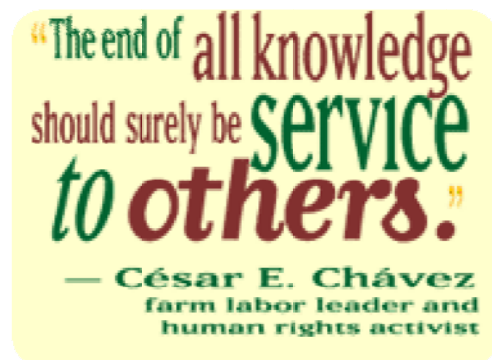
Under the auspices of the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects at California State University, San Marcos and fiscally managed by the CSUSM Foundation, the National Latino Research Center (NLRC) was founded in 1998 with the mission of promoting research, education, and the exchange of information related to Latino and under-served populations in the United States.

Specializing in applied research, the NLRC brings together faculty, students, community, and other professional staff to work on topics related to health, education, community engagement, and economic development.

The NLRC provides a range of services designed to address needs of researchers, academic institutions, public agencies, private corporations and community-based organizations. Its applied research-based services include culturally competent program evaluations, needs assessments, surveys, gap analyses, bilingual and culturally competent focus groups, literature reviews, practitioner-oriented reports, demographic fact sheets and training manuals. The NLRC also develops and conducts trainings at the community level that provide facilitation, capacity building, strategic planning, professional development and results-oriented accountability.

For additional information about the NLRC, visit the website:

<http://www.csusm.edu/nlrc/>



FARMWORKER CARE COALITION

The Farmworker CARE (Coordination/ Communication, Advocacy/ Access, Research/ Resources, Empowerment/ Education) coalition is a collaborative of farmworkers and over 40 diverse agencies and community based organizations dedicated to improving the living and working conditions of agricultural workers in north San Diego County. The coalition is currently comprised of representatives, leaders and advocates from local health and social service agencies, California State University San Marcos, community based organizations, national, state and local governmental agencies, faith-based organizations, and the Mexican Consulate.



FIGURE 2: CHILDREN OF FARMWORKERS

The coalition has as its mission *“To recognize farmworkers as a vibrant part of the community and to improve their living, working and health conditions, and access to health, social and educational services through empowerment, advocacy, and coordinated efforts.”*

The CARE Coalition was formed in July 2004 to bring together agencies serving agricultural workers to outline a process for addressing health and well-being of agricultural workers and their families in the North County region. Previous farmworker-focused collaboratives in North San Diego County were limited exclusively to short-term coordination of services that did not address broader economic, political, environmental and social realities in which agricultural workers live and work.

However, after careful analysis of farmworker needs, it became evident that they are a vulnerable population with unique needs and challenges. Hence, in fall 2004, the coalition began to outline a mission and vision. The

NLRC, selected by the group to lead the planning process, began coordinating the coalition's monthly meetings. The NLRC facilitated strategic planning to identify a set of short- and long-term goals and objectives. Among the objectives the group identified included coordination, advocacy, research, and farmworker empowerment. The coalition outlined an infrastructure and developed a plan of action to expand group membership. The coalition also prioritized the need to include representatives from the agricultural sector including farmworkers as part of the planning process.



FIGURE 3: CSUSM ANTHROPOLOGY STUDENTS INTERVIEWING A LOCAL FARMWORKER

The Farmworker CARE Coalition has compiled an inventory of research on local and statewide agricultural worker health. Additionally, coalition members have assessed the working and living conditions of agricultural workers through research and have facilitated coordination of services through partnership on grants and regional collaborative projects.

During the wildfires, the Farmworker CARE Coalition provided the organizing and coordinating infrastructure to reach and deliver emergency relief to farmworker communities. The Coalition leveraged over \$500,000 dollars to rebuild housing, cover health care expenses, provide rental assistance, and meet food and clothing needs of farmworkers and their families affected by the fires.

For more information about the coalition, contact Sandra Carmona at scarmona@csusm.edu and/or Dr. Konane Martinez at kmartine@csusm.edu.

PODER POPULAR IN NORTH COUNTY

In 2005 the **Farmworker CARE Coalition** received a three-year grant from The California Endowment for *Poder Popular para la Salud del Pueblo*, a community-building initiative aimed at supporting healthy conditions in the fields, communities, health care, media and civic life in ten of the state's agricultural areas

(Napa/Sonoma, Merced, West of Fresno County, South Kern, Oxnard/Plain, East Coachella Valley, North San Diego County, North Sacramento Valley and Tulare and Monterey County counties).



FIGURE 4: LIDERES COMUNITARIOS

The purpose of the project is to improve the health, living and working conditions of agricultural workers by strengthening and engaging grassroots leadership utilizing “Promotores Comunitarios” (Community Health Promoters) in North San Diego County. The goals of the project include increasing the local health knowledge base, developing individual and organizational leadership and advocacy

capacity to improve the long term health of agricultural workers through systems change and to create new and strengthen existing collaborative organizing efforts.

In the words of Dr. Robert K. Ross, M.D., President and CEO of The California Endowment, “The time is right to bring together agricultural workers, community, health and civic leaders – with the single goal of improving the living, working and health conditions in farmworker communities. The Poder Popular Program marks a new beginning for these communities so crucial to California’s economic and social health.”¹

¹ The California Endowment’s Press Release, “Private Funds Target Ten Agricultural Communities Statewide Initiative Builds Unprecedented Partnerships,” September 20, 2005.

FOREWORD

The National Latino Research Center at California State University, San Marcos presents this report in an effort to present farmworkers' and migrants' unique needs and challenges, to discuss the impact and experiences of farmworkers during the October 2007 fires, and to assess emergency responses of community organizations and government.

While all San Diegans were affected by the fires in various degrees, research findings suggest a breakdown occurred in the handling of emergency response systems in farmworker and Latino communities in general. During and immediately following the firestorms, farmworker and migrant communities in North San Diego County were negatively impacted by the fires and in some cases encountered structural and institutional barriers in accessing information and relief efforts. Overall, farmworker accounts reveal that poor, disenfranchised, and vulnerable communities continue to experience extraordinary challenges and disparate treatment during disasters. Consequently, assessment of government policies, procedures and standards is recommended to rectify missteps and ensure humane treatment of all individuals impacted by disasters.

Despite these challenges the emerging leadership of *lideres comunitarios* or community leaders who mobilized emergency relief resources serves as a great testament to the importance of building advocacy capacity and grassroots infrastructure for self-sufficiency. Furthermore, the readiness and willingness of local community organizations, volunteers, and donors to come together to assist farmworkers reinforces the need for effective community-based coalitions. In this instance, the Farmworker CARE Coalition is now poised to address ongoing and emerging needs. Hence, this story also celebrates the rise from the ashes of local Latino farmworker community grassroots leadership in the ongoing *lucha-struggle* for human rights.

Sincerely,
Arcela Nuñez-Alvarez and Konane M. Martínez

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *San Diego Firestorm 2007 Report* documents fire impacts on farmworkers and migrants in North San Diego County resulting from the firestorms of October 2007. Research findings suggest that during and immediately following the firestorms, farmworkers and migrants in North San Diego County were negatively impacted by the fires and in some cases encountered structural and institutional barriers in accessing information and relief efforts. Farmworkers' and migrants' socio-economic situation is usually precarious; however, the fires exacerbated their already difficult situation.

General research findings include:

- ❏ Farmworkers and migrants were disproportionately exposed to fire impacts with limited or no relief.
- ❏ Large numbers of farmworkers and migrants living in substandard housing conditions in rural communities lost housing during the fires and had no recourse for recovery.
- ❏ The relationship between farmworkers and migrants and emergency service providers is tenuous.
- ❏ The majority of emergency service providers lack the necessary cultural and linguistic competency to communicate appropriately with Latino, primarily Spanish-speaking and Mexican Indigenous farmworkers and migrants.
- ❏ Culturally and linguistically appropriate resources on health and safety during emergencies are limited or do not exist.
- ❏ Some farmworkers and migrants who were fearful of deportation during evacuation did not evacuate their homes in mandatory evacuation zones.

- ❏ Farmworkers and migrants did not receive appropriate evacuation notifications.
- ❏ Farmworkers and migrants were unaware of emergency relief services and procedures to solicit assistance.
- ❏ Farmworkers and migrants did not receive adequate information about emergency relief eligibility criteria.
- ❏ Resources for farmworkers who were ineligible to receive traditional sources of assistance were limited or non-existent.
- ❏ Economic effects of the fires are compounded by language, cultural and social barriers that limit access to support programs and services.
- ❏ Volunteers and/or staff at evacuation centers enforced eligibility criteria at whim and/or misinformed families seeking assistance.

According to the survey, the needs of greatest concern in farmworker and migrant communities in order of priority were employment, shelter & housing, food & water, personal hygiene products, health, educational & mental health services.

Employment

Lack or limited access to employment resulting from the fires is the top concern for farmworkers and migrants. While many families faced difficulty finding jobs since the freeze in January of 2007, the fires further damaged economic activities making work difficult to find. Overall well-being is dependent on their ability to secure employment.

According to the survey, 99% of participants reported losing income and/or a job as a result of the fires.

Shelter and Housing

Housing is a critical issue for farmworkers and migrants year-round. Due to high housing costs in North San Diego County compared to income farmworkers earn, they face serious challenges keeping up with housing costs. The fires worsened the housing crisis for farmworkers by making it less affordable and available. In some instances, farmworkers and migrants lost their housing during the fires.

According to the survey, shelter and housing is in the top-three of the most urgent needs in the community.

Eight percent of survey participants lost their housing or shelter as a result of the fires.

Food and Water

Access to food and water is an ongoing pressing issue for farmworkers and migrants in North San Diego County. Many farmworker families living in remote regions often have difficulty accessing grocery stores due to lack of transportation. Furthermore, they are unable to afford basic food staples due to limited income.

Eighty-two percent of participants reported having lost food and water as a result of the fires.

According to the survey close to half of the participants reported having urgent and long-term needs for food and water.

Non-Food Items

Access to non-food items is an ongoing challenge for farmworkers.

Personal hygiene products were the non food items most needed by participants.

Health

Access to health care both during and after an emergency is an ongoing pressing issue for farmworker and migrant families.

Thirty-three percent of survey respondents reported not having access to medical care.

Over half (57%) of participants reported mental health issues (depression and stress) as a result of the fires.

Sixty-five percent of participants do not have any type of health insurance coverage for themselves and 23% have no insurance for their children.

Participants reported alarmingly high rates of asthma and/or lung disease in this community (22%).

Educational and Emotional Well-Being

The fires affected general emotional well-being of farmworkers and their families.

Limited or no mental health services have been provided to help farmworker families cope with aftermath of the fires.

According to the survey, the top three pressing needs are: Employment/Income, food/water, and housing.

INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

This report presents the results of a fire impact assessment in farmworker and migrant communities conducted from October 2007 to February 2008 by the National Latino Research Center (NLRC) at California State University San Marcos and the Farmworker CARE Coalition. The assessment was conducted with individuals in affected communities throughout North San Diego County.

While local and national media sources covered large relief efforts like those held at Qualcomm Stadium, they neglected the thousands of Latino farmworker and migrant families who were impacted by the fires in rural and unincorporated regions of San Diego County.

As this report shows, Latino farmworkers faced multiple barriers in the evacuation phase, were unable to access appropriate relief services and today continue to be impacted with limited or no relief in sight. Several reports about the fires have already raised concerns about farmworkers' experiences during the initial week of the firestorms. According to the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), farmworkers in North San Diego County received disparate treatment or no services at all. AFSC argues that some of these irregularities amount to serious civil and human rights violations needing additional investigation to assess the treatment of vulnerable populations by government agencies. Specifically, the presence of the Border Patrol near evacuation sites in Fallbrook, Valley Center, and other communities created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation for farmworkers which prevented many families from evacuating to safety zones. Secondly, several accounts indicate farmworkers labored in fields during the fires exposed to dangerous air contaminants because employers

*Message from
Congressman
Brian Bilbray*

... Now our attention turns to the rebuilding effort and moving forward from this week-long nightmare. There are many resources available for you to use, and I encourage you to forward this information on to anyone you think would benefit from it. I will work to ensure that the people affected by this disaster will have every available resource at their disposal.

