In this episode of Resilient, Karen Baker, senior advisor for disaster volunteering and preparedness at Cal OES, or Office of Emergency Services, and architect and co-chair of the Listos California emergency preparedness campaign discusses volunteering at times of natural disasters.

Michael Kearney: I think everybody knows by now if you've been listening to Resilient, that I live in California. Lived here my entire life other than a few years when I lived in Connecticut. And when I think about it, the reason is really simple… the weather. I don't think there is a place in this entire world with better weather. Or the things that you can do. One day you could be up in Napa, the next day you could be up on a lake, you could go to Tahoe, the beaches, San Francisco, Southern California, there's just so many different things that you can do.

But we, as you probably have seen, have had some challenges in California. I think everybody has probably witnessed from afar, unless like me you live in California, the number of natural disasters that we've been exposed to over the last several years. Think about the Tubbs fire back in 2017. I had an incredible conversation on that topic with James Gore, the Sonoma County supervisor. What about the Camp wildfire just last year, almost at this time, the largest wildfire in California's history?

Today I am unbelievably fortunate to be sitting down with Karen Baker. She is a senior advisor for disaster volunteering and preparedness at Cal OES, or Office of Emergency Services, and architect and co-chair of the Listos California emergency preparedness campaign, formerly known as the California for All campaign. And for 13 years, she led California Volunteers, which has been focused on many incredible things, including organizing volunteers at times of a natural disaster. I have got a lot that I want to talk to Karen about.

First of all, she has worked for three governors, three very different governors. I want to get the inside scoop on what it's like working for them, how she even got into the disaster world in the first place, learnings that she has from recent disasters, and some research that she recently commissioned on the challenges of navigating through disaster, and finally how she is using the Listos California campaign to empower individuals and communities to take accountability for disaster preparedness.

Karen Baker: Since 2013, we've had 16, so I mean, it's exponentially, you know, just like crazy town when it comes to the number of disasters.
Mike Kearney: Right.

Karen Baker: So nonprofits are definitely thinking about this, philanthropists are thinking about this as they think about how are they going to really invest their dollars and support nonprofit capacity.

Mike Kearney: Hey, I am really excited to share this episode with you. I think you're going to find Karen to be not only an incredible leader but even a better person, and you're going to learn a lot about disaster preparedness—how you can prepare, respond, and even support people in their time of need. And just wait—and it's actually pretty funny—until you hear the story about Governor Schwarzenegger. Visit your favorite podcast outlet to listen to the full episode and stay in the know by following our series on that podcast channel and by subscribing to our mailing list on our site. And while you're here, I encourage you to check out some of our previous episodes. Thanks for listening.

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