

Page: Entry Information
Chapter GLAC
Chapter Size Very Large (761-1200)
Category Public Affairs
Program Name Wildfire Crisis Response & Community Support Initiative
If this was a joint program with another chapter, please list the chapter.
Each question is worth 20 points and will be scored using the following rubric: (1-5) Poor Didn't effectively answer the question (6-1) Fair Answered the question (11-15) Good Answered the question with more detail (16-20) Excellent Went above and beyond with proven results and visible data
Describe the program and why it fits the category. (20pts) <p>In January 2025, Los Angeles County experienced one of the most devastating wildfire events in its history. The Palisades Fire and Eaton Fire, along with several other blazes, destroyed thousands of homes and displaced tens of thousands of residents across communities including Pacific Palisades, Santa Monica, Malibu, Pasadena, Altadena, and surrounding areas. Within our chapter territory, numerous community associations and their residents faced catastrophic losses.</p> <p>CAI-GLAC's Wildfire Crisis Response & Community Support Initiative represents a comprehensive, multi-faceted effort to support affected members and raise public awareness of CAI's role as a critical resource during community disasters. This program perfectly exemplifies the Public Affairs category through its focus on community service, public awareness, and demonstrating CAI's value to the broader Los Angeles community.</p> <p>Our response was immediate, coordinated, and sustained. Within 24 hours of the fires starting on January 7, we had begun communications with affected members and started compiling resources. Within 48 hours, we had launched a comprehensive multi-channel response that included:</p> <p>Public Awareness and Education: We created and disseminated extensive resources through blog posts, social media campaigns across Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, email communications to our entire membership base, and our weekly newsletter. We compiled comprehensive resource lists including emergency service providers, disaster relief organizations, financial assistance programs, and practical recovery checklists. We made a disaster preparedness webinar free and accessible to both members and non-members, recognizing that the crisis affected the entire community, not just CAI members.</p> <p>Direct Community Service: Our Community Outreach Committee, led by Co-Chairs Stephanie Romero and Jennifer Silva, organized an immediate donation drive collecting water, food, home goods, and clothing. The volume of donations exceeded our committee's distribution capacity, so we partnered with established disaster relief agencies to ensure these critical supplies reached those in need. We also provided direct financial assistance to chapter members who lost their homes, recognizing that immediate financial support could help cover emergency expenses while insurance claims were processed.</p> <p>Industry Resource Coordination: We rapidly assembled and promoted a comprehensive list of chapter business partner members specializing in fire restoration, water damage, environmental testing, debris removal, and reconstruction services. This list connected affected community associations with trusted, vetted service providers who understood the unique needs of HOAs during disaster recovery.</p> <p>Sustained Fundraising and Support: In June, we partnered with Barker Block, a chapter member in the DTLA Arts District where a number of displaced fire victims found temporary residence, to produce a 'Christmas in July' fundraiser. This event demonstrated the resilience and generosity of our community, bringing together over 100 residents, guests, and vendors to raise over \$15,000 (with \$8,000 net profit dedicated entirely to victim relief). The event also provided a moment of joy and solidarity for those still recovering from trauma. We continued identifying and supporting affected members throughout the year, raising additional funds in October when we discovered another member who had lost their home in January.</p> <p>The Chapter's fire response and outreach efforts elevated CAI's visibility and demonstrated our commitment to the communities we serve during their darkest hours. It showcased CAI not just as a professional association but as an essential community resource and support network.</p>

How did this program meet the mission and vision of the chapter and CAI as a whole including fostering an inclusive environment that reflects and serves our diverse community? (20pts)

This program embodies CAI's mission to build better communities by demonstrating that our commitment extends beyond professional development and education to genuine care for the people who make up those communities. When disaster strikes, community associations are on the front lines—managing evacuations, coordinating with emergency services, communicating with displaced residents, and ultimately leading recovery efforts. Our response recognized and supported this critical role.