*Bill Bilbray's Office
Disaster Assistance &
Community Update*

failed to disseminate adequate information for employees regarding evacuation procedures and/or did not allow some employees to evacuate. Furthermore, AFSC notes there was a general lack of informational resources describing relief assistance for farmworkers concluding that “despite the continuous need of basic food and water, these communities were not serviced by any formal/government relief efforts.”²

The Unseen Victims of California’s Wildfires

Immigrant advocacy groups are uncertain how these workers are surviving. They say the fires have left the workers scattered and unaccounted for. Evacuation orders have closed off access to these communities, making it very difficult for support teams to assess the population’s needs and nearly impossible to determine how many living quarters have been destroyed in the fires.

Amanda Martinez
New America Media
October 26, 2007

Similarly, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Immigrant Rights Consortium, Justice Overcoming Boundaries, and other legal organizations are investigating the treatment of farmworkers and other vulnerable populations during the evacuation process. According to the ACLU, many farmworkers worked in mandatory evaluation areas and were exposed to “reckless endangerment.” One worker reported that “immigrant crews kept working while wind whipped smoke and ash in their eyes.”³

Supplementing previously published reports, this report presents new quantitative data gathered regarding losses and needs of farmworkers resulting from the fires. Additionally, through focus groups and key informant interviews, we explore questions of access to emergency relief, protection of civil and human rights and overall government response to protect farmworkers and their

²American Friends Service Committee. *Preliminary Report: The State of Civil and Human Rights for Migrant Communities in San Diego County during the Firestorms of October 2007*. San Diego: American Friends Service Committee San Diego Area Office, 2007.
http://www.aclusandiego.org/article_downloads/000325/AFSC-Preliminary-Report-SD-Fires-FINAL.pdf

³ American Civil Liberties Union, Justice Overcoming Boundaries, and San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium. *Firestorm: Treatment of Vulnerable Populations during the San Diego Fires, 2007*.
http://www.aclusandiego.org/article_downloads/000325/Final%20Report%20-%20Firestorms%2011-07.pdf

families from harm during the fires.

We begin with a community background contextualizing the geographic and cultural region of San Diego County and North County in particular. Then, an overview of farmworkers in North San Diego County presents a socio-economic profile of the farmworker population. The next section presents a summary of the research findings from the survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews. The report concludes with recommendations for future consideration.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

San Diego County is the sixth most populated county in the United States and the second most populated in California with an estimated 2.8 million residents. Between 1990 and 2000 the County's population increased by more than 11 percent, further increasing the diversity of the region (2000 U.S. Census). It is located in the Southwest corner of the state and is bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west, Imperial County to the east, the U.S.-Mexico border to the south, and Orange and Riverside counties to the north.

FIGURE 5: MAP OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY



According to the 2000 US Census, there were 750,965 Latinos, mostly Mexican, in the San Diego region, representing 26.7 percent of the total population. The population increase of 240,000 persons between 1990 and 2000 represents 76 percent of the region's growth (316,000) in the 10 year period. Fifty-five percent of the county's residents are White while over one-quarter (27%) are Latino. The remaining 18 percent are Asian (9%), Black (5%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (1%), Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.4%), or two or more ethnicities (3%).

Latinos are highly concentrated (65%) in the Southwest region of San Diego, including Southeastern San Diego, National City, Chula Vista, and the San Ysidro border area. However, their numbers increased greatly in North San Diego County during the 1990s.

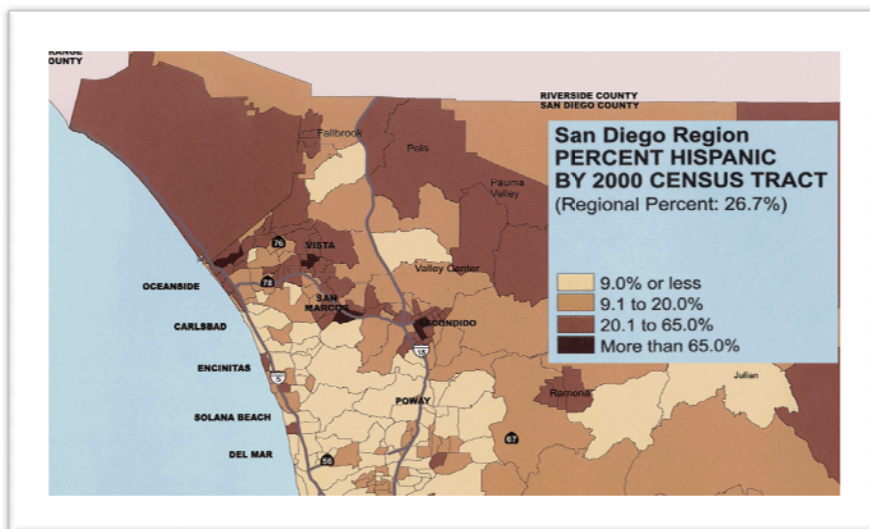
NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

North San Diego County (locally referred to as North County) is one of the most rapidly growing regions in the country encompassing 19 unique communities stretching nearly 2,000 square miles of rugged and vast valleys, mountain towns and beaches. The region includes the cities along Interstates 5, 15 and Highway 78 including Oceanside, Carlsbad, Vista, San Marcos, Escondido, Fallbrook, Encinitas, Poway, Rancho Bernardo, Scripps Ranch, Solana Beach, Cardiff-by-the-Sea, Del Mar, Carmel Valley, Rancho

Santa Fe, Ramona, Valley Center, and other unincorporated communities.

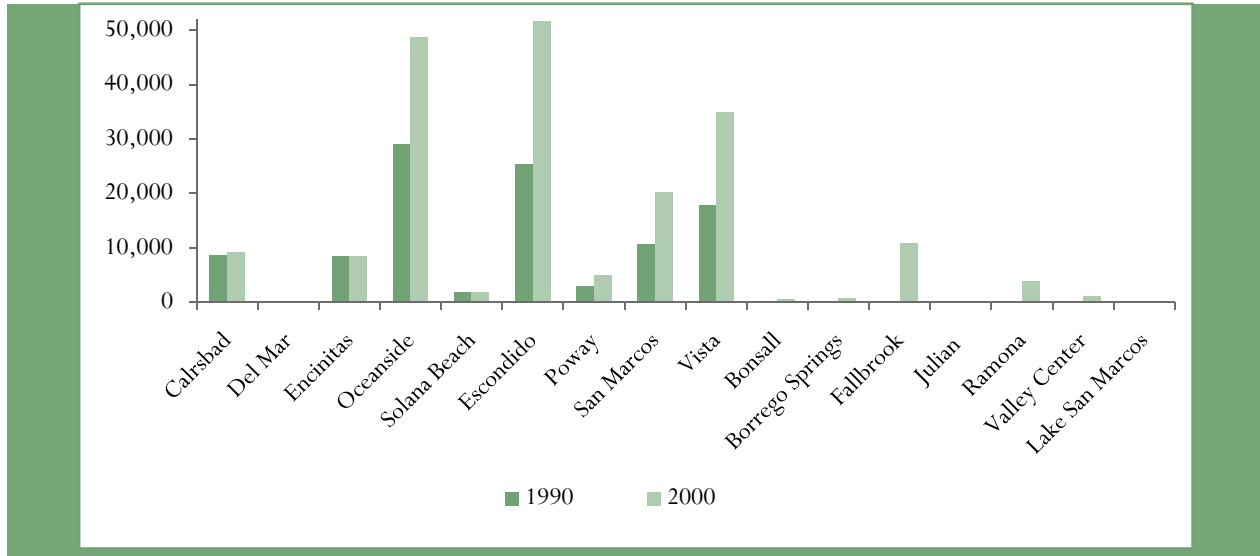
North County's population consists of predominantly White and Latino residents followed by Asians, Blacks, and American Indians. In several

FIGURE 6: LATINO POPULATION IN NORTH COUNTY



North County communities, the Latino population nearly doubled over the last 10 years. The cities of Oceanside, Vista, Escondido, San Marcos (78 Corridor) and Fallbrook have the greatest ethnic and linguistic diversity in North County. Latinos represent 27% of the population in North San Diego County. According to the 2000 US Census, the Latino population grew from 23% in 1990 to 39% in Escondido, a percent change of 103.7%. In the city of Vista it grew from 25% to 39%, a total percent change of 96.5%. San Marcos experienced an 89.4% change in the Latino population from 27% to 37%. In Oceanside, the Latino population grew from 23% to 30% of the total population; a 68% change.

FIGURE 7: LATINO POPULATION 1990 - 2000 (US CENSUS 2000)



Along the Highway 78 Corridor, Latinos comprise 32% of the population, a higher population than the rest of the county (27%). The majority of Latinos in this region of North County are of Mexican origin (85%), 85%, 1.7% are Puerto Rican and <1% are Cuban (US Census 2000).

Ethnic and cultural trends are important considerations for service providers to consider when designing programs and interventions to serve the large and growing Latino population in North San Diego County. Although the exact number of Latino farmworkers and migrants is

unknown, they comprise a substantial sector of the Latino population in San Diego County.

FARMWORKERS IN NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY

San Diego's 1.4 billion dollar agricultural industry employs approximately 24, 570 farmworkers in San Diego County.⁴ Immigrants, primarily from Mexico, and their families subsidize the county's fourth largest industry and bear the cost of low wages, lack of mobility and limited access to health and social services. Poverty, overcrowded housing, discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment make life in San Diego for farmworkers and their families challenging at best.

Socioeconomic and health disparities exist for farmworkers statewide and locally. The following indicators paint a picture of these disparities:⁵

- The median annual income for farmworkers in California is \$7,500-\$9,999.
- In 2000, 70% of farmworkers in California lacked health insurance.
- One in five male farmworkers has two of three risk factors for chronic disease: high serum

Inequity in access to affordable and safe housing and health services has resulted in making the farmworker community one of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in the San Diego County border region.

Konane Martinez

⁴ Bade, B. "Farmworker Health in Vista, California." *Ties That Bind: Mexican Immigrants in San Diego County*, Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, UCSD. La Jolla, CA 2005.

⁵ Villarejo et al. *Suffering in Silence: A report on the Health of California's Agricultural Workers*. California Institute for Rural Studies, November 2000; Bade, B. "Farmworker Health in Vista, California." *Ties That Bind: Mexican Immigrants in San Diego County*, Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, UCSD. La Jolla, CA 2005.

cholesterol, high blood pressure or obesity.

- ✚ 31% of male farmworkers interviewed in 2000 stated that they had never been to a doctor or a clinic.
- ✚ The median educational attainment for farmworkers falls between 4th and 6th grade in Vista.
- ✚ 87% of the dwellings inhabited by farmworkers in Vista are shared by two or more households with an average of 7.5 persons per room. This figure is higher than the statewide farmworker average of 4.3 persons per room.
- ✚ 96% of farmworkers in Vista report not having health insurance.
- ✚ 28% of farmworkers in Vista report never having been to a doctor; 64% of Vista farmworkers have never been to a dentist.
- ✚ 33% of farmworkers in Vista qualify as obese as measured by the Body Mass Index.
- ✚ 23% of farmworkers surveyed in Vista have high blood pressure.⁶
- ✚ The California Agricultural Worker Survey found that 49% of the workers interviewed were undocumented.⁷
- ✚ Poder Popular community leaders in Fallbrook have identified safety, transportation, gangs, pesticide exposure, access to healthcare and economic insecurity as the most pressing issues in the community.

The scarcity of affordable housing combined with poverty has resulted in many farmworker and migrant families seeking housing on local Indian reservations in San Diego County. Several reservations have communities

⁶ B. Bade, "Farmworker Health in Vista, California." *Ties That Bind: Mexican Immigrants in San Diego County*, Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, UCSD.

⁷ Fear of deportation combined with an already tense relationship between residents and local law enforcement makes life for many farmworkers full of tension and stress.

of Latinos living among tribal communities. Inter-ethnic relations between the two communities are tense at best. This tension between the two groups is palpable and adds to an already stressful situation for many Latino families on the reservation.

Farmworkers and migrants in this region live in some of the worst conditions encountered in San Diego County. Families occupy scattered and dilapidated trailers that more often than not lack access to running water, drainage and/or electricity. Community leaders from Poder Popular are working to improve the housing condition through advocacy and partnership with local land owners and tribal members.



