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Agence France-Presse

SAN DIEGO, California - Firefighters expressed hope on Saturday the end may be in sight for California's wildfire crisis but cautioned there was "a long way to go" with more than 20,000 homes remaining threatened.

Cooler temperatures and calmer winds have allowed firefighters to staunch or contain most of the 23 fires that have erupted since Sunday, leaving seven people dead, destroying 1,800 homes and displacing 500,000 people.

Firefighting personnel have predicted that three major blazes could be brought under control within 10 days, offering the prospect of a return to normalcy after one of the worst fire disasters in Californian history.

The San Diego Tribune on Saturday quoted officials as saying all fires in the region were forecast to be tamed by November 5.

Some 203,000 hectares (502,000 acres) of tinder-dry park and forest land have been incinerated by the firestorm.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services said firefighters were buoyed by the weather conditions but remained vigilant. Figures released by the office on Saturday showed that some 20,600 properties were under threat.

"The weather has enabled the fire personnel to make great progress but there is still a long way to go," spokeswoman Rochelle Jenkins said.

"The weather is helping but we have to plan for the worst and hope for the best, and that is how we will be proceeding in the days ahead."

The National Weather Service has warned the weather could again pose problems for crews in coming days, with less humidity and winds increasing to 25-40 kilometers (15-25 miles) per hour in canyons and passes.

The fires are the worst to hit the state since 2003, when 22 people were killed and more than 3,000 homes lost in a series of blazes.

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said Friday that the focus had shifted from crisis management to the rebuilding effort.

"This first week was like a sprint, but the next phase is like a marathon," he said in Sacramento. "Hundreds of thousands of Californians had their lives turned upside down. We have many, many tough tasks ahead of us."

He issued an executive order with administrative measures to speed up state assistance to these people. In it he estimated that "thousands of workers are, or will be, unemployed as a result of the wildfire disaster."

Nearly 3,000 people remained in temporary shelters across the state as many people headed home to find their homes reduced to piles of ash and rubble.

Hundreds of mental health experts have fanned out across the state to offer counseling and support to the thousands of people affected.

"Some of them are overwhelmed, very sad, stressed, angry, frustrated," said Karen Hoganson, a Red Cross mental health supervisor who spent the past few days counseling people at San Diego's Qualcomm stadium.

"They have feelings of loneliness because home was all they had."

California officials have meanwhile set up a special task force to investigate insurance and contract fraud matters as well as con-artists who pretend to be claims adjusters of contractors.

"It is really unfortunate that every time there is a significant disaster in California, scam artists will come to the disaster area and try to rip victims off," state Insurance Commissioner Steve Poizner said Friday.

San Diego County officials have put the cost of property damage at more than one billion dollars although insurance industry analysts have said it may go as high as 1.6 billion.

The causes of the different fires vary, from a fallen power line to suspected arson.

In Orange County, a 285,000-dollar reward was offered for information leading to the arrest of an arsonist who started a fire which has destroyed 14 homes and 11,000 hectares (27,000 acres).

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office said five people have been arrested and linked with various fires.

California Assembly recently moved a motion: California millionaire levy additional state personal income tax, the tax revenue devoted to the psychological and mental disorders in patients with treatment, and to promote the state's psychological and mental health services. The motion is proposed, the California government officials, community groups and ordinary people engaged in a fierce debate on.

The rich imposed on the income tax of 1% shortly before the California state legislature proposed a series of new motion.n

Shidingbage Rule 63 motion, the specific contents are: to increase mental health services in California personal funds, in addition to the original source of funds, for mental health services to open up new sources of income, that is, from 2005 onwards, in the taxable income of more than 1 million US dollars of the taxpayers, should on its more than more than 1 million US dollars of additional revenue to pay 1% of the state personal income tax. This tax revenue will be deposited into the county's mental health services Foundation, dedicated to promoting and expanding the California Psychological and mental health services, including mental illness on the prevention and early intervention, treatment of mental illness, mental illness training doctors and professionals to help with psychological problems to re - into normal life. The motion also proposes that the state government should not levy new taxes to reduce the existing mental health service expenditure, so that it can not be lower than the current level.

Currently, the State of California personal income tax rate in the 1% to 9.3% between the states is higher. If the motion is approved, then California will be about 30,000 new millionaires have to pay the Mental Health Services Tax, the applicable state personal income tax rate will be raised to 10.3%.n

US dollars, will be an increase in the future.

