RESEARCH GUIDES
FIRES AND FIREFIGHTERS IN CALIFORNIA

By

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Do you hold your breath for a loved one who is fighting California wildfires every time he or she is deployed? Are you a fire-fighter yourself? Have you donated to or directly participated in relief efforts after a particularly devastating blaze? Explore the proud history of firefighting, fire management and even controlled burns in California via the California History Section’s rich collections!

Digitized Resources ................................................................. 3

Reference Works:
   Books ..................................................................................4
   Periodicals ..........................................................................7
   Manuscript Collections ...................................................... 8

Search:
   Catalog General Research Tips ......................................... 9
   Subject-Specific Resources in our Catalog .......................... 10
   County-Specific Resources in our Catalog .......................... 11
   On-site Research Resources ................................................. 12
   Other On-site Resources ..................................................... 13
   Other Places to Look ........................................................... 14

ENJOY YOUR RESEARCH!
Can’t come to the library just yet? No worries! There are a number of online resources you can explore related to fires and firefighting in California!

**Digitized Resources**

A few years ago we digitized some of our more fragile resources on California’s fires. You can see them on Internet Archive!

**Digitized Publications**

URL: https://archive.org/

Type in Search Box: ((forest fires) OR (fire fighters)) AND collection:(californiastatelibrary) &sin=TXT

Select Option: “Search full text of books”

**Digitized Images**

We have scanned and digitized a portion of our image collection. Check them out and remember that we have a lot more in the library.

URL: https://calisphere.org/institution/51/items/

Type in Search Box: (Fires OR Wildfires OR (Forest Fires) OR Fire OR Burning)
Unsure about where to start? Consult a book! If you are interested in the history of California’s urban fires, firefighters or wildland fire management, these books will get you going.

**Books**


A seminal work on the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, this thoroughly illustrated book chronicles the progress of the fire after the 1906 earthquake.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990001025250205115


Written by a survivor of the 1991 Tunnel fire in the Oakland hills, this book examines both the factors that increased fire risk in the Oakland region and the factors that allowed this region to be so resilient in the face of disaster.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990016270410205115
Books


A detailed history and memoir of Sacramento’s fire department, this book covers major fires, regional competitions, the transition to a professional fire department and more.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 99000541560205115


Put out to mark the Los Angeles fire department’s centennial, this book tracks the major technological changes, building fires and even deaths seen by this urban fire department.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990004342840205115


A memoir written by an urban firefighter, this book details the gritty details of working major building fires, urban-wildland interface fires and the daily firehouse life.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990012212070205115
Books


This comprehensive textbook lays out not only the environmental effects of prescribed burning on Native plant and animal populations in California, but offers practical advice on burning in different California sub-regions.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 9916471081205115


An after-action report put out by the department of forestry after a particularly bad fire season, this book provides a near real-time snapshot of how California emergency responders triage and allocate personnel in the face of multiple serious blazes.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990012184460205115


Using extensive visual evidence, this book compares gold-rush era vegetation to current levels, via side by side comparisons of regional photographs. Although mostly letting the images speak for themselves, the author suggests that fire suppression has dramatically altered the character of California’s forests.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990011495070205115
PERIODICALS

Don’t want to read an entire book? Check these publications for real-time information on fires, fire departments and firefighting techniques.

California Professional Firefighters
Are you curious about firefighting or the opinions of firefighters? Covering firefighting news from 1977 forward, this publication provides information and updates on the firefighting profession in California. Additionally, it provides opinions about issues of government and law.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990005812210205115 OR 990006032770205115 OR 990010653770205115

California Fire Service
Do you want to read advice from professional firefighters? This publication gives readers legal advice as well as general fire prevention and safety advice. It also provides information on the firefighting profession. The library’s run is from 1977 forwards.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990005390860205115 OR 990005390850205115
Manuscript Collections

In addition to books and periodicals, there are many archival resources that focus on California’s fires and her firefighters. Here are some relevant collections at the State Library.

**John Beeckman Collection**
This collection of Gold Rush correspondence contains a brief description of the 1852 fire that destroyed almost all of Sacramento. In particular it relates the financial losses Beeckman suffered as a consequence of this blaze.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
**Search:** 990005578350205115

**Fire Department SMCs**
Containing organizational papers such as rosters and founding documents, these folder-sized collections cover various fire departments in California, mostly in the Sacramento and Motherlode regions.

**URL:** http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCalinfo.htm
**Search:** “Small Manuscript” Fire Department

**Linda Hirschler Collection**
Containing two detailed accounts of the 1906 earthquake’s fiery aftermath, these letters, one written by a Japanese servant, Hiro Sawa and one written by Hirschler detail the fire and how they lived in a ruined city.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
**Search:** 990015006040205115
Catalog General Research Tips

While many of our materials are online, even more are only in hard-copy. You can use the following resources to learn about our books, articles, and manuscripts on fire.