FIGURE 8: HOUSING IN PALA

North San Diego County has a large and growing indigenous Mexican community. Several studies indicate that indigenous farmworkers from states of southern Mexico, specifically the states of Oaxaca, Puebla and Guerrero, are the newest and fastest growing sources of labor entering California agriculture.⁸ Economic, cultural, linguistic, organizational and structural barriers inhibiting healthy access and utilization of services by indigenous farmworkers and their families have been documented anecdotally and ethnographically.⁹

⁸ Runsten, D. and M. Kearney, "A Survey of Oaxacan Village Networks in California Agriculture." CIRS, 1994; Runsten, D. "Origins and Characteristics of Mexican Migrants in San Diego: Evidence from the Matrículas Consulares." *Ties That Bind: Mexican Immigrants in San Diego County*, US-MEX, 2005.

⁹Martinez, K. et al. "Salir Adelante – Getting Ahead: Recent Mexican Immigrants in San Diego County." *Ties That Bind: Mexican Immigrants in San Diego County*, *Ties That Bind: Mexican Immigrants in San Diego County*, Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, UCSD. La Jolla, CA 2005. Bade, B. "Farmworker Health in Vista, California." *Ties That Bind: Mexican Immigrants in San Diego County*, Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, UCSD. La Jolla, CA 2005. Martinez, K. *Health Across Borders: Mixtec Transnational Communities and Clinical Health Care Systems*. Doctoral dissertation, University of California Riverside, 2005.

Data indicates that farmworkers from Mexico's southern states where many indigenous immigrants originate suffer the worst conditions and have the lowest incomes. The combined impact of these barriers contributes to drastic disparities negatively impacting the health and welfare of indigenous farmworkers and their families.

Prior to the firestorms, farmworker families had been adversely affected by lack of work resulting from the freeze in January of 2007 that severely damaged the agricultural industry in San Diego. The fires compounded the precarious situation farmworkers regularly face living in North San Diego County.

SAN DIEGO WILDFIRES OF 2007

The firestorms of 2007 affected all San Diegans and will have lasting material and emotional impacts on the lives of thousands of people in the county for many years to come. However, long-term recovery for farmworkers, migrants, and other vulnerable populations affected by the fires will take even longer unless strategic and targeted support is made available to aid these families.

FIRE DAMAGES & COSTS

The October 2007 fires burned approximately 368,316 acres and destroyed 1,751 homes and businesses in San Diego County.¹⁰ The Witch Creek Fire caused the most damage by destroying about 198,000 acres and more than

¹⁰ Dave, D. (2007, December 22). "SANDAG agrees to pursue wider assault on excess brush." *North County Times*.

1,000 homes totaling around \$1.1 billion in damages.¹¹ The table below provides information about the five major fires in San Diego County.¹²

TABLE 1: FIRE DAMAGES BY REGION

Region	Acres burned	Deaths
Witch Creek Fire	197,990	2
Harris Fire	90,750	5
Poomacha Fire	49,150	None
Horno Fire	21,084	None
Rice Canyon Fire	9,472	None

Local governments spent more than \$80 million fighting the fires. Estimated costs for fighting the wildfires of some cities in San Diego County include:¹³

TABLE 2: FIRE COSTS BY CITY

City	Estimate of fire costs
San Diego	\$ 31.2 million
Poway	\$2 million
Escondido	\$842,450
Chula Vista	\$430,000
Vista	\$251,000
San Marcos ¹⁴	\$234,000
El Cajon	\$130,000
Del Mar	\$50,000 - \$60,000
National City	\$36,850

According to county damage estimates, the fires destroyed more than 8,890 acres of farmland costing San Diego County approximately \$55.7 million.

¹¹ Associated Press. (2008, January 15). "Witch Creek fire ranked second largest U.S. disaster." *North County Times*.

¹² Fire Facts. (2007, October 29). *San Diego Union- Tribune*.

¹³ Vigil, J. (2007, November 25) State, feds expected to help in covering the costs. *San Diego Union- Tribune*.

¹⁴ Lou, L. (2007, November 28). Wildfire costs city about \$234,000. *San Diego Union- Tribune*, p. NC2.

This amount includes the cost of supplies irrigation, other farm equipment and associated structures. The Witch Creek fire impacted the farming areas of Valley Center, San Pasqual Valley, and Escondido damaging 7,418 acres and costing \$27.7 million; the Rice Canyon fire burned 745.9 acres and caused \$16.3 million in damage of which Fallbrook’s cut avocado growers (\$6.6 million) flower growers (\$4.9 million) and ornamental tree and shrub growers (\$2.9 million) endured the greater costs; the Poomocha fire incurred in about \$8.4 million in damages and burned 729 acres.¹⁵

Of the estimated \$55.7 million in damage to San Diego County farms and ranches, avocado farmers were the most affected: 1,722 acres were damaged or destroyed yielding \$24.1 million in crop losses. Avocado growers will lose productivity for various years since an avocado tree needs three to five years to reach its peak productivity. As a result, San Diego’s expected production of 185 million pounds of avocados for this year will be cut by about 15%, according to the California Avocado Association. Ninety percent of the nation’s avocados are produced in California of this total San Diego produces 40%. Other crops were also affected by the October fires:¹⁶

TABLE 3: CROP LOSSES DUE TO FIRES¹⁷

Product	Acres Damaged	Crop losses (in millions of dollars)
Avocados	1,722	\$24.1
Cut Flowers	428	\$9.8
Ornamental Trees/Shrubs	185	\$7.2
Indoor flowers and foliage	5	\$2.1
Lemons	140	\$1.6
Poultry and eggs		\$1.1

¹⁵ Estimates compiled by County of San Diego, Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures January 2008

¹⁶ Washburn, D. (2007, November 9). Fires cost growers \$42 million. *San Diego Union-Tribune*, p.C1.

¹⁷ Estimates compiled by County of San Diego, Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures January 2008

RESOURCES FOR FARMERS, HOME OWNERS, AND INDIAN TRIBES

San Diego County homeowners, business owners, and local Indian tribes affected by the October fires have received more than \$55 million in government loans or grants. As of December 2007, the U.S. Small Business Administration had approved \$45 million in disaster loans for San Diego County homeowners and \$3 million more for nonfarm businesses, in addition to almost \$7 million in housing-related grants disbursed by FEMA and more than \$800,000 in grants from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Farmers are expecting to receive assistance to avoid shutting down businesses.¹⁸

Money has been allocated for farmers through two programs: The U.S. Farm Service's Emergency Conservation Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Through these programs \$6.5 million will be available; more than 150 applications have been submitted to each program but none has been approved and officials are unsure of when San Diego County farmers will count with the aid. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is aware of this problem which they attribute to the wrong programs having the money. The Crop Disaster Program, the Livestock Compensation Program, and the Tree Assistance Program are programs believed to better help farmers meet their needs. Yet, these programs are not funded because Congress allocates money for them on a disaster-by-disaster basis and the current cutoff date excludes most of the crops lost in the recent fires.

There are other options available to farmers such is the emergency loan program offered by the Farm Service which can lend farmers up to \$500,000 at rates ranging from 3.75% to 12% making recovery difficult. The state also offers the Small Business Disaster Assistance Loan Guarantee Program, a loan program for businesses, including farms, intended to help small businesses that may not qualify for federal aid and provide temporary funding for those businesses waiting for federal assistance to arrive. The state has \$7.5 million dollars available to guarantee bank loans

¹⁸ Washburn, D. (2007, December, 13). "Funding Stalled After Wildfires." *San Diego Union-Tribune*, p. C1.

up to \$500,000. Currently, six applications have been submitted and no loans have been granted since farmers need to prove they will be able to pay the amount borrowed and for those whose property was damaged this is almost impossible.⁷

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)

During the October fires, 1,775 homes and other buildings were destroyed. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will provide mobile homes for families who need a home and can accommodate them. Mobile homes are for people who cannot rent temporary housing and who have the space, water, sewer, and electricity for the unit. Due to these requirements, many people who can benefit from this help are not able because they do not qualify. In San Diego County, 22 families will receive a mobile home because the majority of people affected by the fires have already found temporary shelter, according to emergency officials. The mobile homes are for people who live in remote areas since a great number of people have opted for rental assistance.¹⁹

In California, 18,605 fire victims have registered for state and federal disaster assistance. In addition, 14,960 have registered with FEMA and visited assistance centers seeking help.²⁰ FEMA has paid \$8.5 million for rental expenses, home repair or replacements; \$3.4 million from FEMA and the state has been used to pay for losses and damage to personal property, vehicular repair or replacement, moving expenses, and other costs. FEMA is covering 75% of the CAL Fire grant which reimburses the state for employee overtime, equipment use and rental costs, contract labor, aircraft use, materials and similar costs incurred by firefighting agencies that are part of the California Master Mutual Aid Agreement.⁹

¹⁹ Soto, O.R. (2007, December, 5). "FEMA says fewer homes needed for fire victims." *San Diego Union-Tribune*, p.B1

²⁰ News Services. (2007, December 27). "Victims of fires get FEMA funding." *Daily Breeze*.

RESOURCES NEEDED

According to San Diego Fire Chief, Tracy Jarman, the city does not count with all the resources necessary to fight wildfires like the ones from October or with the support from Cal Fire, the state fire agency. Jarman stated that during the October fires Cal Fire did not respond adequately to their call for help. Cal Fire spokesman, Mike Jarvis, stated that at the time of the fires, their equipment was utilized fighting fires in other areas, hence there was nothing left to offer San Diego. Jarman declared that the city needs to be more prepared for the next fire season and not expect much help from other sources. According to Jarman and the former chief, Jeff Bowman, in order to be up to National Standards the following resources are needed:

- 20 new fire stations
- 50 more engines (at least)
- a second firefighting helicopter
- a solid brush-clearance plan
- stricter building codes
- stronger state, county, and federal presence in fighting local wildfires

As much as it is needed, the Fire Chiefs acknowledges these needs will not be obtained by next fire season due to funding.²¹

In the aftermath of the fires, it is clear that families, community organizations, and government agencies are assessing fire impact and are exploring strategies to be better prepared in the event of another emergency.

The following summary presents key research findings regarding fire impact on farmworkers and migrants and offers recommendations for future consideration.

²¹ Sauer, M. (2007, December 1). Lack of resources, outside support plague fire department, chief says. *San Diego Union-Tribune*, p. A1.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The *San Diego Firestorm 2007* assessment consisted of a variety of outreach, educational, and advocacy strategies to address fire impact in North San Diego County. Through design and implementation of data collection tools and strategies, the NLRC and collaborators gathered meaningful information to help assess the experiences of

farmworkers and migrants during the fires and in their aftermath.



FIGURE 9: SURVEY DATA COLLECTION

This multifaceted research project included:

- General Impact Survey
- Focus Groups in Vista, Fallbrook, Pala, and Carmel Valley
- Key informant interviews
- Analysis of primary and secondary sources

The NLRC collected qualitative (focus groups and interviews) and quantitative (survey) data. The survey gathered participants' demographic information (age, ethnicity, gender) and general information regarding fire impact on housing, access to food and water, health, employment, education, and mental health.

The survey was approximately 30 minutes in length and consisted of 44 questions (mostly discrete choices). Survey participation focused on persons over 18 years of age who were affected by the fires. Participation was also strictly voluntary. The survey was completed in English and Spanish by outreach workers and bilingual *lideres comunitarios* or *promotores*

as part of the overall fire impact assessment. The NLRC coordinated and supervised the data collection process.

The surveys were collected during the week and on weekends at various hours of the day. The assessment specifically targeted the neighborhoods within North San Diego County most affected by the fires. Surveys and focus groups were completed in Fallbrook, San Marcos, Ramona, Pauma, Bonsall, Escondido, Del Mar/ Mt. Carmel, Rice Canyon, Vista, Poway, Valley Center, Oceanside, Rancho Bernardo, and Pala. Although Ramona was greatly impacted by the fires, limited presence of service providers and community organizations made data collection challenging during the week of the fires. It is also important to note that there was a recognized “over sampling” of specific groups as well as an over sampling in neighborhoods where these communities live. Finally, since the survey was collected as part of the overall fire impact assessment, many of the surveys were conducted at homes and in neighborhoods along the more accessible and walk-able streets. However, special efforts were made to also reach remote communities of farmworkers and migrants.

Data collected yielded measurable baseline data to develop strategies and make programmatic changes to improve services in the local community during and following emergency situations.

Dr. Arcela Nuñez-Alvarez and Dr. Konane Martinez conducted the focus groups in Spanish with farmworkers and migrants. Questions asked information about participants' experiences during the fires to gather data about participants' experiences during the evacuation, access of emergency services, and losses resulting from the fires.

Data collectors obtained informed consent and advised participants that participation was voluntary and confidential and that they could decline to answer any question or stop their participation at any time.

The data collected yielded measurable baseline data to develop strategies and make programmatic changes to improve services in the local community during and following emergency situations.