Prisons have become mental patients wards California Center for Mental Health Services statistics show that in the state of 36 million people, about 2% to 3% of adults suffering from serious or lasting mental illness, 9% to 13% of minors in a serious psychological problems, the total number of about 200 million people. California authorities also estimate that in California, there are about 300,000 homeless, of which 1 / 6 that 50,000 people found in various degrees of psychological problems, because most of these people have psychological barriers and running away from home. Their street in the city, tend to create social order incident, and even vicious incident. California cities, counties, the prison seems to have become psychologically ill wards, prisoners about 24,000 people with mental illness. According to reports, only a year on the San Francisco Police Department about 9,000 asylum patients with mental illnesses.

Serious psychological and mental problems, so that children can not be properly educated adults can not be properly working and living in the last few years, California government is very concerned about this issue. California existing mental health services system formed in the 1960s Ronald Reagan era as governor. In 1967, Reagan signed the famous LPS Act, the abolition of a special psychological treatment hospitals, people's mental health problems mainly by the community to solve serious cases, before hospitalization. The bill requires that all counties in patients with mental illnesses must provide the necessary services for this state government funded 99%. But due to budgetary pressures, the state government expenditure in this respect diminishing, many people's mental health be ignored. In 1991, the state government also called on counties must ensure that mental health services funding. County, mental health services expenditure from the 5% state sales tax, 24.3% comes from vehicle registration fees, the other match from the state government, individuals and social groups funded. In fact there is no guarantee of funds. According to statistics, from 2001 to 2002 fiscal year, a total of 626,000 California mental patients, patients with mental illnesses only practical about 1 / 3. Total expenditure is about 2.9 billion US dollars, of which about 27% federally funded, state government-funded 16%, patients themselves funded by about 20%. Some people say that the current system is a personal, government and community groups co-financing of the rig up, the source of funding instability, mismanagement, the parties caused resentment.n

Shidingbage Rule 63 motion. He said, the revenue must be dedicated to the children, adults and elderly mental health services. The use of strict income plan. In 2005, 45% will be used for education and training in psychological problems professionals, 45% for equipment and technology needs, the remaining 10% for state and local mental health programs; In 2005 to 2008, 10% for education and training of professionals, 10% for equipment investment, 20% for prevention and early intervention projects, 5% used to enhance the quality of mental health services, the other for patients with serious mental illness treatment. Counties must mental health services to the state management committee to monitor and mental health services spending plans, the Commission will ensure that the costs incurred compliance requirements.

The motion by many individuals and groups for their support. They said that the tax increases on the wealthy to increase mental health services funding is necessary, and it can also reduce prison, police departments, hospitals and other expenditure to reduce the government to provide shelter for the homeless and provide other social services spending, these expenses is about hundreds of millions of dollars a year. Mental Health Association of California President Celix said: The increase in mental health services funds, many people can be effectively beginning the treatment, rather than being locked up in prison or in the street. This is a good move and hope that it can be passed.

However, many opponents, and even formed the opposition groups. The group's spokesman David Yang said: We support the mental health services, the original intention and purpose of the motion is very good, but that does not mean this is a good policy. He said that the millionaire was in a very unstable taxpayers is part of the additional tax on the wealthy will leave them to other states to California. For example, he said, in the Internet economy bubble burst, when many millionaires transferred to other states, California's rapid decline in tax revenues caused by the state fiscal distress now. He said: If the introduction of such a tax, we will be the number of losses millionaires! He suggested that the state legislature should adjust the priority of all project expenditures for mental health services for more of.

California capital Sacramento City a communications company head said: This tax is the source of instability, if rely on the money, California's mental health services will not go very far. This measure actually affected the mental health services. Recently, California voters will vote on the motion.

About the Author

From www.abs-cbnnews.com:

The Sacramento Mental Health Clinic provides a full range of psychiatric and psychological assessments and interventions including individual. The San Francisco Behavioral Health Plan offers a full range of specialty Behavioral health services provided by a culturally diverse network. Mental health recovery, news, advocacy and personal experiences. Santa Cruz affiliate of the. California Performance Review Mental Health. The California Council of Community Mental Health Agencies is dedicated to the proposition that the people of California deserve a rational, comprehensive.

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