

December 3, 2021

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

Along with hundreds of others, my wife and I lost our home to the Caldor Fire on August 17, more than 3 months ago. We lived in the town of Grizzly Flats which, as you saw for yourself during your fly-over in September, was completely destroyed.

Despite your pledge to help, not one person has seen any assistance from the Federal Government even though you acknowledged this was a Federal issue.

We urge you to reverse FEMA's decision not to provide individual assistance to the residents of El Dorado County, namely Grizzly Flats. There are hundreds who are suffering and you can change that.

We voted for you in hopes that we would have a president who listens and keeps his promises.

Please keep to your word, Mr. President.

The lives of hundreds of people hang in the balance.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy & Tricia Rios". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Timothy & Tricia Rios
7207 Capps Crossing
Grizzly Flats, CA 95636

Temporarily residing at:

1519 Inland Lane
Ceres, CA 95307

R.W. MacNeil Caldor Fire Impact Statement

Dear Sir,

I am well aware the President, Joe Biden, is very unlikely to ever read this, but I'll write it anyway.

I am a resident of Grizzly Flats, CA. The town that burned up in the Caldor Fire, the town you [President Biden] flew over in a well-publicized photo op, but you never came down and talked with any of us ordinary people here. If you had you might have a different view of what this town really is.

We've heard that FEMA doesn't want to give any assistance to individuals. What the F____! What do you think this town is? Yes, we had a small elementary school, a post office, and a church/community center; all were lost in the fire. But that's about it! We had nothing else. No store, no gas station; no businesses or government buildings. Just individuals and houses.

My family has been in this town for over a hundred years. Not to say we all stayed up here all the time. I was born in Berkeley, CA, and grew up in San Francisco and Sacramento, CA areas. But Grizzly Flats was always seen as home turf for many of us.

My grandmother bought the land I was at in the 1950s, hoping to retire there. The house dated to 1910. Just like my neighbor Larry's place. The old house across from his, where we used to stay when I was a kid, dated back to 1874. I mention this to counter that some people say, that things burn down all the time out here in the hills. Obviously, they don't, or those old wooden houses wouldn't have been there. Although they are gone now.

Some people seem to think that us folks in Grizzly Flats were well off, and these homes were 2nd houses. That's anything but true. While there are a few that are doing well, most of us are basically poor. That's why people come here. It's the cheapest housing around. That's why 40 % of us didn't have homeowners insurance. Not that we wouldn't have liked to have it. I used to have it, but had to give it up. I'm 73, living on nothing but Social Security. To give you an idea, my cousin is paying \$4,000/year for his insurance. But, he's got a great pension from USPS, so he can afford it.

I hope you can understand why us Grizzly Flats residents are blown away to hear that you don't want to give any assistance to us people. As always, you rich folks will do just fine. And us poor folks will be the ones to suffer. We already are. Cathie and I are currently living in my cousin's backyard.

For that matter, we Grizzly people are already fed up with the government. If you don't know, the Caldor Fire was not handled well by the federal and state agencies out here. Even '60 Minutes' carried the story of how the agencies did not work well together. And the last minute recorded message we got to evacuate, that most of us did not take very seriously. We could not believe they would let the middle of town, the old part, burn. They brag about how they got all the people out, but not all the animals. Some animals burned alive horribly. I still cry everyday over the pets I lost. --**R.W. MacNeil**

To: FEMA
From: Vivian Hargis
RE: Caldor Fire Denial of FEMA Financial Aid

I am a 61-year-old mother of 3 children and 8 grandchildren. I moved to Grizzly Flats in January 2011 to be closer to my adult children, although I have lived rurally my whole life because that's where I prefer to be.

In August of 2015 my son was killed in a motorcycle accident. This tragedy was followed the very next year by my daughter in law's involvement in a serious car accident. As a result of this accident, following their release from the hospital, I became the guardian of my two youngest grandchildren, Kendra and Robert Johnson.

It means everything to me to raise them and give them the best home I can. In August of 2021 the Caldor Fire took our simple rented home and left us with nothing.