SURVEY FINDINGS

This section presents the results of the fire impact assessment survey conducted between October and November of 2007. The survey was part of a larger impact assessment the National Latino Research Center (NLRC) at California State University San Marcos conducted in collaboration with Farmworker CARE Coalition members. The assessment involved individuals in affected communities to assess immediate and long-term recovery needs following the wildfires that raged throughout San Diego County in October of 2007.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Survey participants were predominantly Spanish speakers with children living in multi-unit apartment complexes in Fallbrook and Escondido.

- 711 participants participated in the fire assessment survey (396 females, 242 males). However, only 674 surveys were fully completed, analyzed, and reported in the survey findings.
- Surveys were administered in either English or Spanish. The majority of participants completed the Spanish version of the survey (505 Spanish and 206 English surveys were completed).
- When participants were asked to report their primary language of communication, 62% reported Spanish, 23% reported English, and 9% reported communicating in both Spanish and English.
- Most participants reported living in Escondido or Fallbrook. They reported living in the same neighborhood for an average of 6 years, 2 months.

SURVEY GEOGRAPHY

Although the majority of survey participants reported living in Escondido (34%) and Fallbrook (26%), a sample of residents from throughout North San Diego County participated in the survey. Table below provides a breakdown of the number of surveys completed in each area.

TABLE 4: SURVEYS COLLECTED BY REGION

Region of Interview	Total Surveys	Percent
Escondido		34%
Fallbrook	178	26%
Pala	66	10%
Vista	46	7%
Oceanside	41	6%
San Marcos	20	3%
Valley Center	20	3%
Pauma	18	3%
Poway	13	2%
Rice Canyon	12	2%
Del Mar/Mt. Carmel	5	1%
Rancho Bernardo	1	<1%
Bonsall	3	<1%
Other	18	3%
Total	674	100%

LOSSES INCURRED AS A RESULT OF THE FIRE

Participants were asked to report their losses as a result of the fires. Almost all participants temporarily lost their jobs and/or source of income (99%), food and water (82%) and clothing (26%) as a result of the fires. Table 6 illustrates the percentages of participants reporting losses.

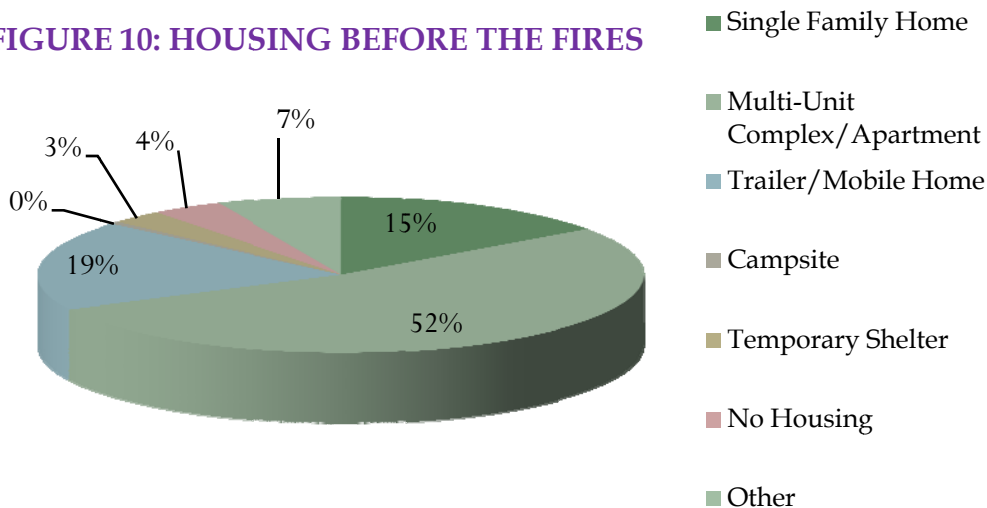
TABLE 5: TYPES OF LOSSES

Type of Loss	Percentage
Home	8%
Bedding	15%
Job or Source of Income	99%
Car/Transportation	13%
Food or Water	82%
Clothes	26%
Legal Documents	15%
Agriculture	3%
Savings	7%

SHELTER AND HOUSING BEFORE THE FIRES

Participants were asked to report on their previous and current housing situation. Most participants reported living in a multi-unit apartment complex or in trailer homes (71%). Almost a quarter (24.5%) of participants reported living in trailers, campsites, and/or having no fixed housing. For those participants who reported other, the majority were living in a community center ($n = 23$) or at St. Peter’s church ($n = 8$). Figure 11 below shows where participants were living before the fire.

FIGURE 10: HOUSING BEFORE THE FIRES



Typically, households reported on average 2 families living together. Additionally, 69% of participants reported having children under the age

of 17 years of age. Sixteen percent of the participants reported having a pregnant or breastfeeding female in the household.

POST FIRE HOUSING SITUATION

At the time the survey was administered (within a two week period since fires started), 85% of participants were back in their homes. The rest were staying in evacuation centers or with friends and relatives. Six percent who were not currently living in their homes, reported not knowing when they could move back, could no longer afford rent, could not move back because of a job loss, or that they were going to move back on Friday October 26th, 2007, the day the evacuation was scheduled to be lifted.

Five percent of participants reported losing their housing and of these participants, one was scheduled to be placed in a FEMA mobile home, a couple had decided to return to Mexico, and the rest were in search of a home or had no idea where to look for housing.

ACCESS TO FOOD AND WATER

Participants were asked to report whether they currently had enough food and water. Specifically, participants were asked to reflect on whether their family had enough food and water for the following week, 15 days, and month. If not, then participants were instructed to report what items were needed. In addition, if participants had infants or children less than 2 years of age living with them, they were asked whether there was enough food for their children. Results are shown in tables 6 and 7 below.

TABLE 6: AVAILABILITY OF FOOD & WATER

Family Needs within	Enough Food?		Enough Water?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Week	73%	27%	77%	23%
15 Days				36%
Month	55%	45%	65%	35%

TABLE 7: CHILDREN'S NEEDS

Children's Needs	Yes	No
Week	63%	38%
15 Days	54%	47%
Month	56%	44%

If participants reported not having enough food, they were asked to report the basic staples needed. They reported needing the following items:

- Basic food supplies (60%)
- Cooking oil, beans, flour, rice, bread, and/or tortillas (70%)
- Dairy products (i.e., milk, cheese) 35%
- Fresh produce, eggs, canned goods, and tortillas (10%)

Participants who had infants or children in the household also requested a variety of foods. Specifically, 57% of participants requested baby formula (i.e., milk), 25% requested fruit, 12% requested baby food (e.g., Gerber™), and 7% requested cereals.

Participants were asked how they were currently obtaining food and water supplies. They reported obtaining food and water through various methods including: purchasing food at local markets with their own money (59%), obtaining meals with help from public assistance such as community shelters and food stamps (20%) and local churches (10%), through the Red Cross (14%), and Interfaith Community Services (36%).

Even though 90% participants were able to obtain food, 10% of participants reported not being able to cook in their homes. As a follow-up question, participants were asked "If you can cook at home, what do you need?" 13% needed cutlery and silverware, 2% needed gas and stoves, 12% needed pots and pans, and 6% of participants needed "everything."

ACCESS TO NON FOOD ITEMS

Participants were asked to report whether they had enough blankets, personal hygiene products, sanitary supplies, and clothes. On average participants reported needing blankets and hygiene products. They requested feminine products (18%) and bathing products (e.g., shampoo and soap) (7%). They also requested a variety of clothes (i.e., shirts, warm sweaters/jackets, socks, shoes, pants, and hats (19%), cleaning supplies (63%), bleach or antibacterial clean agents (58%), brooms and/or mops (6%), and laundry soap (5%). Responses are reported in table below.

TABLE 8: NON FOOD ITEMS NEEDED

Question:	Yes	No
Does everyone in the household have enough ...		
blankets?	75%	25%
personal hygiene products?	62%	38%
sanitary supplies?	69%	31%
clothes?	72%	28%

HEALTH

Participants were asked nine questions regarding their current health status and the health of those living in their household. They were asked to report on the types of illnesses or emotional problems (stress) that had occurred in their household after the fires. A total of 355 participants responded to these questions. Four key health-related issues that were reported among participants include:

- ❏ Mental health problems such as depression and stress (57%)
- ❏ Flu like symptoms (e.g., sore throat, cold, and cough) (26%)
- ❏ Respiratory related problems (14%)
- ❏ Itchy eyes (3%)

Additionally, asked to report chronic medical problems, participants reported the top five chronic medical conditions:

- ❏ Chronic flu-like symptoms (e.g., cough) (24%)
- ❏ Arthritis/chronic pain (21%)
- ❏ Cardiac problems (e.g., heart disease) (23%)
- ❏ Eye illnesses (3%)
- ❏ Mental disorder (15%)

Table below presents general health questions and responses by percentage.

TABLE 9: GENERAL HEALTH QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

Question	Yes	No
Does anyone in the household have a medical problem that has not been treated?	13%	87%
Specifically, the medical problems reported were as follows: 32% reported respiratory problems, 11% reported some sort of chronic pain, 13% reported cardiac problems, 4% reported mental health problems, 7% reported dental problems, 1% reported a drug problem, and 1% reported incidence of unspecified tumors.		
Did anyone in the household go to the hospital emergency room since the fires started?	5%	95%
Emergency room visits were caused by respiratory problems (52%), mental health problems (14%), stomach aches (7%), pregnancy (3%), smoke/burn victims (11%), and various accidents (14%).		
Do you have enough medicine for everyone who needs it?	70%	30%
Medicine needs: Flu medication (62%), asthma medication (6%), blood pressure (2%), diabetes (5%), eye medication (3%), first aid (8%), money for prescription (2%), and miscellaneous medications (17%).		
Do you have access to medical care?	67%	33%
If yes, then participant were asked to report where they seek medical care. The majority of participants attend their local community clinics (33%), various participants have health insurance (30%), some attend Interfaith Community Services for medical assistance (6%), and a few see a private doctor (1%).		
If no, the participants were asked to report why not. Reasons included: Do not qualify for insurance/no insurance (12%), do not need it (1%), no money (4%), and not have the informational resources for medical access (1%).		
Does anyone in the household have asthma or lung disease?	22%	78%
Does anyone in the household have diarrhea?	7%	93%
Does anyone in the household have respiratory infection or cold?	29%	71%
Does anyone in the household have new skin problems?	8%	12%
Do you have health insurance for yourself?	35%	65%
Do you have health insurance for your children?	57%	23%

LIVELIHOODS

Participants were asked to report whether or not they were employed before the fires and whether they were currently employed. Responses include:

- 67% of participants were employed before the fires
- 33% of participants did not have previous employment
- 54% of participants were currently employed (i.e., at the time the survey was completed)
- 46% of participants had no current employment

Moreover, if participants were previously employed, they were instructed to report their type of employment. Top five types of employment are in agriculture, nursery, construction, factory and housekeeping. Table below summarizes types of employment reported in the survey.

TABLE 10: REPORT OF PREVIOUS TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT

Type of employment	Percent
Agriculture/Nursery	44%
Factory	13%
Construction	13%
Housekeeper	12%
School District	10%
Landscaping	9%
Store Clerk	7%
Restaurant	6%
Miscellaneous	1%

Participants who reported not currently working were asked to report why they did not have employment and/or when they planned to go back to work. Over a quarter of participants reported not having jobs as a result of the fires (28%). Additionally, 19% of participants report that their location of employment was directly affected by the fires (e.g., houses burned, fields burned). Also, 4% of participants were unemployed because they were disabled. Lastly, 16% of participants were unemployed because they chose to become “*stay at home moms*” or were currently pregnant.

On average, participants who reported being unemployed were seeking employment and expected to go back to work within the next month. However, 2% of the participants had no idea when they expected to go back to work and 1% expected to never go back to work.

EDUCATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Researchers asked about children’s education and overall psychosocial well being. 84% of the participants reported that their school-aged children were back in school. Of the 16% of school-aged children that were not back in school, 25% were ill and 5% lost school related materials, and 5% did not have transportation to return to school. Participants reported losing school supplies including backpacks, paper, crayons, and pencils/pens.

Survey asked participants to reflect on the most serious issues/problems currently facing their families. Lack of money and jobs was their main concern (51%). Additionally, 24% reported lack of food and water also as major issues, 11% reported illness, 12% reported lack of housing as an issue, and 2% reported mental distress being the main issue.

