

[Sonoma County Medical Association holds fires-recovery workshop](#)

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Like anyone who has been affected by October 2017's wildfires, physicians need ongoing support and assistance in rebuilding their lives. And they continue to receive it.

On Wednesday the Sonoma County Medical Association held the third in its ongoing series of fire-recovery programs and workshops aimed at providing area physicians with the timely information and resources they've asked for, according to Wendy Young, executive director.

SCMA, an arm of the California Medical Association, supports local physicians and their efforts to enhance the health of the community. It also offers legal, collegial and advocacy benefits.

The physicians' most requested topics for Wednesday's program revolved around insurance, permits, construction and rebuilding, Young said.

"Many of you are still in the insurance process, many of you are looking for a contractor or are in discussions with a contractor; some of you are looking for a homebuilder and some of you are already applying for permitting," Young said. "So these are the people you have tonight) who are going to answer questions for you and chat with you."

Young previously told the Business Journal that out of the more than 250 physicians that lost their homes in the wildfires, four physicians subsequently left the area, which she described at the time as being a low percentage.

"SCMA recognizes that a lot of our physicians are still facing great personal challenges in the wake of the October fires," she previously told the Business Journal. "Many lost their homes and are trying to manage the insurance and rebuild tasks on the side of very busy full-time work demands."

And Wednesday's program addressed those very topics. The evening's panelists included Keith Woods, CEO of the North Coast Builders Exchange; Amy Bach, executive director of United Policyholders; Gabe Osborn, deputy director of development services at the City of Santa Rosa Planning and Economic Development Department; and Tom O'Brien, co-founder of Homebound, a logistics-management company founded following the fires to vet and bring in out-of-area contractors, both to help with the

rebuilding process and going forward to address the overall housing shortage.

“We’ve already brought in 10 contractors who will build 10 to 15 homes a year,” O’Brien said, adding the goal is to bring in an additional 30 to 40 builders to address the overall housing shortage. “We now need to rebuild 6,200 homes, plus another 15,000 to 20,000 on top of that.”

Osborn said he was on hand to answer any questions about the permitting process, as the City of Santa Rosa is now getting a “significant number of permits,” and people are asking about neighborhood-specific factors about topics ranging from mailboxes, sidewalks and roadways, to tree removal and neighborhood bus stops.

United Policyholders, a nonprofit information resource and voice for consumers across the country for all types of insurance topics, over the past year has been holding workshops covering a broad range of fire-recovery topics, and that all are available for viewing on its website, Bach said.

“If you are still in the throes of either negotiation with your insurance company over what they still owe you, or you don’t understand what you’re still entitled to, or you’re hearing rumors that your neighbor got a great deal and you didn’t), those would be some of the questions you could come and ask us,” Bach said. “We are all about helping you find the leverage to get your insurance company to do what is right.” North Coast Builders Exchange, a construction association that services Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino and Lake counties, has been surveying its approximately 1,250 members to ask about their capacity to take on rebuilding projects, Woods said.

“I might be able to help you in that sense,” Woods said. “I can talk about contractors who say they are available. ... We know the quality of their work.”

Woods added he’s also met with fire survivors in Lake and Mendocino counties, so could offer their perspective on the rebuilding process as well.

“We are not only Sonoma strong, we are still Sonoma uncertain, and I get it,” he said. “There are lot of factors that go into rebuilding a home and I don’t blame you for being uncertain at this point.”

Wednesday’s program drew approximately 65 people, Young said, and was held at Medtronic’s Brickway location in Santa Rosa. SCMA has been holding these ongoing workshops in partnership with Medtronic and Kaiser Permanente. The two previous events held earlier this year took place in January and May. Young said SCMA will continue to put on these programs for as long as there is a need.