

January 2025 Los Angeles County, California Wildfires – Situational Report 1

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Scope

For reporting purposes, Los Angeles County fires beginning on or after January 7, 2025 will be treated as a single complex extreme event, as each impacts response capacity at other sites. Fires included in this report to date are: Palisades*, Eaton*, Hurst, Lidia, Sunset, Woodley, Kenneth, Archer, Sepulveda, and Hughes*.

*Active Incidents

Executive Summary

On January 7, 2025, under “elevated to critical” fire weather conditions, multiple fires ignited across Los Angeles County, California.^{1,2} The Palisades fire started at 10:30 AM, followed by the Eaton fire at 6:18 PM and the Hurst fire at 10:29 PM.¹ That same day, California Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency, and on January 8, President Biden approved a federal Major Disaster Declaration.^{3,4} By January 8, the National Weather Service had upgraded to fire weather risk to “extreme.”⁵ Five additional fires—Lidia, Sunset, Woodley, Olivias, and Tyler—ignited that day.¹ High winds (20-35 mph sustained, gusts of 50-60 mph and isolated gusts up to 100 mph) and low relative humidity (10-20%) further complicated containment efforts.⁵ Conditions remain high risk. On January 22, the Hughes fire erupted in Northern Los Angeles County, spreading to more than 9,400 acres within eight hours.¹

In response to the heightened fire risk, Governor Newsom had pre-positioned personnel and equipment on January 6 and January 12.³ Responding agencies include Los Angeles City Fire Department, Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles County Fire Department, Cal Fire, Bureau of Land Management, and the United States Forest Services.¹ As of January 21, more than 16,000 personnel and 2,000+ pieces of equipment, including 1,490+ engines, 80+ aircraft, 200+ dozers, and 210+ water tenders, had been deployed.³ The California National Guard was mobilized to support fire suppression efforts.³ By January 9, over 180,000 people had received mandatory evacuation orders or warnings.⁶ On January 22, over 50,000 people received mandatory evacuation orders or warnings for the newly ignited Hughes fire.⁷ As of January 24, the estimated cost of response to the Palisades, Eaton, and Hughes fires has reached approximately \$276 million.⁸ The federal government has committed to covering 100% of California’s fire management and debris removal costs for 180 days, surpassing the usual 75% coverage.³ In addition to Individual Assistance grants, Fire Management Assistance Grants were made available to support firefighting efforts for three fires in Los Angeles County: the Palisades, Hurst, and Eaton fires.³

To date, the Palisades, Eaton, and Hurst fires combined have burned an estimated total of 47,865 acres.¹ As of January 23, approximately 16,188 structures are estimated to have been destroyed, making this complex event the second most destructive in terms of structural loss in California’s history.^{1,9} Taken independently, the Eaton and Palisades fires rank as second and third in terms of destroyed structures, eclipsed only by the 2018 Camp fire.⁹ As of January 17th, prior to the outbreak of the Hughes fire, California’s January monthly total estimated wildfire carbon emissions for 2025 were already estimated at more than three times the highest reported rates for the period spanning 2003-2025.¹⁰ At the time of this report, the Hurst, Lidia, Sunset, Woodley, Kenneth, and Archer fires have been contained and are no longer active incidents; the Palisades and Eaton fires remain active incidents, with containment estimated at 77% and 95%, respectively.¹ As of January 24, the Hughes fire has burned 10,396 acres of forest land and is 56% contained.¹ The same day, with rain forecasted, specialized debris flow teams were mobilized to burn scar zones to prepare for potential mudslides.¹¹

Major Health Outcomes

The wildfires in Los Angeles County have resulted in significant public health challenges, with immediate and projected long-term health consequences. As of January 24, there have been 28 confirmed fatalities.¹ As of January

16, LA County experienced a 16-fold increase in fire-related hospital visits, including treatment for burns and smoke inhalation. Populations at heightened risk of adverse health effects include children, pregnant individuals, and those with pre-existing respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.¹²

The ongoing wildfires have significantly impacted public health infrastructure. Eight water districts in Los Angeles County have issued water advisories due to concerns of contamination from the Palisades and Eaton fires.¹³ Public utility disruptions and evacuation orders also resulted in the temporary closure of dozens of medical offices, clinics, and community health centers across major health systems including UCLA Health, Cedars-Sinai, and Kaiser Permanente.^{14,15} At least two clinics, the AltaMed Health Services clinic in Pasadena and the UCLA Health Family Medicine Clinic in Pacific Palisades, were destroyed.¹⁵