FEMA: I am asking that you would allow individual victims and families displaced by the Caldor Fire the help we so desperately need. My needs are simple just a home a roof over our heads is all. I could use FEMA aid to put a down payment on a mobile home or rent somewhere else. I would like the ability to provide a safe home for my 2 grandchildren until they are adults.

The wildfire hasn't only affected me, far from it – the entire community of Grizzly Flats was impacted by this disaster. In my profession is a caregiver for the elderly (30+ years), 2 of my clients, ages 89 and 77, both lost their homes to the fire. Unfortunately, they will never recover from this, one has already passed on. My son also lost his home he had just bought it in 2020.

I was in Grizzly Flats the day your planes flew over our town. That day was the first time I was allowed to go see the destruction, which has now been sitting for over 6 months time.

FEMA, keep your promises. You said you would help us but WE HAVE RECEIVED NO HELP.

If you have any questions or would like to set up a phone call, please feel free to contact me at 7101 Crystal Boulevard, El Dorado CA 95623.

Sincerely,

Vivian Hargis

Dear President Biden,

In August 2021, the community of Grizzly Flats and areas surrounding Lake Tahoe in El Dorado County were brought to destruction. Hundreds of young families, seniors, and people from all walks of life lost their homes. Nearly 40% of these families did not have homeowners insurance and/or were not adequately insured.

You visited the Caldor Fire area on September 13, 2021 and met with El Dorado County's Chief Administrative Officer that same day at Mather Air Force Base. You assured him that the people affected by the Caldor Fire would receive assistance.

On October 8, 2021 El Dorado County was denied FEMA individual assistance, with the citation that there was not enough destruction sustained from the Caldor Fire. After many calls for help and several letters for assistance from our state and federal legislators, our pleas for help have gone unanswered. FEMA has denied Individual Assistance to the people of El Dorado County. All appeals to this decision have also been denied.

The Caldor fire – the 15th largest ever in California history— burned 221,775 acres, forced the evacuation of more than 50,000 Californians, and destroyed over 1,000 structures, most of which were homes. This devastation is particularly tragic as El Dorado County has a higher-than-average percentage of seniors and many of those who lost their homes live on limited incomes. Many hard-working families, some with children and many senior citizens are homeless, living in tents, cars, and recreational vehicles.

We want to thank you, Mr. President, for declaring a Major Disaster and your promise to provide public assistance in response to this incident. You are our last hope – the only person who can help relieve the pain of the survivors of this terrible and tragic event. Individual assistance was granted to the people affected by fires in Colorado and hurricanes in Kentucky. The people of El Dorado County humbly ask for the same assistance.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Melissa White and her family of eight enjoyed their home in Grizzly Flats, because the rural atmosphere provided a better setting for her family. She heard about the Caldor Fire on August 14th, but since there were no evacuation notices, she didn't expect fire in her area. On August 16th, the Caldor Fire was approximately four miles from her home, she could hear an audible roaring from the fire and ash was falling on her property like snow. After Melissa and her family started packing for evacuation, fire crews appeared in her community informing residents that they had 15 minutes to evacuate.

On August 17th, an independent reporter on social media was showing Grizzly Flats devastation. After asking the reporter to check on their home, Melissa and her family saw that their home had burned down. ***They lost everything.*** There was too little time to save many belongings before the fire consumed everything else that they owned. Melissa worked locally in Grizzly Flats, and the place she worked burned down too, leaving her without a job. Her husband's job was also lost. Though they did receive assistance from family, they were asked to leave the hotel they were staying at to make space for firefighters and a wedding party. They had to stay with family in Antioch temporarily, which is quite a distance away. Since that point, Melissa and her family of 8 have not been able to find a stable life.

Eventually, Melissa and her family of 8 were able to get an RV but due to the small size, three family members simply moved away to stay with other family, leaving Melissa with a family of 5 instead of 8. In the process of moving around, the family pet dog died. While they did have insurance, the insurance company made excuses why they (the insurance company) would not reimburse the full cost of the home. Expenses during the Caldor Fire evacuation period drained Melissa and her family of their resources. With no income, and no home, Melissa has had to consider moving out of the state while she and her family rebuild their home and lives.

