

Attachment B

Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner's Office

Ag Pass Program Description and Eligibility Information



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Introduction

The purpose of the Santa Barbara County “Ag Pass” program is to provide a uniform way to identify vetted commercial agricultural operators and their employees to emergency response and law enforcement personnel during disasters. Possession of an Ag Pass during a wildfire or other disaster potentially allows the cardholder limited emergency access to areas that may otherwise be restricted to the public, in order **1) to protect or care for livestock (through sheltering, moving, evacuating, feeding, watering, or administering veterinary care), 2) to conduct irrigation-related activities for crops, and/or 3) to provide support information to emergency personnel (such as identifying access roads and water points).**

Ag Pass cards are intended to be applied for by and distributed to eligible commercial agricultural operators and/or their managerial employees before a disaster. The application process is designed to confirm that the cardholder is a commercial agricultural owner-operator or managerial employee whose services are essential to providing protection or care to livestock and/or agricultural crops. Individuals eligible for the Ag Pass must be owners and managerial personnel who have a working knowledge of the agricultural property, including access to irrigation systems, farm equipment, and other essential infrastructure. Before the Ag Pass is provided, they will be provided training in emergency procedures and understand that their role is to provide limited protection and/or care to the agricultural operation, not to fight fire or act as first responders during disasters.

Possession of an Ag Pass card does not grant any rights or privileges and does not necessarily mean the cardholder will be able to pass through road closures to get to their farm or ranch. Front-line law enforcement and emergency personnel are empowered to use discretion when it comes to protecting emergency crews and the public from unnecessary exposure to risk. While a valid Ag Pass card may allow the cardholder access to their agricultural property during a disaster, access is at the discretion of law enforcement and emergency personnel, and access will not be permitted if front-line personnel determine conditions are unsafe. **Ag Pass cardholders must follow the instructions of law enforcement and emergency personnel at all times while utilizing their Ag Pass to enter restricted areas.**

A managerial employee of a qualifying agricultural operation shall not be required by their employer to obtain an Ag Pass, and access to a qualifying agricultural property by a managerial employee during a disaster shall be fully voluntary on the part of the employee. Employers shall not require employees to obtain or use an Ag Pass, or to enter or be present on the agricultural property during or following a flood, storm, fire, earthquake, or other disaster.

What partners are involved?

The Ag Pass Program involves partnership from multiple county-based and regional agencies for successful implementation. The following agencies in Santa Barbara County participated in the initial program development and provide ongoing support and assistance to the program as needed:

- Agricultural Commissioner's Office
- County Fire Department
- County Counsel
- County Executive Office
- Fire Safe Council
- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- University of California Cooperative Extension
- Sheriff's Office and other local law enforcement agencies
- Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau

Additional entities/agencies may be consulted as needed, including:

- Cattlemen's Association
- US Forest Service
- California Highway Patrol
- County Animal Services

Who administers the Ag Pass?

Due to their unique position serving the agricultural community and their experience working with Fire Incident Management Teams as the agriculture liaisons during disasters, the Agricultural Commissioner's Office is responsible for administering the Ag Pass program in Santa Barbara County. Program administration includes processing applications, confirming eligibility, printing and distributing Ag Pass identification cards, record keeping, and coordinating training. The Agricultural Commissioner's Office works closely with County Fire to coordinate and administer the required training courses for Ag Pass participants and record the completion of the training requirements. Modifications to the Ag Pass program may be made at the discretion of the County Agricultural Commissioner, in consultation with County Fire and the Fire Safe Council.

Who is eligible for an Ag Pass?

Ag Passes are limited to owners/operators of commercial agricultural operations and their managerial employees. No more than three (3) individuals from any agricultural operation will be eligible to obtain an Ag Pass. As the purpose of the Ag Pass program is to potentially allow commercial agriculturalists access to their farm or ranch for *limited* emergency response activities to protect or care for livestock and irrigate crops, each operation is allowed a limited number of Ag Passes. The program is not a pathway to allow for normal agricultural operations or activities (such as harvesting, planting, or making pesticide applications).

An Ag Pass is only available for agricultural operations that meet the following criteria:

- 1) Property must be located in the State Responsibility Areas (SRA) of Santa Barbara County. *Visit the map link below to determine if a property is within the SRA.*
<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5b0d39054d2d4aefb91b58a1b72f7dad>"></div></div>
- 2) The operation must be:
 - a. A commercial agricultural enterprise; or
 - b. Property used for conducting agricultural research or agricultural instruction by an educational institution.
- 3) Property must be zoned agricultural and a minimum of 40 acres in size.
- 4) The Applicant must be the owner or managerial personnel of the operation who has a working knowledge of the agricultural property, including access to irrigation systems, farm equipment, and other essential infrastructure.

