



Gov. Newsom says he won't issue emergency proclamation for Tustin hangar fire



1 Officials investigate the rubble of the historic Tustin Marine Corps Air Station blimp hangar on Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023 after a fire destroyed the WWII-era structure. (Photo by Mindy Schauer, Orange County Register/SCNG)



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PUBLISHED: January 19, 2024 at 2:42 p.m. | UPDATED: January 19, 2024 at 5:32 p.m.

Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday said he would not issue a state of emergency proclamation for [the Tustin Hangar fire](#), saying the emergency has passed and that reimbursement is a federal responsibility.

City and county officials have asked the governor to issue one, and in turn request President Joe Biden to issue a presidential declaration of emergency, saying it would allow agencies to give money to the city and residents to get reimbursed for costs associated with the fire.

“The emergency’s passed, so the emergency (declaration) won’t have any effectiveness in terms of reimbursement,” Newsom said Thursday, while in Orange County for [a housing event in Costa Mesa](#). “Disaster declaration has to reach a certain threshold. A major disaster (declaration), actually has a numeric legal threshold of about \$73 million. As it relates to this specific issue, it doesn’t reach those thresholds.”

Mayor Austin Lumbard was disappointed by the governor’s comments, saying the city has waited [for months](#) for a response. Lumbard said Thursday the city has done its due diligence on understanding state law and this is the first time they are hearing about a monetary threshold.

“It’s troubling that the governor of our state doesn’t realize that he could include in his declaration of an emergency a recommendation to the federal government to declare an emergency, which will give our residents access to FEMA individual assistance,” Lumbard said. “Just yesterday, news crews were in our neighborhoods interviewing residents who are out of pocket thousands of dollars without any way of accessing these FEMA funds for reimbursement. His declaration would certainly help get us closer to that needed relief.”

“Where has the governor been with his emergency declaration since he apparently believed we did indeed have an emergency? We have been asking since day one on [Nov.7,](#)” [Lumbard added.](#) “Based on the governor’s own comments, I’m not sure why he hasn’t already made an emergency declaration as the impacts to our region have clearly exceeded the supposed \$73 million threshold he mentioned. Why after months are we hearing this now for the first time – and through the media, not in response to the city’s and county’s repeated requests?”

Both Tustin and the OC Board of Supervisors, in January, [re-upped their local emergency proclamations and their calls for the governor](#) to issue one himself.

The Navy owns the hangar and the surrounding property and has said it will fund the costs associated with the fire. Newsom said the incident is a federal responsibility, and the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services is working with the county and feds “to make sure you get reimbursed.”

“It just doesn’t reach the thresholds under the state laws,” Newsom said. “I can fake it, but then I’m going to be in jail myself in front of the Supreme Court asking for forgiveness. It’s just not at that level of threshold that would trigger state resources.”

City officials have warned of Tustin’s precarious financial position due to the fire.

The Navy so far has committed to paying the city \$11 million for costs associated with the fire. The city says it has already committed to spend \$54 million, and expects that number to grow as [residential testing for asbestos and lead](#) begins.