**Catalog**

If you are looking for images, books and articles on fire, your best source is our catalog.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?
vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&lang=en&sortby=rank

**Type in Search Box:** (Fires OR Wildfires OR (Forest Fires) OR Fire OR Burning OR Firefighters)

**Limit:** By desired material type

**California Information File II**

Sometimes the catalog doesn’t provide as much detail as you might like. This is why we created the California Information File II. In this resource, you can find information about individual fire-departments, related articles and more!

**URL:** http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCalinfo.htm

**Type in Subject Box:** (Fires OR Wildfires OR (Forest Fires) OR Fire OR Burning OR Firefighters)

**For a narrower search:** Add a place to your keyword search
Subject-Specific Resources in Our Catalog

California’s fires and the management thereof have had far-ranging effects on everything from politics to aeronautics! Explore some of our resources via these catalog links.

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<td>German Americans</td>
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<td>Native Americans</td>
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Subject

- Aeronautics
- Business
- Cooking
- Education
- Environment
- Festivals
- Fiction
- Horses
- Legislature
- Mining
- Music
- Oil
- Shipping
- San Francisco 1906
- Water
Curious about firefighting and its development in a specific county? While these catalog links don’t list all of what the California History Section has, they are a good starting point.

Alameda
Amador
Butte
Calaveras
Contra Costa

Fresno
Glenn
Humboldt
Kern
Los Angeles
Marin
Mariposa
Mendocino
Merced
Monterey
Napa
Nevada

Orange
Placer
Riverside
Sacramento
San Benito
San Bernardino
San Diego
San Francisco
San Joaquin
Santa Barbara
Santa Clara
Santa Cruz
Shasta
Sierra
Siskiyou

Solano
Sonoma
Stanislaus
Tuolumne
Yolo
Yuba
California Information File

In the library? Check the California Information File before you do anything else! This file indexes over 130 years of articles, books, and manuscript collections on California fires and more.

Subject Headings:
1. Firefighting (Various subdivisions)
2. Firemen (Various subdivisions)
3. Fires (Various subdivisions)
4. Forests and Forestry: Fires

Picture File

Sometimes a picture is worth a 1000 words and not all of our pictures are online. To check the rest of the collection search our picture file.

Subject Headings:
1. Fires
2. (Various Counties and cities): Fires
OTHER ON-SITE RESOURCES

Despite our best efforts, some of our resources defy complete description. We suggest that you ask a librarian about fire and fire management information in the following files:

Vertical Files

Our massive collection of vertical files cover a wide variety of topics including highways. You can check them for information on organizations that protect and use highways or sites famous for road systems.

Subject Headings: Subject: Fire

Postcard Files

Separate from our photo collection, our postcard collection contains a number of fire department and fire images. Most are not online.

Subject Headings: Check with librarians

Map Files

Our map files contain a number of maps related to California fires particularly Sanborn fire insurance maps. Most are not online but are catalogued in our card file.

Subject Headings: Check with librarians
Other Places to Look

Of course the California History Section doesn’t have everything, so we suggest that in addition to looking at our collections, you contact the following organizations:

Other California State Library Sections

Government Publications Section
Witkin Law Library
Sutro Library
General Information

- http://www.library.ca.gov/government-publications/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/law/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/sutro/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/services/

Government Agencies

California State Archives
California State Parks
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Office of the State Fire Marshal
Governor’s Office of Emergency Services
Local California libraries or archives

- http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/
- https://www.parks.ca.gov/
- https://www.fire.ca.gov/
- https://bofdata.fire.ca.gov/
- https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/
- https://www.caloes.ca.gov/home
Government Agencies Cont.

California National Guard
California Conservation Corps
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
California Emergency Medical Services Authority
California Department of Public Health
California Air Resources Board
California Volunteers

- https://calguard.ca.gov/
- https://ccc.ca.gov/
- https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/
- https://emsa.ca.gov/
- https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/Pages/WildfirePages/Wildfires-.aspx
- https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/
- https://californiavolunteers.ca.gov/

Non-Profits and Stake-holders

California Fire Museum
Fire Museum Network
Pioneer Mutual Hook and Ladder Society
San Francisco Fire Dept. Museum
Los Angeles Fire Department Museum

- hwww.cafiremuseum.org/
- www.firemuseumnetwork.org/index.html
- www.sacramentofiremuseum.org/
- www.guardiansofthecity.org/index.html
- http://lafdmuseum.org/
CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY
CALIFORNIA HISTORY SECTION

California History Section
900 N Street Room 200
Sacramento CA 95814

Phone: (916) 654-0176
E-mail: csclal@library.ca.gov
Hours: 9:30-4 Monday-Friday

This guide is also available online at:
http://www.library.ca.gov/california-history/research-guides/