NEEDS

Participants were asked to report on their current and future needs. They reported the following current needs, needs within a month, and needs within 3-6 months.

TABLE 11: CURRENT NEEDS

General Needs	Children’s Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job/money (30%) • Food/water (21%) • Miscellaneous items (15%) • Housing (6%) • Nothing (5%) • Furniture (4%) • Transportation (2%) • Did not respond (17%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothes (30%) • Food/water (26%) • Baby supplies (9%) • Housing (4%) • Medical needs (4%) • Counseling (4%) • Education (2%) • Miscellaneous items (3%) • Reported nothing (8%) • Did not respond (17%)

TABLE 12: NEEDS IN A MONTH AND 3-6 MONTHS

Participant's needs in a month	Participant's needs in 3-6 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job/money (28%) • Food/water (26%) • Transportation (3%) • Housing (7%) • Furniture (1%) • Bedding (2%) • Insurance (1%) • Baby diapers (3%) • Clothing (10%) • Miscellaneous items (11%) • Did not foresee needing anything (9%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job/money (15%) • Food/water (13%) • Transportation (1%) • Housing (9%) • Insurance (3%) • Clothing (6%) • Miscellaneous items (9%) • Did not foresee needing anything (9%)

ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE

Participants were asked whether they were aware of assistance being provided to people affected by the fires. 40% of participants were aware of various assistance providers in their area. Specifically, 14% of participants were familiar with various community shelters, 4% of participants were familiar with church support, 32% of participants were familiar with free food and water services, 14% of participants were familiar with federal aid such as food stamps, 12% of participants were familiar with assistance from the Red Cross and FEMA.

Participants were also asked to report on the types of relief assistance and from whom they had received assistance thus far. 48% of participants had received aid from the Red Cross (i.e., food, water, shelter, medicine, cleaning supplies, and miscellaneous supplies such as pet food). 31% of participants had received aid from local churches (i.e., shelter, clothes, diapers, food, and water). 22% of participants received aid from Interfaith Community Services (i.e., food, water, gas, money, smoke masks, medical assistance, jobs, and shelter). 12% of participants had received food stamps

from the county. Finally, 2% of participants received aid from friends and family.

Participants were asked whether or not they were helping others who were affected by the fires. 20% of participants were and 60% of participants reported at the time that they were not helping others. Of the 20% of participants who were helping others, 15% were providing housing, 13% were helping with food and water distributions, 8% were volunteers, 9% were donating money, and 6% were helping by providing emotional support.

As a follow-up question, participants were asked “Is there something or someone that prevents you from receiving help to assist people affected by the fires?” 88% of participants reported no and 12% of participants reported yes. Of the 12% of participants who reported yes, 28% of them reported that the lack of social security identification cards and legal residences was the main reason that was preventing them from helping others. 27% of these participants reported that lack of transportation was preventing them from helping others. Finally, lack of child care (9%), lack of trust (5%), lack of money/jobs (10%), and language barriers (3%) were what prevented participants from helping others.

GENERAL COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

- Participants would like to see more help provided to assist people (24%)
- Participants need money (24%)
- Participants would like to have shelters open during the winter (1%)
- Participants would like to of had warning about the fires (7%)
- Participants still need food and water (7%)
- Participants have fear of no housing (4%)
- Participants are concerned about air quality and health (5%)
- Participants want to thank the fire fighters (4%)
- Participants want to thank the organizations (28%)

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

The NLRC conducted qualitative, in-depth analysis utilizing focus groups and key informant interviews to assess fire impact and needs of farmworker and migrant communities in North San Diego County. NLRC researchers developed a set of questions exploring experiences during the fires including:

- ❏ What happened to you and your family during the fires?
- ❏ How did the fires affect you and your family?
- ❏ What type of support or assistance did you and your family received during the fires and from whom did you receive mentioned assistance?
- ❏ How have the fires affected you over the last 3-4 months?
- ❏ In the event of another emergency or crisis, what would you do differently?
- ❏ What do you think was done well and what could be improved in the future to better serve families?

Responses gathered during the focus groups and interviews provide unique insights to better understand fire impact and community needs.

LOCAL CAMP

Researchers and government agencies estimate that thousands of homeless farmworkers and day laborers reside in the hills and canyons of San Diego County. The mostly unaccompanied male workers in these camps lack access to basic living conditions such as



FIGURE 11: MIGRANT CAMP IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

shelter, water, drainage, and food. The NLRC conducted one focus group session with six men to assess the impact the fire had on the farmworkers.

The men stated that it was difficult to breathe due to the heavy amounts of ash and smoke in the air. The men said they felt the physical effects of the fires for weeks following the disaster. Colds, sore throat, difficulty breathing, eye irritation and vision problems were the health problems most frequently experienced by homeless residents.

Most of the men stated they did not evacuate the camps during the fires. They did not have any place to go and remained at the camps. They were also fearful of going to an evacuation center or did not know which shelters were available. Other residents did leave to seek shelter with friends or family living in urban areas. A few residents went to an evacuation center established by the County of San Diego.

While men in the focus groups saw the border patrol in the surrounding communities, they did not see them deporting anyone during the fires. However, they heard about several sweeps occurring in other communities; hence they were fearful that the border patrol would sweep their camps.

All the participants in the focus group lost a week's worth of work during the fires and have faced unemployment or reduced work since the fires. They receive no compensation for missed days of work. Most participants in the group reported they are now working only 2-3 days a week, when they normally work 5-6 days a week this time of year.

Focus group participants stated that the loss of work has negatively impacted their economic situation and their ability to sustain themselves. They will not recover from this disaster anytime soon. The top three current needs for men living in the camps are food, clothing (especially socks and shoes) and water. Other identified needs include food gift cards for local grocery stores, work gloves, tarps and blankets. As weather fluctuates, their needs for blankets and clothing also changes. Unless individuals and organizations offer them assistance, they are not likely to go into urban areas seeking any sort of benefits.

PALA

Hundreds of farmworker and migrant families live in the Pala, Pauma, Rincon, and Rice Canyon regions of North San Diego County. According to Sandra Carmona, Poder Popular field project coordinator, approximately 300 farmworker families were displaced in these communities. Many of these families regularly live in old trailers and lack access to water, electricity, and other basic needs. NLRC conducted a focus group with fifteen residents and day laborers who live primarily on local Indian reservations.

Four key findings emerged from the discussion in Pala: 1) Inconsistency in the evacuation notification process and systems; 2) Lack of educational and informational resources about emergency relief programs including shelters during disasters; 3) All families experienced losses as a result of the fires; and 4) Few emergency relief services were available for farmworkers.

NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

Formal emergency notification systems failed in these remote communities. Although most participants evacuated their residences within the first three days and were away from home for four to five days, until the evacuation order was lifted, community members informed each other. Most families do not have telephone landlines; hence, they were not able to receive reverse 911 calls. Few families have cell phones and those individuals who have cell phones served as the key contacts for entire communities. In some cases, landlords went around the trailer communities letting people know they had to evacuate. In other instances a reservation security guards went around

Frightened, some families loaded their cars with some clothes and the children and drove aimlessly following others into grocery store parking lots in Temecula and Oceanside where they remained for a couple of days until they were able to find a place to sleep.

knocking door-to-door letting families know they had to leave immediately. In most cases, neighbors alerted each other to evacuate.

EVACUATION PROCESS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

All participants reported lacking general information regarding the evacuation process, emergency preparedness, and procedures for accessing resources. Furthermore, they did not know who to contact to find out more information about the evacuation procedure and/or to find out where shelters were available.

Families devised systems of evacuation in which families without cars carpooled with those who had transportation. The families who evacuated did not know where to go or how to get to evacuation centers. After leaving their homes without any personal belongings, they went to Temecula, Lake Elsinore, Oceanside, and Escondido. Only one English-speaking family went to an evacuation center in Escondido while all others sought shelter with friends and acquaintances. Those who went to evacuation centers in Escondido and Temecula said they were treated well and received enough food and other items they needed. Several families joined relatives or acquaintances who welcomed as many as twenty to twenty-five people in their homes. Adults and children shared sleeping quarters, food, water, gas money, and clothes supporting each other for almost a week.

Some were frightened, loaded their cars with some clothes and the children and drove aimlessly following others into grocery store parking lots in Temecula and Oceanside where they remained for a couple of days until they were able to find a place to sleep. One family rented a hotel room in Temecula reporting exorbitant hotel prices but having nowhere else to go they used all their savings to pay for the hotel room.

Despite the environmental hazards in the outdoor air and proximity of the fires, several families remained in their trailers during the entire week with little food and water. They did not evacuate fearing the Border Patrol would arrest them if they left. They managed to survive the heat and heavy smoke until the evacuation was lifted and relief from the Farmworker CARE Coalition reached them.

LOSSES

All families experienced losses as a result of the fires. They lost employment, income, electricity, food/groceries, school, cash, gas, and clothes. Lack of work in farms and nurseries continues to be a major issue many families are facing. Even three or four months after the fires, they continue under-employed or unemployed altogether. Those who lost perishable food items left in their refrigerators due to electrical problems, lost hundreds of dollars they invested in purchasing at least one week's worth of groceries. Some families had under \$20 in cash at the time of the evacuations to last an entire week. A family of four had \$5 at home until their next payday. They were able to get in contact with a relative living in the state of Washington who sent them \$200 via quick collect to help them during the week. They did not have savings accounts, credit cards, or any other source of income to help them cover the extra costs of groceries, clothes, hotels, gas, etc. Also, several families who have cell phones experienced the highest cell phone usage they ever had. Some of their cell phone bills were as high as \$1,000 (which they have not been able to pay).

ACCESS TO RELIEF

These families received very little assistance during the fires, except for the few who took shelter at evacuation centers. Some have received clothes from Salvation Army, cleaning products, food, and water from the American Red Cross, and bread and other supplies from the San Luis Rey Mission. All fifteen families in the focus group received food, clothes, furniture and rental assistance or cash donations from the Farmworker CARE Coalition.

Some agency volunteers and organizations denied services to families. Several families who solicited assistance at distribution centers reported being denied food. They were asked for identification and for immigration papers. Some of them were unable to produce identification documents and went back home without assistance. Since they did not know where to call to ask for information regarding availability of services and eligibility criteria, they did not seek assistance again. However, when the Farmworker CARE Coalition provided assistance in their local

communities, they received rental assistance, food, water, clothes, and cash donations. Although the assistance amounted to only a couple of hundred dollars maximum per family, all families reported Farmworker CARE Coalition assistance was extremely helpful. The ongoing needs in these communities are jobs, food, water, and rental assistance.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

While many families saw the Border Patrol in neighboring communities and/or heard rumors about the presence of the Border Patrol, they did not see any deportations during the fires. However, everyone mentioned they heard about several sweeps occurring in other communities; hence they were fearful that the Border Patrol would sweep their communities.

Focus group participants stated that the loss of work has negatively impacted their overall economic situation and their ability to sustain themselves. Many are feeling desperate due to uncertain employment opportunities. Some are considering moving elsewhere to seek work but are not sure where they can go and how they will find resources to relocate their families.

Some are part of a quiet population that makes its home under tenuous circumstances, laboring in the groves, building new homes, or scrubbing bathtubs and kitchen floors in North County.

Teri Figueroa, *North County Times*,
November 2, 2007

FALLBROOK

Hundreds of farmworkers and migrants live in Fallbrook. The NLRC conducted a focus group with sixteen residents and day laborers whose families live and work in Fallbrook.

Five key findings emerged from the discussion in Fallbrook: 1) Inconsistency in the evacuation notification process and systems; 2) Lack of educational and informational resources about emergency relief programs including shelter locations; 3) All families experienced losses as a result of the fires; 4) Few emergency relief services were available for farmworkers

and migrants; and 5) Fire impact is forcing some families to migrate to other regions of California, others are considering migrating to other states, and yet others are even considering returning to Mexico.

NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

Formal emergency notification systems worked in some areas. Most participants evacuated their residences within the first two days and were unable to return home, until the evacuation order was lifted, one week later. They learned about the evacuation through various means. Most families learned about the evacuation orders through police officers who came knocking on people's doors. Others received notices from apartment managers. Some families received reverse 911 calls. In other cases, neighbors alerted each other to evacuate. Yet in some cases, residents did not receive notification at all. Additionally, many expressed frustration that during the evacuations there was no means by which they could find out whether or not their home was burned or damaged by the fire.

EVACUATION PROCESS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Regardless of the notification process, all participants reported lacking general awareness and/or information regarding the evacuation process, emergency preparedness, and access to resources. Furthermore, they lacked information about who to contact to find out more information about the evacuation procedure and/or to find out where shelter facilities were available.