Melissa White
(530) 306-4042

Candace Fleming watched the Caldor Fire begin from her family ranch, the Tyler Ranch. At first, it seemed that no one knew where the fire was, but everyone could see the smoke and reports suggested the fire was only 40 acres. When fire crews started appearing, the fire crews were simply checking on the fire but not responding, which worried Candace because she couldn't see any visible fire support. She noted that an observation helicopter flew over her residence five times. The Tyler Ranch is partially timber lands, registered fire swath, and had 9 family owned homes and antiques from the early 1900's. Candace would later find out that there were only 67 fire personnel in Grizzly Flats to deal with the Caldor Fire, despite the Tyler Ranch being within a registered fire swath and being some distance from Grizzly Flats.

On August 16th, the fire was beyond 700 acres, but still Candace saw no fire response as it was moving closer and closer towards her historic home originally built in 1854. Realizing the importance of the situation, Candace and her family began packing trailers and everything they could. Through the raining ash and debris, their preparations for evacuation were cut short when homes started exploding around them. Candace and her family immediately evacuated Tyler Ranch.

Candace first evacuated to Pleasant Valley, which was evacuated the next day, forcing Candace to move again. She had to rely on family for immediate help, by parking her RV in the family member's front yard. She would later learn that her family lost 7 homes on Tyler Ranch. Her home had insurance, but the payout was minimal and not enough to rebuild. Candace Fleming has nothing left now, and she lives in an RV that is parked in a front yard.

Candace Fleming at Tyler Ranch
(530) 306-7261

The Johnson Family
4890 Mt. Pleasant Drive,
Grizzly Flats, CA 95636

Dear Mr. President,

Since the horrendous fire that swept through our neighborhood, we were affected tremendously in many ways. For approximately twenty-eight days we could not return to our home. When we returned to our home at 4890 Mt. Pleasant Drive we found substantial damage to our home. Due to supply chain delays, we can't even get our windows and sliding door replaced. We lost thousands of dollars in personal items, appliances, etc., as well as fifty-six beautiful trees on our property. We now have fifty-six stumps to be removed from when PG&E cut our trees and fencing down. We hoped that President Biden would declare Grizzly Flats a disaster area so we could get help from FEMA, what happened? Please try to help us.

Most respectfully,

The Johnson family

Sara Moreau first heard about the Caldor Fire while attending a local Grizzly Flats restaurant. Sara saw the fire trucks coming down the road initially, only to realize later that the fire was closing in on her home. The morning of August 15th, Sara began to see neighbors packing up to evacuate. It took the entire day to pack, and convince her 68 year old mother to evacuate. Her mother was able to purchase a hotel room for the night, but were later asked to leave the hotel to make space for firefighters. The Red Cross paid for a hotel to help Sara and her family, but the hotel was in another county and far from home. Once the funding ran out, Sara and her family were on their own and sought refuge on a local farm as a temporary home. They remain there still.

Sara Moreau would go on to learn that 9 out of 12 homes in her small community were gone, including her home. The entire town was wiped out. She had no insurance on her home, and had been consistently denied insurance coverage. The Caldor Fire has caused a great hardship on her family, and Sara is unsure where to go from here.

Sara Moreau
(530) 903-2274

Miranda Thomas
P.O. Box 192
Grizzly Flats, CA 95636

Dear Mr. President,

On August 16th, I sat at home listening to broadcastify with my nerves on edge. The Caldor Fire had been creeping closer minute by minute. Evacuation would be easy, only because I'd already had a couple bug out bags packed and I'd packed the car with essentials.

I'd locked the cats in one room so they'd be quick to find and the dog was sitting with me while my daughter watched cartoons, completely unaware of what was going on. This is one of the few times I was glad my sweet girl doesn't understand a lot.

At 9:30 PM, the red alert hit my cell phone. I grabbed the animals and put all 3 of them in the car. I carried my daughter to the car and made sure her wheelchair was secure in the backend. By 10 PM, we slowly made our way off the mountain. I didn't know if we'd see the house again or how long we'd be gone, but no way would it be bad. Our cats were taken to the shelter and our dog stayed with a friend.

We all thought it'd be OK, the firefighters would save our town and we'd go back, grateful but home. We never thought we'd suffer so much loss, so much gone, burnt, ashes.

