

How fires get their names

Every year in California thousands of wildfires start throughout the state. In most cases, the dispatch center sending the initial resources to a wildland fire will designate a name for the fire, but the first on scene engine or fire official can also name the incident. Fires are usually named for the area in which they start – a geographical location, local landmark, street, lake, mountain, peak, etc. Quickly naming the fire provides responding fire resources with an additional locator, and allows fire officials to track and prioritize incidents by name.

For example during the Southern California Fire Siege of 2003, the largest wildland fire in California history, the Cedar Fire in San Diego County, was named after the Cedar Creek Falls area where it started. The destructive Old Fire, which burned during the same time period in San Bernardino County, was named after the road along which it started - Old Waterman Canyon Road. See the 2003 Large Fires list for more information on these fires.