



COUNTY OF SISKIYOU

Board of Supervisors

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August 14, 2025

Nancy Ward, Director
California Governor's Office of Emergency Services
3650 Schriever Avenue
Mather, CA 95655

**Subject: Response to Denial of Siskiyou County's Request for State of Emergency –
Illegal Pesticide Use**

Dear Director Ward,

I received your denial letter dated August 4, 2025, in response to Siskiyou County's request for a State of Emergency proclamation due to the widespread use of illegal pesticides linked to illicit cannabis operations. On behalf of the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors, I submit this letter in full support of the response issued by the Siskiyou County Sheriff and the Director of the Office of Emergency Services.

While I acknowledge the prior coordination between Cal OES and their partner agencies, the response to date has not reflected the urgency or scale of the public safety and environmental threat currently affecting Siskiyou County. I must respectfully, but firmly, disagree with your determination that the situation does not meet the criteria for a State of Emergency under the California Emergency Services Act.

Firefighters and law enforcement personnel are increasingly responding to wildfires and other incidents across the County where they encounter illegal cannabis cultivation operations contaminated with banned, highly toxic pesticides. Often fortified and deliberately concealed, these operations present serious hazards. The chemicals in use are acutely dangerous, and exposure can occur suddenly and without warning, particularly when they are applied as fumigants. Standard protective gear does not provide adequate protection against these substances. Once released, these chemicals can contaminate surrounding soil, groundwater, air, and ecosystems. Some operations are located close to residential areas, creating additional risks to public health.

The scale of the problem now far exceeds what local agencies can manage. Siskiyou County has attempted to elevate this issue through appropriate channels, yet the State continues to treat it as a matter that can be managed through technical assistance and coordination. It cannot. A formal State of Emergency is necessary to provide the level of resources, coordination, and support required to respond appropriately.

I strongly support the accompanying letter submitted by the Siskiyou County Office of Emergency Services and the Siskiyou County Sheriff. Their account reinforces our position that the current situation meets both the statutory and practical definitions of an emergency.

Jess Harris
District 1

Ed Valenzuela
District 2

Michael N. Kobseff
District 3

Nancy Ogren
District 4

Ray Haupt
District 5

I urge the State to reevaluate this decision without delay. A timely and coordinated response is essential to protect those who are risking their lives in service to our region and to address the escalating public safety and environmental threats facing Siskiyou County and surrounding rural communities.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

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Nancy Ogren, Chair
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

CC: Bryan Schenone, Director, Siskiyou County Office of Emergency Services
Sheriff Jerimiah LaRue, Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office
Governor Gavin Newsom
Secretary Yana Garcia, CalEPA
Director Nicole Elliott, Department of Cannabis Control
Director Charlton H. Bonham, CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
Senator Megan Dahle
Assemblymember Heather Hadwick
Siskiyou County Environmental Health Department
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors
Rural County Representatives of California
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange