



Field Notes

STORIES, DEPLOYMENTS AND MOMENTS OF SERVICE ACROSS OUR COMMUNITY

AT A GLANCE

- **Habitat for Humanity rebuild efforts** in Altadena
- **Member spotlight** featuring a **remarkable wildfire story**
- **Toys for Tots** holiday event recap, **preparedness tips**, and more

Service Between Deployments



CERC members supporting rebuild efforts with Habitat for Humanity

CERC members recently joined **San Gabriel Valley Habitat for Humanity** for a milestone event: the first Habitat rebuild project in Altadena following last year's wildfires.

This project focuses on restoring the home of a long-time Altadena resident whose property was impacted by fire. Members worked alongside Habitat staff, local community volunteers, and LA RISE, contributing to hands-on recovery efforts by painting, installing insulation and preparing interiors for drywall.

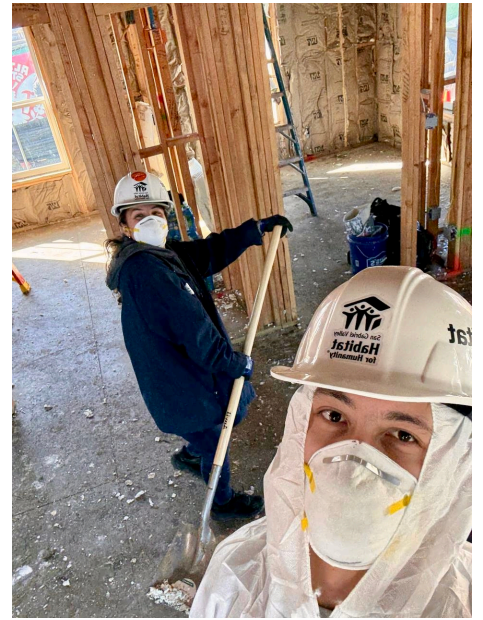
"The day the fire took place, there was a pouring of love in this community and that pouring of love still continues.

As a member of this community, I am so grateful to Habitat for Humanity, to the volunteers who give what they have, to the people who share their skills with those in need of housing.

We cannot thank you enough for the love, the work, the sacrifice, the hours, and the dedication you bring. From the bottom of our hearts: a million thanks."

- Altadena homeowner

San Gabriel Valley Habitat for Humanity currently has 300 homes on their roster to rebuild. Volunteer days like this show the power of collective action. Every skill shared helps move families closer to home.



Member Spotlight



Meet Kate, a CERC member continuing her commitment to California communities



Before the Tubbs Fire in 2017, Kate was living a full, steady life in the Mayacamas Mountains outside Santa Rosa working as a freelance event coordinator and enjoying the rhythm of her community. That changed overnight when fire reached her doorstep.

With power out and flames closing in, Kate fled barefoot through falling embers with her chinchilla, Ameila. Her tires caught fire as she drove the winding road to safety. By morning, everything she

owned was gone.

In the days that followed, Kate found herself surrounded by neighbors facing the same loss; many unsure where to go and worried about displaced pets and livestock. While at a temporary shelter, she and her partner accepted an unexpected opportunity: fire cleanup work just outside the burn area, with a place to live. Kate had one question: *Could displaced animals stay too?* The answer was yes!

"I believe what motivates me to show up is simply wanting people and animals to know someone cares."

Soon, they were caring for a flock of 22 sheep and a large Maremma sheepdog while living out of a fifth-wheel camper so they could move where help was needed. That simple act of compassion became Kate's journey into disaster recovery.

Now serving with CERC at Cal Poly Humboldt, Kate supports emergency preparedness across campus. Her days range from earthquake preparedness presentations and campus outreach to emergency signage updates and Emergency Operations Center meetings. *"Every day looks different,"* she says. *"It's always engaging."*

Her philosophy is simple:

"If you want to help, start by talking to people in the community. Find out what's needed, and start there."

Kate reminds us that recovery isn't about speed. It's about patience, listening and taking the next best step forward.

Binational's *Toys for Tots*



Community highlight: holiday service and teamwork





In December, CERC members partnered with the full Binational team to support two large-scale Toys for Tots events in Fresno and Los Banos serving thousands of families during a difficult holiday season.

Behind the scenes, members spent long hours coordinating incoming donations, sorting toys by age, supporting vendor set-up and helping with food distribution and health screenings. The Fresno event alone served more than 3,000 children, exceeding expectations.

"Long hours and stressful moments don't get in the way of the mission because we know why we're here."

Families received far more than toys: parents had access to free health screenings, medication when needed, and warm meals.

For team members who have supported Toys for Tots year after year, the impact is deeply felt. Many families return annually, underscoring both the ongoing need and the trust built within the community after years of continued service.

One member shared, *"It's more than giving a toy. It's helping families feel supported—financially, emotionally, and physically—during a time when everything feels expensive and overwhelming."*

Disaster Snapshot



Current Events Across California and the World

California

- **January storms are bringing heavy rain, mountain snow, and localized flooding** across **Humboldt, Santa Cruz, Sonoma, and Los Angeles Counties**, increasing risks of power outages, landslides and road closures.

