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Rainbow Water Provides Critical Aid to Support the Eaton, Lilac and Pala Fires

Rainbow Water supported firefighting efforts in January by sending crews to assist local fire agencies with emergency response to the Lilac and Pala Fires, and mutual aid for water agencies impacted by the Eaton Fire in Altadena.

Rainbow Water responded to a mutual aid request on Jan. 16 through the California Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (CalWARN) on behalf of the Rubio Canon Water Association for a team to dewater several reservoir sites destroyed by the Eaton Fire in Los Angeles County. Four of Rainbow Water's operations team members traveled over 100 miles from Fallbrook to Altadena for the three-day mutual aid assignment. Team members worked night and day to remove water quickly from the Meridian Pump Station and Calavera Water Tanks to enable Contractors to remove debris from the reservoir sites to restore water service. Rainbow Water was among several water districts in Southern California to provide critical mutual aid following the Los Angeles Fires.

"We were proud to aid another small water district and work alongside numerous utility agencies who responded to restore the communities devastated by the Eaton Fire," said Robert Gutierrez, Rainbow Water Chief Operations Officer.

After returning from the Eaton Fire, Rainbow Water crews were working on a main break in the early hours of Jan. 21 when the Pala and Lilac Fires started. Rainbow Water emergency response protocols were activated, team members arrived at the command post to assist firefighters with water for fire suppression, emergency alerts were posted to the website with office closures due to Rainbow's headquarters being within the mandatory evacuation area, and text messages were sent to staff with evacuation information. North County Fire and CalFire coordinated with Rainbow Water to relocate the incident command post from the Park and Ride lot at SR 76 to Rainbow Water headquarters' lower yard off Highway 395. Rainbow Water sent additional support through a water truck that stopped the progress of a spot fire behind Sullivan Elementary School in Bonsall.



Rainbow Water General Manager, Jake Wiley assesses the Lilac Fire damage around Hutton Tank in Bonsall.

Preparation was key to Rainbow Water's swift response, as proactive measures were taken during the active SDG&E Public Safety Power Shutoff alert, which preempted the fires, to fill water tanks and fuel backup generators at pump stations. In addition, a \$160,000 grant awarded to Rainbow through CalOES has aided with funding the removal of dry brush around all infrastructure to create defensible space. This move was key to protecting the 4.0 million gallon capacity Hutton Water Storage Tank from the Lilac Fire that burned around and downhill from the tank.

"Fire is a reality in our district, and at Rainbow Water, we are very forward-thinking in our preparation that has come out of our past wildfire experience," said Gutierrez. "We are constantly improving emergency response by regularly checking systems, including fire hydrants, and continue fuel management to mitigate risk around tanks, pump stations, and lift stations."

Water agencies have been at the epicenter of the recent firefighting efforts. The Rainbow Water team does not take any emergency lightly after experiencing the 2017 Lilac Fire, which burned 4,100 acres and 157 structures in Bonsall and Oceanside. Rainbow Water is home to San Diego County's first Rapid Aerial Water Supply (RAWS) site, which allows helicopter pilots access to a quick-fill water station to aid in aerial fire support. The RAWS system was instrumental in rapidly suppressing the recent Garden Fire when it was used for more than 36 aerial water drops, aiding in protecting nearby homes.

"The loss from the recent fires has reinforced the urgent need to fund future RAWS heli-hydrant sites, redundant power and source of supply projects, and ensure adequate reserves are available for emergency response," said Jake Wiley, Rainbow Water General Manager.