Supporting the Entire Community Ecosystem:

The fires affected every segment of our community—managers, homeowners, board members, and business partners. Our response was designed to serve all of these constituents. We made our disaster preparedness webinar free and open to non-members, recognizing that in a crisis, the entire community benefits when knowledge is widely shared. We collected donations not just for chapter members but for anyone in need, partnering with relief agencies to ensure resources reached the broadest possible audience. This inclusive approach aligned perfectly with CAI's vision of serving diverse communities.

Elevating CAI's Brand and Public Awareness:

This crisis presented an opportunity to demonstrate CAI's relevance and value to the broader Los Angeles community. Our comprehensive social media campaign, blog posts, and resource compilations positioned CAI-GLAC as a go-to source for disaster recovery information specific to community associations. We coordinated with CAI National headquarters to amplify messaging and resources, ensuring consistency while tailoring content to our local situation. The visibility we gained through these efforts strengthened public understanding of CAI's role as more than a professional association—we are an essential resource for community resilience.

Demonstrating Compassion and Solidarity:

The financial assistance we provided to members who lost their homes carried profound symbolic value beyond the dollar amounts. As Community Outreach Committee Co-Chair Stephanie Romero wrote in the letters accompanying each check: 'While we know a check can't replace a lifetime of memories, we want you to know you are not alone. Your community stands with you.' This message of solidarity reinforced that CAI is not merely a professional network but a genuine community bound by mutual support.

Connecting Resources to Need:

Our rapid assembly and promotion of business partner resources specializing in fire restoration and recovery services served a dual mission. It connected affected associations with trusted providers who understood HOA-specific challenges, while simultaneously supporting our business partner members whose expertise was suddenly in critical demand. This created a beneficial cycle where the entire CAI community—both those serving and those being served—could support each other through crisis.

Building Long-Term Resilience:

Beyond immediate crisis response, we focused on building long-term community resilience. Our disaster preparedness webinar and comprehensive resource documentation will serve California communities for years to come. In a state where wildfires, earthquakes, and other disasters are ongoing threats, these resources position CAI as a proactive force for community preparedness, not just disaster response.

What was the impact on the chapter and its members after completing the program? (Growth of membership, financially, public awareness, membership value, better chapter/member relationship, chapter operations, etc.) (20 pts)

The Wildfire Crisis Response program delivered significant impact across multiple dimensions:

Direct Member Support and Tangible Relief:

Seven chapter members who lost their homes received direct financial assistance totaling \$3,675. While these amounts could not replace what was lost, they provided some relief for emergency and ongoing expenses. Recipients expressed profound gratitude not just for the financial support but for the emotional affirmation that their professional community recognized their suffering and stood with them.

We collected substantial donations of water, food, home goods, and clothing—a volume that exceeded our committee's direct distribution capacity. We coordinated with established disaster relief agencies to ensure they reached those in need. This demonstrated operational maturity: recognizing our limitations while leveraging partnerships to maximize impact.

Strengthened Member Relationships and Chapter Unity:

The crisis and our response to it deepened the bonds within our chapter community. The Christmas in July fundraiser at Barker Block brought together over 100 people in a celebration of resilience and generosity. The event raised over \$15,000 (with \$8,000 net profit for victim relief), but perhaps more importantly, it created a moment of joy and human connection during an ongoing period of trauma and recovery. Members who attended spoke about the healing power of coming together in support of their colleagues.

Throughout the response, we received countless emails, texts, and messages from members expressing appreciation for the chapter's leadership during crisis. Board members, managers, homeowners, and business partners alike commented that they felt proud to be part of an organization that responded with such speed, compassion, and effectiveness.

Enhanced Chapter Visibility and Public Awareness:

Our comprehensive social media campaign reached thousands of people across Los Angeles County. We posted over 20 times across Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, sharing resources, service provider information, fundraising appeals, and messages of solidarity. We created a dedicated Instagram Story Highlight folder for easy ongoing access to fire-related resources. This sustained digital presence positioned CAI-GLAC as a trusted source of information during crisis.

Our blog posts and email communications were shared beyond our immediate membership, reaching community association board members, residents, and property managers who may not have previously engaged with CAI. This expanded awareness created opportunities for future membership growth and demonstrated CAI's value to the broader community.