I listened to broadcastify all night, crying when I lost video from my ADT system. Hysterically called ADT and found out that as long as there was a signal from the system, the house was likely still there.

When we woke the next morning, it was to the news that the vast majority of our town was gone. Even with the knowledge that my security system was still sensing a signal, I was fearful that we could still lose our home.

We've been homeless before. I couldn't believe that when we had finally gotten our lives on track and even owned a home, we might become homeless again. Until the day I saw video of our mostly unscathed house, I feared becoming homeless again.

While evacuated, my sweet girl got a blood clot in her leg, leading to an ICU stay. Then after attending church, she caught COVID and ended up in the ICU again for 2 days.

October 1, we were some of the few, the blessed, to be able to move back into our home. It's quiet and traffic sucks now. We drive half an hour for the mail, but we still have a home. And this Christmas, that home means so much more than anyone outside Grizzly Flats truly knows.

President Biden promised to help our neighbors and thus far, is failing to follow through. When I was in the navy, the core values were HONOR, courage and COMMITMENT... I call for President Biden to HONOR his COMMITMENT to help the people of Grizzly Flats who have lost so much.

Most respectfully,

Miranda Thomas

The Magidson Family
2990 Sunday Ridge Rd,
Grizzly Flats, CA 95636

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Tobe Magidson, a resident of Grizzly Flats, California. I would like to explain the devastation we have experienced as a family and as a community. I worked for 35 years straight to build my family their little slice of the American pie. I struggled through life since I was born in Oakland, California. I learned early that to survive I had to fight through adversity and struggles to rise above the poverty level we were accustomed to living in as a child. To do so was a blessing from God and a testament to American fortitude. I'm a single dad who fights so hard every day to provide a better future for my children and family.

On that horrible tragic hot august night, I walked outside around 11:30 after an exhausting day of being battered in just trying to save our homes and property. I knew at that moment we were awaiting an inevitable date with hell. This fire was something out of the Book of Revelations. It was a biblical destruction to this once beautiful thriving mountain community. As I gazed up into the smoky night sky, I had silver dollar sized ashes raining down from above on me. I prayed to God that He would vanquish this firestorm and then started my reluctant evacuation process. I realized at that moment that nothing I could do would be able to control this beast from hell. I loaded up remaining animals, my dog and my family and started down the easement road to the evacuation point at the bottom of our mountain.

From 12 miles away from home, we watched as the mountain began to glow so bright in the night sky that it was apocalyptic. The pain we felt sitting at the base of that mountain, watching our beloved community and everything we worked so hard for disappear in a matter of a few hours time, was like nothing we have ever experienced before. We just finished building our house and finally were able to move in, just to have it ripped away in one night. I can't begin to explain the great loss this has caused our family and many more families like ours.

Our community needs the President of the United States to approve the individual federal assistance and reevaluate the decision to leave us without any help based upon the FEMA formula. We have children and families that are cold, homeless and hungry. My family is fortunate o at least have a small camper to live in when many others are still in tents and in even more dire circumstances. You have the power to actually care for this community and to help us. We are one of the poorest communities in our county and are feeling again, that we just do not matter to many. I plead with you, leaving politics aside, to help this community and show the world that a young kid from Scranton who became President of the most powerful country on earth, actually cares about the small mountain community of Grizzly Flats, California. Please show the world that the President of the United States has compassion for the normal Joe's out here; the blue collar workers working hard and endless hours to provide for their families. Show the world that despite rules and regulations set forth can be changed, modified or reevaluated for the good of our nation and our American values.

After your visit, I had hoped that help would be on the way after you told us you would take care of us, but after the denials from FEMA and the appeals, I hope I can still trust your word. We too are

Americans, Mr. President, living in third world conditions without roofs, warmth, power, water and sewage. The basic human necessities are just that, necessities, and while our local Supervisor is doing everything he can help us, it simply is not enough. I only ask that you please treat us as Americans and citizens of our great nation. I am not one to ask for help, but sir, we need your help and we need it now. I appreciate you listening to a normal everyday American citizen and we hope you realize how badly we all need this FEMA assistance.

Most respectfully,

The Magidson family