

January 2025 Los Angeles County, California Wildfires & February 2025 Floods
Situational Report 3

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Scope

For reporting purposes, Los Angeles County fires beginning on or after January 7, 2025 and the impact of heavy rains in late January and February will be treated as a single complex extreme event. Fires included in this report to date are: Palisades, Eaton, Hurst, Lidia, Sunset, Woodley, Kenneth, Archer, Sepulveda, and Hughes.

Executive Summary

On January 7, 2025, under “elevated to critical” fire weather conditions, multiple fires ignited across Los Angeles County, California.^{1,2} 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} On January 22, the Hughes fire erupted in Northern Los Angeles County, spreading to more than 9,400 acres within eight hours.¹ Five additional fires—Lidia, Sunset, Woodley, Olivias, and Tyler—ignited that day.¹ All fires in Los Angeles County have since been fully contained.¹ The Palisades, Eaton, and Hurst fires combined burned an estimated total of 48,153 acres.¹ 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 For details on early fire progression, conditions impacting containment efforts, and response logistics see SitRep 1 (January 24, 2025).

Heavy rains were predicted in Los Angeles County for the dates January 26-27 and February 4-7, leading to official flood watches.^{1,5} There was a predicted 10-20% risk of landslides and debris flow in burn scar areas, with the Eaton fire scar identified as particularly at risk.⁵ In preparation for this, California Governor Newsom directed specialized crews to install more than 58 miles of emergency protective materials in burn scar areas.⁶ Special attention was paid to preventing potential debris contamination of creeks, rivers, and other bodies of water.⁷ For details on early flood preparation see SitRep 2 (February 7, 2025).

While damage from the initial storms ultimately proved minimal, an atmospheric river predicted to be the strongest storm of the rainy season hit California on February 12-14, bringing nearly 4 inches to each of the Palisades and Eaton burn scars over two days.⁸ Prior to the storm, officials with the Governor’s office urged residents in burn scar areas to prepare for potential flooding by packing go-bags and identifying evacuation routes.⁷ Rain falling at up to an inch per hour in the heaviest cases caused mud and debris flows at both the Eaton and Palisades burn scars, resulting in the closure of the Pacific Coast Highway and 15 other roads, 3,500 reported power outages, and nearly 4,300 calls alerting public works to downed trees.⁸ The storm dumped 2.80 inches of rain on downtown Los Angeles on February 13, breaking the daily rain record of 2.71 inches (1954).⁸ Hazard assessments will continue over the coming days, as there is risk that eroded land and rocks may continue to fall as the area dries out.⁷ The potential for heavy rains to send contaminants from the fires deeper into the soil may further increase the risk of long-term exposure among residents.⁹

Major Health Outcomes

Total confirmed fatalities stand at 29.¹ Per February 6 reporting, the percentage of wildfire-related emergency department encounters peaked at 1.01% on January 8, 2025.¹⁰ Average percentage of emergency department encounters which were wildfire associated increased eightfold from baseline (0.06%) between January 7 and January 12 (0.52%), remaining elevated at 0.20% above baseline between January 13 and January 19.¹⁰ For further description of changes in hospital use cases following the fires, see SitRep 2.

Eight water districts in Los Angeles County had issued water advisories due to concerns of contamination from the Palisades and Eaton fires.¹¹ By February 21, laboratory testing results had been received for 389 of 395 collected samples.¹² Sixteen samples tested positive for benzene with all other samples meeting drinking water standards.¹²

Do-not-drink notices were lifted February 25 for about 2,000 residential and commercial customers in the Palisades but remain in place for many residents.¹³ On February 24, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) has launched an interactive Water Quality Restoration Dashboard to keep residents informed with updates regarding the ongoing “Do Not Drink” advisory impacting most areas of Pacific Palisades and nearby LADWP service zones.¹⁴

On February 20, the CDC reported that the Atmospheric Science and Chemistry mEasurement NeTwork (ASCENT) had measured an approximate 110-fold increase in PM2.5 lead levels January 8-11 (0.077 µg/m³ compared to 0.00068 µg/m³ January 2–6).¹⁵ By the evening of January 11, PM2.5 lead concentration had returned to levels similar to those before the fire.¹⁵

For information on temporary closure of medical offices and clinics, see SitRep 2. The Pacific Palisades Clinic has reported it is permanently closed due to the Palisades fire, directing its patients to the UCLA Health 15th Street Plaza Family Medicine & Internal Medicine in Santa Monica.¹⁶

From January 7 to 15, the national mental health helpline experienced a five-fold rise in calls from the Los Angeles area.¹⁷ The California legislature is now considering Assembly Bill 1032, which would compel healthcare service plans and insurers to reimburse persons living in counties impacted by wildfire-related (local or state) emergencies for up to 12 visits with licensed behavioral health providers.¹⁸ If passed, the bill would go into effect in 2026 and cover visits over one year following an emergency.¹⁸