On January 17, the Pasadena Public Health Department has confirmed 3 norovirus infections among 28 cases of acute gastrointestinal illness at the Pasadena Evacuation Shelter.¹⁶ The Pasadena Public Health Department is working with American Red Cross personnel managing the shelter are working to strengthen isolation, disinfection, and prevention measures.¹⁶ On January 21, the City of Pasadena issued an order mandating that all shelter personnel wear face masks to prevent the spread of infectious disease.¹⁷

Systems-Level & Critical Infrastructure Impacts

Transportation

- CalTrans has reported that the Pacific Coast Highway (State Route 1), the 405 Freeway, the Angeles Crest Highway (State Route 27), the 210 Freeway, and the 10 Freeway all have experienced disruptions since January 7.^{18,19} Several roads were also limited to local traffic in neighborhoods near the evacuation zones.
- In the Palisades Fire, standstill traffic forced many evacuees to leave their vehicles along the road to travel on foot. Fire officials used bulldozers to clear parked cars to move equipment further inland.²⁰
- Permission for residents to return to their homes will be determined by the field incident management teams on a daily basis.²¹

Water, Power

- Many fire hydrants in the Pacific Palisades ran out of water.²² LADWP stated that the sudden increase in demand for water had “pushed the system to the extreme” with “four times the normal demand...for 15 hours straight.”²²
- In a briefing on January 9, former-President Joe Biden said that intentional power outages had been administered out of concern for the possibility of more fires being sparked in Los Angeles neighborhoods, which inadvertently also caused water shortages.²³
- An estimated 1.9 million residents in LA County were impacted by power outages as a result of the Palisades and Eaton fires.²⁴
- Boil advisories were also set in place for residents who are able to return to their homes as well as those who are adjacent to mandatory evacuation zones.²²

Healthcare Facilities, Schools

- While several outpatient clinics for the major healthcare systems had to be closed during the fires, all hospitals remain open and operational, including Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, UCLA Health, Providence Health Care, and Kaiser Permanente.²⁵
- At least a dozen schools were destroyed and around 10,000 students will be impacted by the Palisades Fire.²⁶
- Five schools were destroyed and around 10,000 students will be impacted by the Eaton Fire.²⁷

Communication Networks

- The County has used text messages and phone alerts to notify the public about updated evacuation zones.²⁸

- Los Angeles County mistakenly sent out an immediate evacuation warning to all residents regardless of proximity to the fire. The organization has since recalled the warning, saying “Disregard last EVACUATION WARNING. It was for Kenneth Fire Only.” Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn has said the post was “due to a technical error,” according to her post on X.²⁸

Aftermath

- Estimates for economic loss between \$250 billion to \$275 billion.²⁹

Social Impacts

Structures Destroyed

- CalFire has not yet distinguished between the number of homes and total structures destroyed. As of January 23, approximately 16,188 structures were estimated to have been destroyed in the Palisades and Eaton fires.¹ No structures have been reported destroyed in other fires.¹
 - Palisades - 6,770¹
 - Eaton - 9,418¹

Structures Damaged

- CalFire has not yet distinguished between the number of homes and total structures damaged. As of January 23, approximately 1,977 structures were estimated to have been damaged in the Palisades and Eaton fires.¹ No structures have been reported damaged in other fires.¹
 - Palisades - 904¹
 - Eaton - 1,073¹

Population Displacement

- As of January 9, evacuation orders affected 180,000 people.⁶ By January 14, population levels had returned to baseline in most areas, except for Altadena, Topanga, and Malibu, where they remained 49%, 44%, and 36% below baseline, respectively.⁶
- As of January 22, approximately 31,000 people were given mandatory evacuation orders, with an additional 23,000 receiving evacuation warnings near the Hughes fire.⁷
- Governor Newsom has issued an order preventing evictions of tenants sharing their units with displaced residents.³

Post-Disaster Recovery

While response efforts to contain the Palisades, Eaton, and Hughes fires continue, recovery efforts have also begun across LA County. On January 23, Governor Newsom signed a bill authorizing \$2.5 billion towards initial spending for response and recovery efforts; \$4 million to the for rebuilding homes; and \$1 million to school districts for rebuilding schools.³⁰ To support rebuilding, permitting and review requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the California Coastal Act have been suspended by Governor Newsom.³ An executive order to prevent predatory land speculation on fire-impacted properties has also been ordered.³ As of January 15, most LA Unified School District schools have reopened, and seven schools remaining in evacuation zones are operating at alternate locations.³¹ The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has opened two disaster recovery centers, one on the Westside and one on the Eastside, to support survivors in applying for financial assistance.³² As of January 23, FEMA has approved over \$38 million in Individuals and Households Program assistance.³³ As of January 22, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is actively conducting assessments of properties burned by the Palisades and Eaton fires and is preparing to begin Phase 1 hazardous waste collection in coordination with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control.³⁴

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