



# COUNTY OF ORANGE

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## Orange County Seeks Taxpayer Losses in Two Recent Utility-Caused Wildfires

**Santa Ana, CA** (October 3, 2023) – Yesterday, Orange County filed two separate lawsuits seeking recovery of public and taxpayer resources lost in two recent wildfires—the 2020 Silverado Fire and the 2022 Coastal Fire. The Silverado Fire lawsuit names T-Mobile and Southern California Edison as defendants, and the Coastal Fire lawsuit names Southern California Edison as the defendant. The lawsuits were filed in Orange County Superior Court.

“These lawsuits seek to recover taxpayer dollars, spent by the county to protect the public, from those responsible for the damages,” said Orange County Board of Supervisors Chairman Donald P. Wagner, who represents the Third District where the Silverado Fire burned 12,466 acres.

“We demand that the utilities responsible for the destruction of county assets, increased expenses, reduced revenues, and environmental damages, reimburse the County,” said Supervisor Katrina Foley, who represents the Fifth District where the Laguna Niguel Coastal Fire burned 200 acres. “In 2022, the California State Auditor found that the utilities are not doing enough to reduce wildfire threats throughout the State of California. We have a duty to protect our taxpayers and County assets.”

In each suit, the lawsuits allege that utility infrastructure was the cause and origin of the fires, and that the utilities acted negligently in maintaining, owning and operating their equipment.

The Silverado Fire started the morning of October 26, 2020 and actively burned for 12 days while 784 personnel, one helicopter and 85 engines responded. The Coastal Fire started the afternoon of May 11, 2022 and actively burned for six days, burning through the City of Laguna Niguel.

The County is represented by the Office of County Counsel, and by outside counsel Baron & Budd, Berger Kahn, and Diab Chambers, which have extensive experience in wildfire litigation and public entity representation.

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