



May 15, 2020

Subject: Standard Statewide Evacuation Terminology

Dear California Public Safety Partners,

I am pleased to present to you recommended standardized evacuation terminology for the State of California. This terminology, which Cal OES developed in close collaboration with its public safety partners throughout the state and pursuant to Government Code section 8593.7(a)(9), demonstrates California's continued leadership in protecting lives and property through clear and consistent alert and warning protocols.

The effort to create a standard terminology arose from the catastrophic wildfires of 2017 and 2018, which exposed inconsistencies in the terminology that local governments used when informing their residents of the need to evacuate, shelter in place, and to return home. These wildfires demonstrated that, unfortunately, inconsistencies in terminology across jurisdictions often led to confusion among the public at the very moment that clarity and certainty are needed most.

Responding to calls for a statewide standard, Cal OES convened a working group comprised of law enforcement representatives from throughout California, as well as Firefighting Resources Organized for Potential Emergencies (FIRESCOPE). Together, this group, in consultation with other subject matter experts, compiled the most widely accepted and clearest terminology for ordering evacuations in an emergency. A concise list of that standard terminology is attached.

I would like to thank the working group and other contributors for their tremendous work and collaboration on this important effort, which serves as a model for the nation and will protect lives and safety of Californians.

I urge you to share this document with your colleagues and allied agencies that are responsible for issuing evacuation orders, and encourage you to implement this terminology in your evacuation protocols.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark S. Ghilarducci", written over a white background.

MARK S. GHILARDUCCI  
Director

Attachments: Standard Evacuation Terminology



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## California Standard Statewide Evacuation Terminology

**Evacuation Order:** Immediate threat to life. This is a lawful order to leave now. The area is lawfully closed to public access.

**Evacuation Warning:** Potential threat to life and/or property. Those who require additional time to evacuate, and those with pets and livestock should leave now.

**Shelter in Place:** Go indoors. Shut and lock doors and windows. Prepare to self-sustain until further notice and/or contacted by emergency personnel for additional direction.

**Evacuation Order(s) Lifted:** The formal announcement of lifting evacuations in an area currently under evacuation.

**Hard Closure:** Closed to all traffic except Fire and Law Enforcement.

**Soft Closure:** Closed to all traffic except Fire, Law Enforcement and critical incident resources (i.e. Utility, Caltrans, City/County Roads etc. or those needed to repair or restore infrastructure).

**Resident only Closure:** Soft closure with the additional allowance of residents and local government agencies assisting with response and recovery.