Systems-Level & Critical Infrastructure Impacts

Transportation

- Following flooding and mudslides, Los Angeles County Public Works has reported that several roads in the Santa Monica Mountains, Angeles National Forest, the City of Malibu, and Castaic Lake will continue to be restricted to emergency vehicles.¹⁹

Water, Power

- Southern California Edison (SCE) reports 0 current shutoffs.²⁰
- Boil advisories remain in place for residents who are able to return to their homes as well as those who are adjacent to mandatory evacuation zones.²¹ A Do Not Drink notice also remains in effect for the most of the Pacific Palisades.²²
- LADWP has paused billing for customers in areas directly impacted by the wildfires.²³

Healthcare Facilities, Schools

- The California Department of Healthcare Services (CDHS) has simplified enrollment for Medi-Cal programs, extended timelines for renewal processes, and waived requirements to allow immediate access prescription medications and medical devices for Medi-Cal members in areas impacted by the wildfire.²⁴
- All hospitals continue to remain open and operational, including Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, UCLA Health, Providence Health Care, and Kaiser Permanente.²⁵
- Around 4 schools in Malibu were closed due to poor road conditions and potential mudslides as a result of the rain. Schools in Santa Monica remain open.²⁶

Communication Networks

- Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass has dismissed LAFD Fire Chief Kristin Crowley following reports that Crowley had withheld the deployment of over 1,000 additional firefighters when the flames began.²⁷

Aftermath

- Estimates for economic loss remains between \$250 billion to \$275 billion.⁴

Social Impacts

The Palisades and Eaton fires have caused an estimated \$30 billion in real estate losses.²⁸ The fires devastated 56% of all properties in the Pacific Palisades and caused destruction to nearly half of the properties in Altadena.²⁸ The

two fires forced the displacement of nearly 13,000 households, affecting roughly 9,700 single-family homes and condominiums, close to 700 apartment units, over 2,000 duplex and bungalow court residences, and 373 mobile homes, all classified by Cal Fire as either completely destroyed or significantly damaged.²⁸ The Los Angeles Times has estimated that real estate losses amount to \$22 billion in Palisades and \$7.8 billion in Altadena for homes rated by Cal Fire as destroyed or up to 50% damaged.²⁸

Nearly half of the single-family homes lost did not have a homeowners' exemption, suggesting they were rental properties. Their destruction raises concerns about the future stability of affordable housing in these communities.²⁸ Per Los Angeles Housing Department records, 770 rent-controlled units were destroyed in Pacific Palisades, and it is unclear whether their replacements will be covered by the city's rent stabilization ordinance.²⁸ A department spokeswoman stated that officials are collaborating with the city attorney to assess whether the ordinance, which applies to properties built before October 1, 1978, can mandate that the lost units be rebuilt under rent control.²⁸

While a majority of impacted structures were homes, 37 schools as well as churches, hospitals and more than 300 commercial structures were also destroyed.²⁸ It is estimated that public agencies relying on property tax income, such as school and community college districts as well as the City and County of Los Angeles will lose \$61 million in revenues.²⁸

Post-Disaster Recovery Efforts

Federal

- As of February 27, there have been 40,357 visits to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)'s disaster recovery centers (DRCs) at UCLA Research Park West and in Altadena.^{29,30} 29,765 people have been helped with FEMA assistance, with \$79.6 million distributed to individuals.²⁹
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and California Department of Toxic Substances Control have completed all Phase 1 hazardous household waste cleanups, totaling 13,612 parcels.²⁹ As of February 28, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has started cleanup for 1,702 parcels accepted for Phase 2 debris removal.²⁹ 9,631 households have completed Right of Entry waivers for federal debris removal.²⁹

State

- 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.³¹
- 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
- A number of executive orders have been signed to support residents, including to prevent predatory land speculation on fire-impacted properties; extend deadlines for state-funded preschool and childcare programs; prevent price gouging on rent; and ensure continuity of services for people with disabilities.^{3,32}
- On February 21, Governor Newsom requested \$40 billion in federal aid to rebuild physical infrastructure and support population needs, including \$16.8 billion from FEMA, \$9.9 billion from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and \$5.29 billion from the Small Business Administration.³³
- The California state website now features a centralized online hub for information about recovery efforts, including a recovery services finder that uses a 2-minute survey to direct individuals and businesses to appropriate state and federal services based on their needs.^{34, 35}

Local

- Of the nine water systems impacted by the fires, five have been restored to safe drinking water.²⁹
- All public schools damaged by fires have reopened, with seven operating in person and one virtually.²⁹
- As of January 31 for the Eaton fire area and February 10 for the Palisades fire area, mobile monitoring surveys of air quality showed no elevated levels of air toxic metals or volatile organic compounds.²⁹
- An Altadena Recovery Commission was established to support community rebuilding, and will include businesses, philanthropic and faith-based organizations, and local, state, and federal government partners.³⁶

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