As a consequence of the lack of general information, evacuations were challenging for most families. They devised systems of evacuation in which families without cars carpooled with those who had transportation. The families who evacuated did not know where to go or how to get to evacuation centers. Those with children in schools made arrangements to pick up children and then left town. The majority left their homes without any personal belongings and traveled to Temecula, Murrieta, Hemet, Rainbow, Oceanside, Camp Pendleton, and Del Mar. Several families went to a local evacuation center in Fallbrook while the majority sought shelter with friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. Those who went to the local evacuation center in Fallbrook said they were treated well and

received enough food and other items they needed. They received clothes, water, food, and vouchers when they left the evacuation center. However, families who stayed with relatives, acquaintances, or strangers lived with up to thirty people in one house during the entire week. Adults and children shared sleeping quarters, food, water, gas money, and clothes supporting each other during the week. They took turns preparing meals and purchasing basic food staples and baby needs. In some instances, individuals and families had no money with them whatsoever and relied on donations from others able and willing to share food, diapers, water, clothes and other basic needs.

Several families with asthmatic children left in such a rush that they forgot their medication. Children suffered due to the thick smoke and had difficulty breathing but did not suffer asthma attacks. According to parents, some of the children with asthma were wheezing for weeks after they returned to their homes.

Despite the environmental hazards and proximity of the fires, several families stayed behind. They waited for their spouses to pick them up but husbands did not arrive because the roads were already blocked and they were not able to get through. Several men have no private transportation and while they waited for family members to come pick them up, law enforcement blocked entry ways and transportation did not arrive to help them for several days. Everyone who was left behind managed to survive the heat and heavy smoke until the evacuation was lifted and families reunited.

LOSSES

All families experienced losses as a result of the fires. They lost employment, income, food/groceries, school, cash, gas, and clothes. The lack of work in farms and nurseries continues to be a major issue many families are facing. Even three or four months after the fires, they continue under-employed or unemployed altogether. Those who lost perishable food items due to electrical problems, lost hundreds of dollars they invested in purchasing one week's worth of groceries. Evacuation was very expensive for families who do not have savings, credit cards, or any other source of income to help them cover unforeseen expenses.

ACCESS TO RELIEF

These families received very little assistance during the fires, except for the few who took shelter at evacuation centers. Some received clothes from Salvation Army, cleaning products, food, and water from the American Red Cross, and food and rental assistance and other supplies from the Farmworker CARE Coalition.

Some agency volunteers and organizations denied services to families. Several families who solicited assistance at distribution centers reported being denied food. They were asked for identification and for immigration papers. Some of them were unable to produce identification documents and went back home without assistance. Since they did not know where to call to ask for information regarding availability of services and eligibility criteria, they did not seek assistance. However, when the Farmworker CARE Coalition provided assistance in their local communities, they received rental assistance, food, water, clothes, and cash donations. All families reported that the assistance the Farmworker CARE Coalition provided was extremely helpful. The ongoing needs in these communities are jobs, food, water, and rental assistance. Their rents have increased from \$25-\$100 since the fires but their income has declined.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

While these families saw the Border Patrol in the neighboring communities, they did not see them deporting anyone during the fires. However, they heard about several sweeps occurring in other communities; hence they were fearful that the Border Patrol would sweep their communities.

For the struggling, even those who are legal residents or citizens of the United States, the fire left behind nothing but heartbreak.

Teri Figueroa
North County Times
November 2, 2007

Focus group participants stated that the loss of work has negatively impacted their overall economic situation and their ability to sustain

themselves. Many are feeling desperation due to uncertain employment opportunities. Some are considering moving elsewhere to seek work but are not sure where they can go and how they will find resources to move their families. Several families were planning to return to Mexico because they have no other recourse left in the United States.

SUGGESTIONS

Coordinated communication would greatly improve quality of information during emergency. Participants recommend having ongoing trainings and workshops for community residents to learn about disaster preparation and relief. Also, availability of information in appropriate languages will make information more accessible to people. Radio and television media sources can provide information to Spanish speakers.

VISTA

Hundreds of farmworkers and migrants live in the City of Vista. The NLRC conducted a focus group/community meeting with twenty residents and day laborers whose families live and work in Vista and other nearby communities.

Six key findings emerged from the discussion in Vista: 1) Inconsistency in the evacuation notification process and systems; 2) Lack of educational and informational resources about emergency relief programs including shelter locations; 3) Lack of information about how to volunteer and make donations to assist families; 4) Families made donations and volunteered in local shelters in Escondido; 5) Fire impact is forcing some families to take in relatives in an effort to help them recover from the fires; 6) Untreated trauma among children and adolescents.

NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

Depending on the region of Vista where residents live, some areas were evacuated. However, the majority of Vista residents were not under mandatory evacuation. Instead, every Vista family interviewed received

friends and relatives from other evacuated communities including Escondido, Fallbrook, and San Luis Rey. They were frustrated with the lack of information to check on the status of the evacuation orders where friends and relatives were in harm's way. In some instances, they lost contact with family members for an entire week.

EVACUATION PROCESS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Regardless of the notification process in the region, all participants reported lacking general awareness and/or information regarding the evacuation process, emergency preparedness, and access to resources. Furthermore, they lacked information about who to contact to find out more information about the evacuation procedure and/or to find out where shelter facilities were available.

As a consequence of the lack of general information, evacuations were challenging for most families. Vista families welcomed individuals and families into their home due to sense of desperation they witnessed. In many cases, they allowed perfect strangers to remain in their homes for over a week.

Many of these families collected donations for impacted communities. They delivered food and water to shelters and volunteered in shelters in Escondido and Fallbrook and went to migrant camps in Carmel Valley and Del Mar to deliver goods. Many served as Spanish interpreters at various centers.

LOSSES

Families in Vista lost jobs and/or income primarily. They are employed in a variety of agricultural sectors impacted by the fires in Del Mar, Rancho Bernardo, Fallbrook, Bonsall, and Escondido. Some family members work in construction and others in domestic work. Participants who work in the Fallbrook groves and Bonsall nurseries lost jobs and/or have seen employment diminish. The lack of work in farms and nurseries continues to be a major issue affecting families. Some of them work in construction in Rancho Bernardo and others are employed in factories in Carlsbad and

Oceanside. Those who work along the coast still missed several days of work without compensation. Others are day laborers in Vista who also lost work the week of the fires. Even three and four months after the fires, they continue under-employed or unemployed altogether. Those who had friends, family members and others stay in their homes paid higher utility bills and spent additional resources buying food to feed guests.

ACCESS TO RELIEF

These families received very little assistance during the fires; instead they donated basic staples to help others in greater need. They heard on the radio and on television that shelters needed food, water, diapers, medicine, etc. and decided to help by delivering donations to shelters in Escondido. Many community leaders assisted with data collection for various surveys and assessed community needs.

Since they generally lacked information about the type of assistance available, families helped each other. Some families who lost work and income during the fires did receive some assistance from the Farmworker CARE Coalition including food, water, and rental assistance.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Although most of these families did not face urgent needs compared to some of the other communities, they still reported illnesses and stress. Many children became ill with respiratory illnesses, itchy and watery eyes, sore throat, skin rashes, and allergies. Several asthmatic children had to use their inhalers repeatedly. Parents were especially concerned about untreated trauma among children who did not comprehend what was happening around them. Children missed school during the entire week.

One participant worked in Rancho Bernardo during the entire week. His boss informed employees that if they left the work site, they would not have work when they returned. Hence, several dozen employees worked outside using only masks during the fires. Although he was feeling very sick from nausea, he was afraid to go home for fear of losing his job.

A volunteer at the Escondido High School evacuation center said he was very happy to see Latinos come out to donate and help others in need. Although he acknowledged that the delivery of services and distribution of goods at the shelter was somewhat disorganized, he believes people received what they needed. There were plenty of supplies to serve everyone who came to the center. He was also glad to help Spanish speakers because very few volunteers spoke Spanish.

Many families wanted to go help at shelters but were afraid to leave their homes because they heard the Border Patrol was roaming near evacuation sites. Also, since many of the families are primarily Spanish-speakers, they could not access information to help others.

SUGGESTIONS

Many things could be improved to be better prepared for a future emergency. Individual families recommend preparing themselves for an emergency with first aid kits, portable filing box with important documents, battery operated radio to hear news and updates, flashlights, etc. They also would like to see local government play a bigger role in helping families to be more prepared to deal with similar emergency situations. Also, they believe coordinating information to the community will be critical in another crisis. They also recommend each city form a committee to devise community programs to educate residents about fire season and to implement more educational programs for weed abatement. Lastly, each community needs to allocate appropriate resources to combat fire season. Most importantly, they recommend ensuring that all people be protected equally during crisis, that basic services are available to all who need them, and that a study be conducted to learn what went wrong to make sure it does not happen again.

AGENCY AND ADVOCATE PERSPECTIVES

This section discusses the perspective of advocates, agency representatives and outreach workers who were directly involved in relief and disaster assistance during and immediately after the fires. These perspectives were gathered through key informant interviews and structured group discussions at Farmworker CARE coalition meetings.

The established network of agencies working through the CARE coalition combined with the network of farmworker community leaders has been an invaluable resource for relief efforts during and after the fires of October 2007. Days after the fires the Farmworker CARE Coalition called an emergency meeting to discuss and develop coordinated efforts among all partner agencies to address the immediate and long-term needs of farmworker families in North San Diego County. Project Concern International facilitated a training session for the coalition on emergency assessment and coordination of humanitarian assistance. The main needs addressed included: health, housing, hygiene, non-food items (blankets, clothes, utensils, etc.), food, food security (access to food), water and sanitation, and psychosocial issues.

During the fires local outreach workers and advocates with deep ties to the farmworker communities found themselves overwhelmed with the charge to help the community amidst the chaos of widespread evacuations, miscommunication and fear. The lack of an effective and adequate emergency response system for the farmworker community grew more and more evident as outreach workers and advocates witnessed firsthand the insurmountable barriers that Latino farmworkers faced during the evacuation and relief efforts. The following is a compilation of the experiences and observations by these outreach workers and advocates during the evacuations, local relief efforts, and in the aftermath of the fires.

EVACUATION

A young child living on the Indian reservation received no warning of approaching fire until he awoke in the middle of the night to witness a river of fire blazing toward the trailer where he lived. He quickly awoke his family and this and other families fled towards the local casino where they sought shelter from the storm. Another family waited until the last possible minute to flee during an evacuation for fear of attracting the attention of the border patrol, whose vehicle was parked outside of their home during the fires.

This vignette represents only two of the haunting stories that one outreach worker from a social service agency documented during the firestorm evacuations.

Consistently, outreach workers reported that the lack of an effective warning and information system during the evacuations endangered the lives of farmworker and migrant families. A few key points illustrate the impact of a lack of an effective system.

Consistently, outreach workers reported that the lack of an effective warning and information system during the evacuations endangered the lives of farmworker and migrant families.

- ❏ Bilingual information about the encroaching fires and evacuation orders was largely absent.
- ❏ Heavy presence of the border patrol deterred many migrant and farmworkers from evacuating and seeking out evacuation information.
- ❏ Several local agricultural companies did not evacuate their workers despite evacuation orders. Workers kept working for fear of losing their jobs.
- ❏ A day after the fire in one area, farmworkers were working on cleanup of ash and lost crops.

- Farmworker families in Fallbrook were stranded during the evacuation of the community. Families stood on the side of the road as rows of cars drove past them on their way out of town.

SHELTER AND RELIEF

Sergio and his family of five grew to over twenty during the fires. Out of money, and desperate to feed the new mouths and diaper the three babies, he called upon a local agency for help. The agency did all they could in bringing supplies, but they were in short supply.

The above example is just one of many ways in which Latino farmworkers and migrants sought shelter during the fires. Lack of information combined with fear of accessing public relief shelters made seeking shelter through familial and social networks the only option for countless families. Case workers and agency representatives received calls from all over the north part of San Diego County as well as southern

Riverside County from families that had “taken in” friends, co-workers and family during the evacuations. Seeking shelter in this way proved to be the rule instead of the exception for the majority of Latino families according to agency representatives. This strategy made assessment of needs and distribution of relief difficult for most agencies working with Latino farmworker and migrant communities.