Member Value Enhancement Through Practical Resources:

The comprehensive list of emergency service providers we compiled and promoted delivered immediate practical value to members. Community associations dealing with fire damage, smoke infiltration, ash cleanup, and resident displacement had access to a vetted list of qualified professionals who understood HOA-specific challenges. Business partner members reported increased inquiries and engagement as a result of being featured in these resource lists.

The free disaster preparedness webinar we offered (normally a paid member benefit) demonstrated our commitment to serving the community beyond transactional relationships. Attendees gained practical knowledge about emergency planning, insurance considerations, and recovery processes that will serve them for years to come.

Operational Excellence and Coordinated Leadership:

The response showcased excellent coordination between chapter leadership, staff, and volunteer committees. Within 48 hours of the fires starting, we had launched a comprehensive response involving the Board of Directors, Community Outreach Committee, Education Committee, Programs Committee, and chapter staff. This coordination required rapid decision-making, including the difficult choice to cancel our January 22 luncheon (rescheduling to June) to respect the ongoing crisis and allow members to focus on recovery.

Our partnerships with CAI National headquarters, other CAI chapters, and local disaster relief organizations demonstrated our ability to leverage external resources and expertise to amplify our impact.

Sustained Commitment Demonstrating Long-Term Values:

Our response did not end when the fires were contained. We maintained contact with affected members throughout the year, hosting the fundraiser in June and identifying and supporting an additional fire victim in October. This sustained commitment demonstrated that our concern was genuine and enduring, not performative or limited to the immediate crisis period. Members recognized and deeply appreciated this long-term support.

Provide quantifiable data supporting the rationale for success. Include why this data is significant. (20pts)

Response Speed and Scope:

- Fires began: January 7, 2025
- First chapter response: January 8, 2025 (within 24 hours)
- Comprehensive response launched: January 9, 2025 (within 48 hours)
- Response activities continued through October 2025 (10+ months sustained effort)

Why This Matters: In disaster response, timing is critical. Our ability to mobilize within 24 hours meant affected members received guidance and support during the most chaotic and disorienting period. The 10-month sustained response demonstrated genuine commitment rather than performative crisis response.

Communications Reach:

- 10+ email communications sent to entire membership base
- 20+ social media posts across Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn
- 5+ comprehensive blog posts with resources and guidance
- Weekly newsletter coverage throughout January and February
- Created dedicated Instagram Story Highlight folder for ongoing resource access
- Added resource links to staff email signatures for continued visibility

Why This Matters: Multi-channel, sustained communication ensured that members received critical information regardless of their preferred communication method. The social media reach extended beyond our immediate membership, raising CAI's profile among broader community stakeholders.

Direct Financial Assistance:

- \$3,675 total distributed to fire victims
- 7 chapter members received direct financial support (\$525 per recipient)
- Complimentary chapter memberships offered to all displaced members (one member accepted the offer)

Why This Matters: While these amounts may seem modest compared to total disaster losses, they provided immediate relief during the critical early weeks when victims faced countless emergency expenses while waiting for insurance claims to process. The 100% of donations went directly to victims demonstrated financial stewardship and donor trust.

Fundraising Success:

- Christmas in July fundraiser: Over \$15,000 raised
- Net profit dedicated to fire victims: \$8,000
- 100+ attendees at fundraising event
- Multiple donors and sponsors contributed

Why This Matters: The success of a fundraising event six months after the fires demonstrated sustained community commitment and the power of creative, collaborative approaches to ongoing support. The event also provided emotional healing through communal celebration.

Resource Creation and Distribution:

- Comprehensive emergency service provider list: 25+ vetted businesses
- Service categories covered: Fire restoration, water damage, environmental testing, debris removal, hazmat, reconstruction
- Multiple resource guides and checklists compiled and distributed
- Free disaster preparedness webinar offered (normally paid member benefit)
- Webinar made accessible to both members and non-members

Why This Matters: Providing vetted, HOA-specialized service providers saved community associations countless hours of research during crisis and reduced risk of engaging unqualified contractors. Making the webinar free and public demonstrated CAI's commitment to community service beyond transactional member relationships.