If their agricultural operation meets the above criteria, applicants must submit one or more of the following documents to demonstrate their status as a commercial agricultural enterprise:

Either:

- Operator Identification Number issued by the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office

Or two (2) of the following:

- A redacted “Schedule F” tax form (Form 1040) attesting to the applicant’s Profit or Loss from Farming;
- Agricultural land lease documentation;
- Document attesting to the applicant's enrollment in a Williamson Act contract;
- USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA) Farm Number;
- Current California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Bureau of Livestock Identification brand registration;
- Proof of membership in a local agricultural industry association (e.g. Farm Bureau, Cattlemen’s Association)

Additionally, applicants must also submit a photo of themselves, a completed application, a description of the areas they are seeking access to during disasters, and a signed Release and Waiver of Liability. A holder of a valid Ag Pass may have access to agricultural property that is owned by another holder of an Ag Pass, with permission from that passholder, for purposes of providing assistance with allowed activities during a disaster.

Ag Pass cards are valid for two (2) years. Upon the expiration of the two (2) year period, a card holder needs to reapply to determine if they still meet the eligibility criteria.

If an Ag Pass holder does not maintain eligibility based on the above criteria, conducts activities not covered by the Ag Pass (such as harvesting crops), or does not adhere to access guidelines established during the emergency by law enforcement or emergency response personnel, they will no longer be eligible to use the Ag Pass Card. A decision about a loss of eligibility will be made by the Ag Pass eligibility committee (“Committee”), composed of representatives from the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, County Fire, and Fire Safe Council, and is not an appealable

decision. If the Committee determines that the holder no longer meets the eligibility criteria and/or breached the guidelines of the program, the Ag Pass identification card must be returned to the County and will no longer be accepted for emergency access.

ID Cards

The Santa Barbara County Ag Pass is a hard, plastic identification card that includes information including the following: 1) name of cardholder, 2) driver's-license-style headshot photograph, 3) farm or ranch name, 4) primary ranch address, and 5) secondary or tertiary farm or ranch addresses.

Training

Once eligibility is determined, completion of training is required for all individuals before an Ag Pass is provided. County Fire has developed an approximately 4-hour curriculum that provides a primer on basic fire behavior, communications during disaster, and incident command structure.

All initial training will be administered by Santa Barbara County Fire Department. The curriculum is built to be adaptable for all disasters, and the initial training is delivered in person in a classroom setting. Topics to be covered include wildland entrapment avoidance, recognition of hazardous environments, working with county stakeholders, waiver and release of liability, communication, escape routes, safety zones, personal protective equipment, and guidelines to be adhered to as an Ag Pass card holder. To attend the training and receive an Ag Pass card, applicants must sign a waiver releasing the County of any liability related to participation in the Ag Pass Program.

Renewal

Ag Pass cards are valid for two (2) years. Upon the expiration of the two (2) year period, a card holder needs to reapply to determine if they still meet the eligibility criteria and needs to attend a refresher training course, which may be held virtually or in person. Both the initial and the refresher training courses are currently provided 1-2 times each year.

Temporary Ag Passes

Temporary Ag Passes may also be available during individual incidents. These temporary Ag Passes are intended for agriculturalists who did not previously sign up through the Ag Pass program but whose farm or ranch is behind a road closure. Temporary passes may be distributed at the discretion of the Ag Pass eligibility committee, if time and personnel staffing permits. A temporary Ag Pass card is only valid during the specific incident it has been issued for. Temporary Ag Passes that do not include a photograph of the holder may not be accepted at road closures by emergency personnel if not accompanied by a valid government-issued photo ID.

Applying for an Ag Pass

To apply for an Ag Pass, agriculturalists who believe they meet the eligibility criteria can submit a completed application, documents substantiating their status as a commercial agricultural operation, and other required information, to the County Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

Applications can be submitted by email to agcommissioner@countyofsb.org or in person at your local Agricultural Commissioner's Office. Application materials, as well as more information about the program, are available at the county's Ag Pass website at <https://www.countyofsb.org/293/Ag-Pass>

Ag Pass cards and participation in the Ag Pass program are not an entitlement and are revocable at any time.

For more information, please contact the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner's Office at (805) 934-6200 or visit www.agcommissioner.com