The supply end of relief work was equally challenging according to agency representatives and advocates. Agency workers expressed their frustration at the lack of coordination and structures in place that would allow them to access relief supplies. “I got a call from an agency in San Diego saying that

“I got a call from an agency in San Diego saying that they had a whole room full of food and blankets, yet I had no way of getting the stuff up here fast enough.”

Case Worker

they had a whole room full of food and blankets, yet I had no way of getting the stuff up here fast enough,” said one relief worker.

After being evacuated many families were stranded in unfamiliar regions of the region called local outreach workers for help in finding shelter and aid. There was a lack of information on local shelters and the ability of these shelters to provide bilingual services.

Local advocates witnessed several violations of basic civil and human rights during relief efforts. The presence of border patrol and other uniformed officers in evacuation shelters spread fear among farmworker families. There were several confirmed cases of harassment by local officials during relief efforts. One observer documented that the Border Patrol and ICE did intervene during the evacuations. ICE officials entered the evacuation centers in north San Diego County and deported several families. After visiting the majority of evacuation sites in the county one local advocate witnessed several cases of discrimination by government officials and relief agencies during the disaster. This advocate stated that some sites asked for residency documentation from Latino immigrants while others did not. Another advocate witnessed ten border patrol vehicles entering the community of Fallbrook, when he tried to enter as a human rights observer he was turned away.

When a trailer park on the Rincon reservation burnt down approximately 300 people, primarily Latino, were at a Red Cross Shelter at a local high school immediately after the fire. They had initially been evacuated to a local casino but were quickly moved to the Red Cross facility. In the course of one week these 300 Latino families moved three times, moving in and out of shelters, some to hotels, others left to stay with family or friends. The two weeks following the fire were very tumultuous, with shelters opening and closing. Evacuees weren't sure how long they were going to be able to stay in any given shelter. This situation made it difficult for outreach workers and advocates who were trying to keep track of where everyone was and what their needs were. At the time of this report it has been difficult to assess exactly how many people lost shelter from that area or where they are now.

Outreach workers worked tirelessly to provide needed clothing and hygienic material to the families living in the shelter and who lost everything in the fire.

One local agency, working in collaboration with the CARE Coalition, has sought funds to house a portion of the families that lost their trailers from this region of the Indian reservation. To date the *Farmworker CARE Coalition Interim Housing Project* has successfully placed families in forty used and donated trailers. With current funding the project will be in place for one year. Residents receive rental assistance, propane, and some stipends for food. The Farmworker Coalition continues to seek out ways to sustain this and other long term recovery programs for farmworkers.

AFTERMATH

I knocked on the door of the small trailer located in the back hills. From the inside emerged a voice asking who was there. After I was recognized and welcomed inside I was appalled to hear the story and see the fear in the eyes of this family that I had come to know over the past year. In a tearful voice she told me about how she has been locked inside with her children for three days. The migra- border patrol- had a heavy presence on the back road near her home. She was terrified. She and her children had only a half gallon of water left, little food and no money. I promised to come back later the afternoon with some food and water. I drove the 45 miles to downtown San Diego and filled the rented SUV with supplies from a local humanitarian agency that had begun to gather food and provisions for Latinos overlooked by relief efforts. I went to the store, bought some fresh milk and butter, and took out \$60 dollars from the ATM. Arriving back at the small community of trailers I distributed the food and supplies to the family and neighbors living in surrounding trailers. I handed her an envelope with the cash. I didn't know what else to do.

Assisting farmworker families in the aftermath of the fires has been challenging and often frustrating according to the key informants interviewed. Outreach workers and advocates have worked countless hours with local agencies with the goal of improving access to relief resources for the many families affected. In the Poder Popular communities outreach workers and program coordinators have taken the lead in these efforts. Working with the trained farmworker community

leaders they distributed food relief during and immediately after the fires and continue to assess the need in the local community.

Outreach workers and advocates still feel and see the economic, social and emotional toll that the fires have had on local farmworkers and their families. They stated that the impact that the fires have had is still very much tangible. Across the board these workers and advocates agree

that relief resources are still needed to help these families. The loss of work during the fires and the reduction of work opportunities since the fires have greatly impacted the already working poor farmworker families throughout the county. As a result, rental assistance, money, food, water, and clothing are still needed in the community.

Rental assistance, money, food, water, and clothing are still needed in farmworker and migrant communities throughout North County.

Finally, outreach workers, advocates and agency representatives believe training and technical assistance to develop an emergency plan for farmworker communities in San Diego is critical. The fires exposed capacity issues of agencies to serve vulnerable communities and to handle a disaster of any magnitude. While the CARE Coalition has taken first steps in addressing this issue there are countless more left to take.

The following recommendations represent key elements for any future emergency preparedness plan:

- Effective communication and coordination between federal, state, and local relief agencies.
- Available bilingual relief workers familiar with the local community.
- Streamlined process for accessing funds for relief work.
- Evacuation plan for community members without transportation.
- Explicit policy prohibiting the presence of border patrol and uniformed officers in both federal and local evacuation centers.

LONG TERM RECOVERY

Farmworker and migrant families are facing serious challenges in their efforts to recover from the impacts the October 2007 fires left behind in communities throughout North San Diego County. This study clearly finds that traditional emergency relief procedures and mechanisms have not adequately addressed the needs of certain vulnerable populations including farmworkers and migrants. However, given the essential service farmworkers provide in the economy of San Diego, targeted long-term recovery strategies are needed to serve this population. First, interventions and resources are needed to address factors of vulnerability carried over from before the fires. Additionally, resources are needed to continue addressing the crisis and challenges left behind as a result of the fires. And most importantly, allocation of resources is needed to enhance the broad socio-economic infrastructure in which farmworkers and their families live in San Diego County now and into the future.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As evidenced in the results of the survey assessment, farmworker and migrant communities are facing immediate and longer term recovery needs in regards to health care, food, employment, housing and other needs. Based on these results, the NLRC recommends the following issues be addressed immediately.

RELIEF AND RECOVERY

Area of Concern	Conclusions/Results	Recommendations
Shelter and Housing	5% reported that they were at risk of potentially losing their current homes.	Housing will be a critical issue for a substantial number of community members who will feel the delayed impact of lost work and wages due to the fires. We recommend a plan of action to help families meet their housing needs in the upcoming months.
Food and Water	Close to half of participants stated having urgent and longer term food needs for both their families and children	It is urgent to begin a program addressing food and water needs for families with a particular interest in meeting the food needs of children living in farmworker and migrant communities.
Non-Food Items	Personal hygiene products were the non food items most likely to be needed by participants	It is crucial to further identify the exact needs in this category and work with partner agencies to address them.

Health	Well over half (57%) of participants reported mental health issues (depression, stress) as a result of the Fires	We recommend that these issues receive priority in the implementation of any health related programs addressing the impact of the fires on the community.
	Alarming high rates of asthma among this community	It is important to begin to research and plan strategies to address this issue.
Educational and Psychosocial Well-Being	Top three needs: Job/Money Food/Water Housing	We recommend that the coalition and partner agencies work to ensure appropriate and accessible programs addressing these three categories of greatest need among farmworker and migrant communities in San Diego.

EMERGENCY & DISASTER RELIEF SYSTEM FOR FARMWORKER & MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Finding	Recommendation
Limited Emergency Notification System	Design system of notifying people in unincorporated, rural areas
Poor Coordination of emergency plan	Coordinate services
Lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate materials and evacuation orders	Create Culturally and Linguistically appropriate outreach and materials available in times of emergency
Delayed relief	Provide immediate relief to impacted communities
Presence of border patrol	Adopt explicit policy prohibiting the presence of border patrol and uniformed officers in both federal and local evacuation centers
Lack of transportation	Provide public transportation to assist during evacuation
Lack of information about evacuation	Multi-lingual streamlined information about evacuation through hotline, website, etc.
Decentralized information	Design centralized communication system
Lack of information on when evacuations are lifted, the status of their communities	Multi-lingual streamlined information about evacuation through hotline, website, etc.

Unclear and inaccessible relief for undocumented individuals	Designate relief services for individuals regardless of immigration status.
Difficulty soliciting help due to strict criteria	Create more flexible criteria for emergencies and coordinate with local community organizations and leaders to assist with delivery of humanitarian relief.
Limited definition of long term “recovery” support	Expand definition of long-term recovery to include basic needs such as rental assistance, food, water, clothing, school supplies, etc.
No emergency plan for farmworker communities	Design emergency plan for farmworker communities

EDUCATION & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Lack of public education and training regarding emergency preparedness	Increase public education and training for emergency preparedness including resources available during an emergency, communication plan, and first aid.
Lack of trust between farmworkers and agencies	Coordinate and develop relationship between Farmworker CARE coalition, agencies, local officials, governments and relief agencies, and farmworkers
Lack of awareness of emergency resources	Build community capacity and make resources available to create networks of support in the event of an emergency.
Lack of awareness and understanding of local issues, people, culture, language, etc.	Train service providers to be culturally and linguistically competent to deal with local population.

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APPENDICES

Survey (English/Spanish)

San Diego Firestorm 2007 Report

National Latino Research Center at California State University, San Marcos

**ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF FIRES OF OCTOBER 2007
SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Information about the Data Collector and the Community	
ID #: _____	Name of Data Collector: _____
Date: _____	Agency/Organization: _____
Area of Interview (City/Region):	<input type="checkbox"/> (8) Oceanside
<input type="checkbox"/> (1) Fallbrook	<input type="checkbox"/> (9) San Marcos
<input type="checkbox"/> (2) Bonsall	<input type="checkbox"/> (10) Escondido
<input type="checkbox"/> (3) Valley Center	<input type="checkbox"/> (11) Poway
<input type="checkbox"/> (4) Pala	<input type="checkbox"/> (12) Rancho Bernardo
<input type="checkbox"/> (5) Pauma	<input type="checkbox"/> (13) Ramona
<input type="checkbox"/> (6) Rice Canyon	<input type="checkbox"/> (14) Del Mar/Carmel Valley
<input type="checkbox"/> (7) Vista	<input type="checkbox"/> (15) Other: _____
Check the type of housing being assessed:	<input type="checkbox"/> (4) Campsite
<input type="checkbox"/> (1) Single family home	<input type="checkbox"/> (5) Temporary shelter
<input type="checkbox"/> (2) Multi-unit complex/Apartment	<input type="checkbox"/> (6) No housing
<input type="checkbox"/> (3) Trailer/mobile home	<input type="checkbox"/> (7) Other: _____

(OPENING SCRIPT) [The survey must be completed by someone who is 18 years old or older]

“Hello, my name is _____ and I am a volunteer with the San Diego Farmworker CARE Coalition. We are requesting a little bit of your time to participate in a brief survey that we are conducting to assess the damages that the wildfires have caused your community and yourself and, to better inform local social service agencies of the needs in your community and how to effectively assist.”

“The survey will take approximately 10 minutes. We assure you that all information you provide to us will be completely confidential and anonymous. We will not record your name or ask for identification. The information that we collect from the families in this community and others in San Diego will be analyzed and given to those organizations that want to help our communities.”

“I want to remind you that this is only a survey. If you need immediate assistance to relieve your needs, we can provide you with a list of resources and referrals of services in your community.”

“Are you willing to participate in this brief survey?”

Yes _____ [If answer is YES, begin the interview]

No _____ [If answer is NO, say thank you and leave]

Are you 18 years old or older?

Yes _____ [If YES, proceed]

No _____ [If NO, ask if someone who is 18 years old or older is available to complete the survey. If no one is available, explain why he/she cannot complete the survey, say thank you and leave]

Food and Water

13) Does your family have enough food for the following?

Week: (1) Yes (2) No

15 Days: (1) Yes (2) No

Month: (1) Yes (2) No

If no to any, what are some basic staples you need? _____

14) Does your family have enough water for the following?

Week: (1) Yes (2) No

15 Days: (1) Yes (2) No

Month: (1) Yes (2) No

15) If you have infants and/or children less than 2 years old living with you, do you have enough food for them for the following?

Week: (1) Yes (2) No

15 Days: (1) Yes (2) No

Month: (1) Yes (2) No

If no to any, what types of baby food do you need? _____

16) Where are you getting food and water now? _____

17) Can you cook where you live now? (1) Yes (2) No

If yes, do you have cooking utensils? _____

Non Food Items

18) Does everyone in the household have enough blankets? (1) Yes (2) No

If no, how many do you need? _____

19) Does everyone in the household have enough personal hygiene products? (1) Yes (2) No

If no, how much do you need? _____

20) Do women have enough sanitary supplies? (1) Yes (2) No

If no, what do you need? _____

21) Do you have enough clothes? (1) Yes (2) No

If no, what items are needed? _____

22) What cleaning supplies do you need? _____

Health

23) Does anyone in the household have a medical problem that has not been treated?