Material Donations:

- Substantial volume of water, food, home goods, and clothing collected
- Volume exceeded committee's direct distribution capacity
- Coordinated with multiple disaster relief agencies for broader distribution
- Donations benefited community members beyond CAI membership

Why This Matters: The overwhelming donor response demonstrated the generosity of our chapter community. Our ability to coordinate with established relief agencies to handle overflow volume showed operational maturity and commitment to maximizing impact rather than organizational ego.

Operational Coordination:

- 60+ documented response activities tracked from January through October
- 5+ chapter committees engaged (Board, Community Outreach, Education, Programs, Marketing)
- Multiple events rescheduled or canceled to respect crisis circumstances
- Coordination with CAI National headquarters for resource development
- Collaboration with other CAI chapters offering support
- Partnerships with local disaster relief agencies and businesses

Why This Matters: The scale and coordination required for this response demonstrated chapter operational excellence. The ability to mobilize multiple committees, make difficult scheduling decisions, and leverage external partnerships showed mature organizational leadership.

Geographic and Community Scope:

- Response addressed 5+ separate fire events (Palisades, Eaton, Kenneth, Sunset, Hurst)
- Geographic area covered: Pacific Palisades, Santa Monica, Malibu, Topanga, Pasadena, Altadena, Glendale, West Hills, Hollywood Hills, Sylmar, Santa Clarita
- Resources made available to affected community members regardless of CAI membership status

Why This Matters: The simultaneous nature of multiple fires across vast geographic areas created unprecedented challenge and complexity. Our response needed to serve members from wildly different communities experiencing different stages of crisis and recovery. The decision to make resources available beyond CAI membership demonstrated our commitment to serving the broader community association industry and Los Angeles community at large.

What are your plans to maintain the momentum of this program moving forward? (20 pts)

While we hope never to face another disaster of this magnitude, the reality of living in California means wildfires, earthquakes, and other emergencies are inevitable. Our plans for maintaining momentum focus on transforming crisis response into sustained preparedness and embedding disaster resilience into our chapter's ongoing operations and culture.

Formalize Disaster Response Protocols:

We are documenting our wildfire response process to create standardized disaster response protocols for the chapter. These protocols will enable even faster, more coordinated response to future emergencies while reducing the burden on leadership and staff who will have clear playbooks to follow.

Maintain and Expand Disaster Preparedness Education:

We have made disaster preparedness a recurring element of our education programming. Proactive education will help community associations prepare before disaster strikes, reducing damage and accelerating recovery when emergencies occur.

Share Best Practices with CAI National and Other Chapters:

We are committed to helping other chapters prepare for and respond to disasters in their communities. By sharing our experience and lessons learned, we can help build disaster resilience across the entire CAI network.

Maintain Long-Term Connection with Fire Victims:

We will continue supporting members who lost homes as they navigate multi-year recovery. Recovery from catastrophic loss takes years, not months. Our sustained commitment demonstrates that chapter membership means belonging to a community that supports its members through life's most difficult challenges.

Embed Crisis Response Culture into Chapter Operations:

Beyond specific programs, we will cultivate a chapter culture that values compassion, mutual support, and rapid response to member needs. By embedding these values into our chapter culture, we ensure that compassionate, effective response to member needs becomes second nature rather than requiring crisis to activate.

The January 2025 wildfires tested our chapter in ways we never anticipated. Our response revealed the strength, compassion, and resilience of our community. Moving forward, we will honor those who suffered loss by ensuring that CAI-GLAC is always prepared to serve our members and the Greater Los Angeles community during their greatest times of need. We will transform crisis response into sustained preparedness, ensuring that when disaster inevitably strikes again, we will be ready to provide immediate, coordinated, compassionate support.

Supporting documents including flyers, postcards, pictures, videos etc. can be uploaded below. While they aren't required for your submission we certainly encourage it.

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