Read more about how Rainbow Water prepares for emergency events by scanning the code or visit: rainbowmwd.ca.gov/emergency-info





Lake Oroville, Butte County

Making Conservation a California Way of Life

In an ongoing effort to enhance water storage and supply in California, the State Water Resources Control Board (CA SWRCB) has adopted a new urban water use plan, Making Conservation a California Way of Life. The new state-mandated water-use efficiency standard changed its indoor water use goal from 55 to 47 gallons per capita per day (GPCD) for every urban water supplier in the state, effective Jan. 1, 2025. The water use efficiency standards apply to urban water suppliers, including Rainbow Water, and are used as a guide to create water budgets. The standard does not impact Rainbow Water customers, as it applies to the water providers, not individual consumers. Rainbow Water's usage is well below the new per capita standard due to many years of conservation and falling water demands in the service area. The standard also excludes agricultural water demands, a key reason the standard does not impact Rainbow Water customers. The regulation requires Rainbow Water to report bi-annually on its measures to monitor water conservation practices.

The result of the standard is long-term best practices to prepare communities for water shortages and reduce the need for emergency water reductions. Read more about conservation efforts and how the new standard assists water districts in developing customer water budgets:

rainbowmwd.ca.gov/conservation

Water Supply Conditions Update

Southern California has experienced an unusually dry start to 2025 due to the effects of a La Niña weather pattern that held storms to the northern part of the state and decreased precipitation in the South to start the water year, which is tracked by State officials from Oct 1 - Sept 30. Effective water management from two straight above-average precipitation and Sierra snowpacks in the 2023 and 2024 periods kept large storage reservoirs in California well above average to start the 2025 water year. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) snowpack survey from 130 stations throughout the Sierra Nevada reported snow water content at 81 percent of average as of Feb. 7 and 116% of average in the critical northern part of the State. The Sierra Nevada snowpack supplies 30% of Southern California's imported water. The State Water Project's largest reservoir at Lake Oroville in Butte County (pictured above) reported 137 percent of the average capacity for this time of year. The snowpack survey report is issued from January to April of each year, and the data is key to DWR managing the California State Water Project Supply. Over the past two years, DWR has prepared for the dramatic changes in weather conditions to increase its ability to capture water during flood conditions with a focus on climate resilience with flood capture, reviving groundwater, and reservoir recharge efforts.

Local Water Reservoirs

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California reported that reservoirs were above historical averages as of Jan. 28. Local storage facilities that feed into the Rainbow Water service area include Lake Skinner in Temecula and Diamond Valley Lake in Hemet, reported above 90 percent of the average. Diamond Valley Lake was constructed to provide emergency storage to the region and currently has 786,300 acre-feet of storage, which is enough to serve water to approximately two million homes for a year. The imported water supply through local water reservoirs and the State Water Project both report a positive start for 2025.

Flow Monitor Device Rebates for Customers

Track your home water usage with flow monitor devices to receive real-time data on water usage and leak notifications. For a limited time, Metropolitan Water District has launched a flow monitor pilot program for customers to select from five different devices at numerous price points that pair with most water meter types. Some devices require professional installation by a licensed plumber and the rebate amount varies per device.



Metropolitan Water District programs include **Flo by Moen**, **Phyn Plus** and **Streamlabs Control** devices that detect indoor water use through a free app with remote and automatic shut off capability, and require professional installation. **Flume** and **Streamlabs Monitor** are self-installed devices with free app subscription.

Rainbow Water offers **Flume**, a self-installed device that monitor indoor and outdoor water use through a free mobile app. Rainbow Water customers receive an instant rebate with purchase price of \$49 at flumewater.com/rainbow

Visit the Be Water Wise website to identify device compatibility, receive rebate eligibility, find a contractor and submit an online application at: <https://tinyurl.com/3p5vwb7k>

Student Programs

ACWA Scholarships for Future Water Leaders

As a member of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), Rainbow Water is proud to share several ACWA scholarship opportunities for high-achieving graduate or undergraduate students majoring in a water resources-related field. Five scholarship opportunities of up to \$10,000 are available for college students in the Rainbow Water service area. All scholarship applications must be submitted online by March 1. For a complete list of qualification and eligibility requirements, please scan the code or visit ACWA's scholarships page at: acwa.com/scholarships



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