Global

- Seasonal flooding in parts of **South America and East Africa** has displaced many, damaging homes and critical infrastructure.

Preparedness Tips for Jan



Key actions to support your winter preparedness

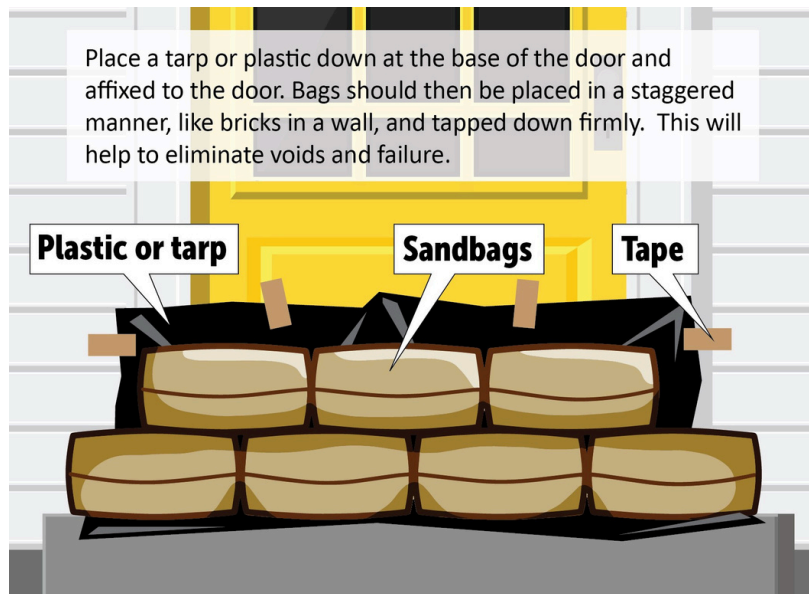
Three top disaster preparedness tips for Californians in January are: **preparing for flooding, staying alert for landslides**, and **planning for power outages**.

Prepare for Flooding *Before* the Next Storm

January storms can overwhelm drainage systems quickly, especially in coastal and low-lying areas.

What to do: Clear leaves and debris from storm drains near your home, move valuables off the floor, and keep sandbags ready if you live in a flood-prone area. Never drive through flooded roads. It takes just a few inches of moving water to sweep a car away. Review your insurance coverage and store important documents digitally and in a waterproof bag.

Find free sandbags here: Many cities and counties provide free sandbags through local public works departments. Check if there's one in your county [here!](#)

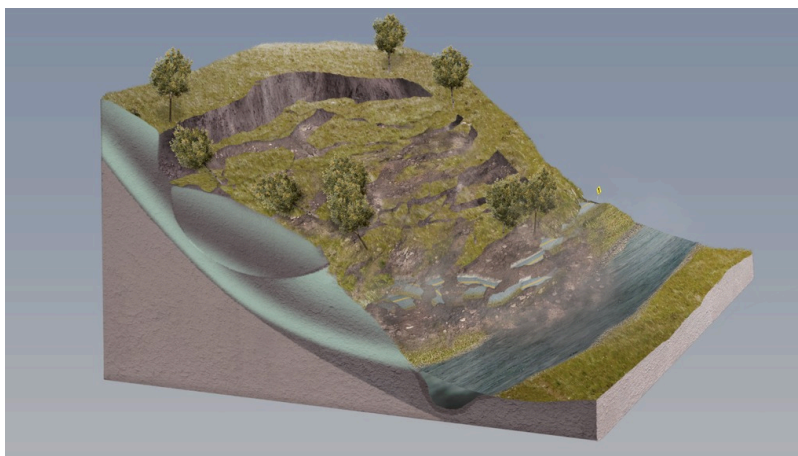


Know Your Landslide Risk

After major wildfires, heavy rains can trigger fast-moving debris flows. See more [here](#).

What to do: If you live near hillsides or in areas affected by recent fires, identify evacuation routes early. Watch for warning signs like cracked ground or leaning trees. Be ready to leave early if officials issue evacuation warnings; don't wait.

Sign up for county emergency alerts: Follow local emergency management guidance through California Governor's [Office of Emergency Services](#), [Listos California](#), or your local county emergency services office.



Plan for Power Outages

Storm-related outages are common in winter and can last anywhere from hours to days.

What to do: Recharge battery packs, check flashlights, gather candles, board games, and restock essentials like water, medications, and shelf-stable food. If you rely on medical devices or heat, make a backup plan.

Resources: Emergency kit checklists and outage planning tools are available through the [Red Cross](#) and local utility providers.

Taking time this month to prepare helps reduce risk, speed recovery, and protect the people and places we care about.



GRATITUDE CORNER



This month we're grateful for...

- **For the quiet rhythm of winter:** short days, long nights, and the chance to pause, reflect, and reset.
- **For Simone from Altadena** whose thoughtful note and drawing will forever remain on the foundation of the Altadena rebuild.



Submit feedback, story ideas or member shoutouts for next month →

LOOKING AHEAD

- **Click the green button above to submit feedback or share story ideas** for next month's issue!
- **Next Issue Feature: Pet Preparedness!** Share your **pet photos and stories** to be **featured in our special Valentine's day** section