

Lessons learned in 2007 fires could be relevant for equestrians affected by the Northern California fires.

Since the Northern California fires began on October 8, they have burned over 200,000 acres, destroyed more than 7,900 structures, and severely damaged more than 600 others. (California Riding Magazine, October 2017) Of those affected by these tragic fires, many are members of the California equestrian community including horse owners, trainers and boarders.

As horse owners and victims of the 2007 San Diego Wildfires themselves, the owners of the Law Offices of Alex Schack understand that Northern California fire victims are going through a very difficult time right now. Kathy Schack, the wife of attorney Alex Schack, has owned Savoir Faire Stables (“SFS”) in San Diego County’s San Marcos, with her sisters Jeanne Burns and Sandy Burns Gardner since 1999. They operate a full boarding, training and rehabilitation business (www.sfsdressage.com).

In 2007, SFS was forced to evacuate 50 horses to the Del Mar Fairgrounds as a result of wildfires. In connection with these fires, the Law Offices of Alex Schack ultimately represented hundreds of clients against the local utility that caused the fires. Based on their personal experience and knowledge of the fires’ effect on fellow horse and stable owners, Kathy and Alex Schack worked with numerous members of the equestrian community, a somewhat forgotten group of victims with unique fire damages, to maximize their recovery.

Given their personal and professional experience with the 2007 San Diego Wildfires, the Law Offices of Alex Schack believes it is important to understand your rights regarding the Northern California fires, whether that be concerning insurance claims or potential additional compensation from those responsible for the fires.

While Cal Fire investigators have yet to rule on an official cause, they are looking into the potential liability of Pacific Gas & Electric, including reports of downed power lines, arcing wires and transformer problems near where the fires started.

PG&E admitted that destructive winds and vegetation growth contributed to trees and other

debris impacting PG&E's electrical lines. The company's spokesman further stated that PG&E "found instances of wires down, broken poles and impacted infrastructure." California laws require that PG&E's equipment be able to withstand high winds, particularly in fire-prone areas, to avoid such occurrences. California law also requires that utilities like PG&E maintain adequate clearance between power lines and vegetation to avoid the ignition of fires. Early reports suggest PG&E may not have satisfied these requirements.

In addition, the Bay Area News Group reviewed emergency radio traffic from 9:22 p.m. to approximately 11:00 p.m. on October 8 and found that fire personnel were dispatched to approximately 10 locations in Sonoma County in response to emergency phone calls reporting sparking wires, downed power lines and other electrical problems. Finally, PG&E reports recently made public suggest that when the fires commenced, downed PG&E wires located in the fire ignition areas failed to withstand required wind speeds.

If you (or your horses) were evacuated or you suffered damage to your property or barn, lost possessions, suffered personal injury, experienced damage to equipment or supplies, or lost income as a result of the fires, you may have a potential claim. Kathy and Alex Schack have the experience necessary to help Northern California fire victims pursue potential claims for equestrian losses, including evacuation costs, lost business and many other equestrian-specific damages known only to those in the industry.

Article provided by the Law Offices of Alex Schack. For more information about a potential legal claim and assistance with insurance claims, fire victims can contact the firm at 858-485-6535 or info@amslawoffice.com or visit www.napafireattorney.com and www.amslawoffice.com