(1) Yes If yes, explain what it is: _____

(2) No

- 24) Did anyone in the household go to the hospital emergency room since the fires started?
 (1) Yes If yes, explain what it is: _____
 (2) No
- 25) What illnesses or emotional problems (stress) have occurred in your household after the fire?
Explain: _____
- 26) What are the chronic medical problems of those in the household?

- 27) Do you have enough medicine for everyone who needs it?
 (1) Yes
 (2) No If no, explain what you need: _____
- 28) Do you have access to medical care?
 (1) Yes If yes, where? _____
 (2) No If no, why not? _____
- 29) Does anyone in the household have the following?
- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Asthma or lung disease: | <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No |
| Diarrhea: | <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No |
| Respiratory infection or cold: | <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No |
| New skin problems: | <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No |
- 30) Do you have health insurance for yourself? (1) Yes (2) No
- 31) Do you have health insurance for your children? (1) Yes (2) No (3) No children

Livelihoods

- 32) Were you employed before the fire?
 (1) Yes If yes, what is your usual occupation? _____
 (2) No
- 33) Are you working now?
 (1) Yes
 (2) No If no, why not? _____
When do you expect to return to work? _____

Education and Psychosocial

- 34) If you have school-aged children, are they back in school?
 (1) Yes
 (2) No If no, why not? _____
- 35) What supplies have the children lost that they need for school? _____

36) What are the most serious issues/problems facing your family today? _____

Needs

37) What do you need right now? _____

38) What do your children need now? _____

39) What will you need in a month? _____

40) What will you need between 3-6 months? _____

41) Are you aware of assistance being provided to people affected by the fires in your area?
 (1) Yes If yes, what type of assistance are you familiar with? _____
 (2) No

42) What relief assistance have you received so far, if any, and from who?

Types of assistance	From whom (organizations)?

43) Are you helping others who were affected by the fires?
 (1) Yes If yes, explain: _____
 (2) No

44) Is there something or someone that prevents you from receiving help to assist people affected by the fires?
 (1) Yes If yes, What is preventing you? _____
 (2) No

45) Any other additional comments? _____

Thank you very much for participating in our survey!

EVALUACIÓN DEL IMPACTO DE LOS INCENDIOS DE OCTUBRE 2007
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Información sobre el entrevistador y la comunidad		
# ID: _____	Nombre del entrevistador: _____	
Fecha: _____	Agencia/Organización: _____	
Área de la entrevista (Ciudad/Región):		
<input type="checkbox"/> (1) Fallbrook	<input type="checkbox"/> (6) Rice Canyon	<input type="checkbox"/> (11) Poway
<input type="checkbox"/> (2) Bonsall	<input type="checkbox"/> (7) Vista	<input type="checkbox"/> (12) Rancho Bernardo
<input type="checkbox"/> (3) Valley Center	<input type="checkbox"/> (8) Oceanside	<input type="checkbox"/> (13) Ramona
<input type="checkbox"/> (4) Pala	<input type="checkbox"/> (9) San Marcos	<input type="checkbox"/> (14) Del Mar/Carmel Valley
<input type="checkbox"/> (5) Pauma	<input type="checkbox"/> (10) Escondido	<input type="checkbox"/> (15) Otra: _____
Marque el tipo de vivienda evaluada:		
<input type="checkbox"/> (1) Casa	<input type="checkbox"/> (4) Campamento	<input type="checkbox"/> (5) Vivienda temporal
<input type="checkbox"/> (2) Apartamento/Complejo de varias unidades	<input type="checkbox"/> (6) Sin hogar	<input type="checkbox"/> (7) Otra: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> (3) Traila o casa móvil		

Introducción [Es necesario que el entrevistado tenga al menos 18 años para contestar esta encuesta].

“Hola, mi nombre es _____ y soy un voluntario de la Coalición CARE para Trabajadores Agrícola en San Diego. Le pedimos que nos de un poco de su tiempo para que participe en una breve encuesta que estamos haciendo para evaluar el daño que los incendios le han causado a usted y a su comunidad y para que las organizaciones de servicio social en San Diego estén mejor informadas de las necesidades en su comunidad y como ayudar mejor”.

“La encuesta tomará aproximadamente 10 minutos. Le aseguramos que toda información que usted comparta con nosotros será completamente confidencial y anónima. Ni siquiera vamos a escribir su nombre ni le pediremos su identificación. La información que recibamos de familias en esta comunidad y en otras partes del San Diego la vamos a analizar y resumir y se la daremos a organizaciones que desean ayudar a nuestras comunidades”.

“Le recuerdo que ésta sólo es una encuesta. Si usted necesita ayuda inmediata para aliviar sus necesidades, le podemos dar una lista de referencias de servicios en su comunidad”.

“¿Está dispuesto(a) a participar?”

Sí _____ [Si dice sí, empiece la entrevista]
No _____ [Si dice no, dé las gracias y despídase]

¿Tiene usted al menos 18 años?

Sí _____ [Si dice sí, continúe]
No _____ [Si dice no, pregunte si hay alguien que tenga al menos 18 años que pueda completar la encuesta. Si dice no, explique el por qué no se pudo hacer la encuesta, dé la gracias y despídase]

ENCUESTA PARA EVALUAR EL IMPACTO DE LOS INCENDIOS

- 1) El(la) entrevistado(a) es: (1) Masculino (2) Femenino
- 2) ¿Cuánto tiene viviendo en esta comunidad (vecindad)? _____ Años _____ Meses
- 3) ¿Cuántas familias viven en su hogar? _____
- 4) ¿Cuántos familiares viven en su hogar? _____
- 5) ¿Tienen hijos(as) menores de 18 años?
 (1) Sí Si dice sí, ¿cuántos? _____ ¿De qué edades tienen? _____
 (2) No
- 6) ¿Hay alguien en su hogar que está embarazada o esta amamantando (dando pecho)?
 (1) Sí (2) No
- 7) ¿Qué pérdidas ha tenido debido a los incendios?
 (1) Vivienda
 (2) Carro/transportación
 (3) Ropa
 (4) Ropa de cama como cobijas, sábanas, etc.
 (5) Comida o agua
 (6) Documentos legales como identificaciones, matrículas, documentos de la escuela, etc.
 (7) Su empleo u otro ingreso
 (8) Otras cosas. Especifique: _____
- 8) ¿En qué idioma se siente usted más cómodo(a) hablando?
 (1) Español
 (2) Ingles
 (3) Los dos, español e inglés
 (4) Otro: _____

Vivienda

- 9) Antes de los incendios, ¿donde vivía usted?
 (1) Casa (2) Apartamento (3) Traila (4) Campamento (5) Sin vivienda fija
- 10) Si usted vive en casa, apartamento o traila, ¿esta rentando o es dueño(a) de su casa?
 (1) Dueño(a)
 (2) Renta
 (3) Comparte con otras personas
- 11) ¿Sigue viviendo en su hogar?
 (1) Sí
 (2) No Si dice no, ¿cuándo podrá regresar? _____

12) ¿Perdió usted su hogar debido a los fuegos?

- (1) Sí Si dice sí, ¿qué piensa hacer ahora? _____
 (2) No Si no, ¿está en peligro de perder su hogar debido a los incendios? (1) Sí (2) No

Comida y Agua

13) ¿Tiene su familia suficiente comida para:

- ¿Esta semana? (1) Sí (2) No
¿15 días? (1) Sí (2) No
¿Un mes? (1) Sí (2) No

Si dice no en cualquiera, ¿qué alimentos le hacen falta con los que cocina a diario? _____

14) ¿Tiene su familia suficiente agua para:

- ¿Esta semana? (1) Sí (2) No
¿15 días? (1) Sí (2) No
¿Un mes? (1) Sí (2) No

15) Si tiene bebés y/o niños menores de 2 años viviendo con usted, tiene suficiente comida para:

- ¿Esta semana? (1) Sí (2) No
¿15 días? (1) Sí (2) No
¿Un mes? (1) Sí (2) No

Si dice no en cualquiera, ¿qué alimentos de niño le hacen falta? _____

16) ¿De dónde consigue su comida y agua ahora? _____

17) ¿Puede cocinar en donde está viviendo ahora? (1) Sí (2) No

Si dice sí, ¿qué utensilios tiene para cocinar? _____

Otras Necesidades

18) ¿Hay suficientes cobijas para todos en su hogar? (1) Sí (2) No

Si dice no, ¿cuántas necesita? _____

19) ¿Hay suficiente productos de limpieza personal (como jabón, champú, pasta de dientes, etc.) para todos en su hogar? (1) Sí (2) No

Si dice no, ¿cuánto necesita? _____

20) ¿Hay suficientes productos sanitarios para mujeres? (1) Sí (2) No

Si dice no, ¿qué necesita? _____

21) ¿Tiene su familia suficiente ropa? (1) Sí (2) No

Si dice no, ¿que necesita? _____

22) ¿Qué le hace falta para hacer la limpieza de su hogar? _____

Salud

- 23) ¿Hay alguien en su hogar con un problema de salud que no ha recibido ayuda médica?
 (1) Sí Si dice sí, ¿qué es ese problema de salud? _____
 (2) No
- 24) Desde que empezaron los incendios, ¿hay alguien en su hogar que ha tenido que ir al hospital de emergencia?
 (1) Sí Si dice sí, ¿por qué tuvo que ir? _____
 (2) No
- 25) Desde que empezaron los incendios, ¿qué enfermedades o problemas emocionales (estrés) han habido en su hogar? Explique: _____
- 26) ¿Qué tipos de enfermedades crónicas hay en su hogar? _____
- 27) ¿Tiene suficiente medicina para quien la necesita?
 (1) Sí
 (2) No Si dice no, ¿qué necesita? _____
- 28) ¿Tiene acceso a ayuda médica? (Si necesitara ayuda médica, ¿tendría manera de obtenerla?)
 (1) Sí Si dice sí, ¿dónde va? _____
 (2) No Si dice no, ¿por qué? _____
- 29) ¿Hay alguien en su hogar con problemas médicos?
¿Asma o enfermedad de los pulmones? Sí (1) No (2)
¿Diarrea? Sí (1) No (2)
¿Infección respiratoria o gripe? Sí (1) No (2)
¿Problemas en la piel? Sí (1) No (2)
- 30) ¿Tiene usted seguro médico? (1) Sí (2) No
- 31) Si tiene hijos, ¿tienen sus hijos seguro médico?
 (1) Sí
 (2) No
 (3) No tengo hijos

Empleo

- 32) ¿Tenía usted trabajo antes de los incendios?
 (1) Sí Si dice sí, ¿en qué trabaja usted? _____
 (2) No
- 33) ¿Está trabajando usted ahora? ¿Tiene trabajo?
 (1) Sí
 (2) No Si dice no, ¿por qué? _____
¿Cuándo cree que regresará a trabajar? _____

Educación y Aspectos Psicosociales

34) Si usted tiene hijos de edad escolar, ¿han regresado ellos a la escuela?

- (1) Sí
 (2) No Si dice no, ¿por qué? _____

35) ¿Qué materiales de escuela perdieron debido al incendio que están necesitando?

36) ¿Cuáles son los problemas más serios que su familia está pasando en este momento?

Necesidades

37) ¿Qué necesita en este momento? _____

38) ¿Qué necesitan sus hijos en este momento? _____

39) ¿Qué va a necesitar o que le va hacer falta en un mes? _____

40) ¿Qué va a necesitar o que le va hacer falta en 3 a 6 meses? _____

41) ¿Sabe usted si otras personas en su comunidad que fueron afectas por los incendios están recibiendo ayuda?

- (1) Sí Si dice sí, ¿qué tipo de ayuda están dando y quien la está dando? _____
 (2) No _____

42) ¿Qué tipo de ayuda o asistencia ha recibo usted hasta ahora y de parte de quién?

Tipo de ayuda	¿De quién? (organizaciones/familia/amistades)

43) ¿Está usted ayudando a personas que fueron afectadas por los incendios?

- (1) Sí Si dice sí, ¿cómo? _____
 (2) No

44) ¿Hay algo que le impida a usted buscar o recibir ayuda para personas que fueron afectadas por los incendios?

- (1) Sí Si dice sí, ¿qué le impide? _____
 (2) No

45) ¿Algo más que quiera compartir? _____

¡Muchísimas gracias por participar en esta encuesta!