



12.18.2018

Contact: Kevin Lawlor

klawlor@buildwithstrength.com

202-253-6402

Amid the Destruction of Woolsey Fire, Community Leaders Call City Council to Action

Local Coalition Says City Needs Strengthened Building Standards and Noncombustible Materials

Los Angeles, CA — California is currently navigating the aftermath of the most devastating wildfire season on record. More than 1,650,000 acres have burned, over [\\$2.975 billion in damages](#) have accumulated, hundreds remain missing, and [at least three people have been killed and 1,600 structures destroyed](#) in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties alone. As the state rebuilds, Los Angeles organizations and community leaders are calling on their councilmembers to take immediate action to strengthen the city's building standards.

"We honor the heroics of the first responders in the recent fires and send our deepest condolences to those that have lost so much," say [coalition members], members of Build with Strength. "We encourage the Los Angeles City Council to act swiftly on the recommendations of Councilmember Blumenfield to enact clear and forceful building code revisions to enforce strict standards that will improve the resiliency of low-rise construction in the city."

Fire experts warn that this level of destruction could be the [new normal](#), suggesting that instead of a fire season, [changing conditions](#) could lead to intense wildfires year-round. Some believe there has been too much emphasis on evacuation, with not enough attention and funding directed toward [preventative measures](#). Several victims of the fire were found near or inside their cars, attempting to flee but halted by impassable roads facing flames and traffic jams.

"Our community in Los Angeles and all across California has suffered due to these incredibly devastating fires, and I stand with all those who have lost loved ones or their homes to the flames," said Bishop Juan Carlos Mendez, founder of Churches in Action. "As a faith leader in a city facing increasing threats of natural disasters, I urge Los Angeles leaders to make prevention and mitigation essential parts of fire safety. As wildfires become a more regular part of our reality, we must do everything in our power to protect the safety of our neighbors and first responders."

Amid the increasing prevalence of fires in recent years that have affected homes across the country, Build with Strength has emerged as a coalition for stronger building safety standards. The coalition, under the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, consists of civic organizations, fire service professionals, architects, engineers and industry experts committed to enacting safer and more sustainable standards. Together with government officials, firefighters, faith-based organizations and trade union leaders across the country, they review current building and fire safety codes to identify

areas in need of improvement, particularly in updating building codes to include the use of non-combustible materials to minimize fire risks.

“These fires disproportionately affect our region’s most vulnerable residents,” said Michael McDowell, Executive Director of The Soldiers Project. “This tragedy needs to be a wake-up call. It’s clear now more than ever that it’s not enough to rely on emergency response. Elected officials need to take a strong, multidimensional approach to fire safety to keep our communities safe, including public awareness, strong building codes and resilient building materials.”

Build with Strength in Los Angeles encompasses includes a number of California organizations from a wide range of communities, including Asian Americans in Commercial Real Estate, the California Black Chamber of Commerce, Churches in Action, Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice, Kol Tikvah, the Los Angeles Civil Rights Association, the Los Angeles Housing Partnership, the Los Angeles Shmira Civil Safety Patrol, the Los Angeles Urban League, The Soldiers Project, the Southern California Black Chamber of Commerce, and the Southern California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Learn more at [www. http://buildwithstrength.com/](http://buildwithstrength.com/)

###