

Bush declares major disaster in California

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- U.S. President George Bush declared the California wildfires a major disaster and ordered federal aid to support local efforts in helping the fire victims. The presidential order makes special funding available to people in the Southern California counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura. More than 1,100 houses have been burned and thousands of acres charred by the fires, which were pushed by hurricane-force Santa Ana winds. "I'm looking forward to going out to California tomorrow. And most importantly, I want the people in Southern California to know that Americans all across this land care deeply about them, we're concerned about their safety, we're concerned about their property, and we offer our prayers and hopes that all will turn out fine in the end. In the meantime, they can rest assured that the federal government will do everything we can to help put out these fires," Bush said. A White House release said the federal assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster.

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