McChrystal Group

After-Action Review of Alert Notification Systems and Evacuation Policies for the Eaton and Palisades Fires

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Executive Summary

In January 2025, Los Angeles County faced a devastating series of wind-driven fire events fueled by hurricane-force gusts and widespread power outages. Between January 7 and January 9, six separate fires ignited across the region. The Eaton and Palisades Fires became the most destructive in the County's history, together burning approximately 37,000 acres, destroying over 16,000 structures, and claiming 31 lives.

The speed and scale of these incidents tested nearly every facet of the County's emergency response system, from the grounding of aerial firefighting capabilities to their communications and power infrastructure. Despite these challenges, the unified command and interagency partners (local and state supporting agencies and departments) contained the fires by January 31.

To protect residents, the County issued 51 zone status changes for the Palisades Fire (32 evacuation warnings and 19 evacuation orders) and 158 zone status changes for the Eaton Fire (58 evacuation warnings and 100 evacuation orders). In total, the County placed nearly 250,000 residents under evacuation warnings or orders. The volume and complexity of these notifications highlight the critical importance of a well-coordinated public alert and evacuation system.

To assess the performance of these systems, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors commissioned an independent After-Action Review (AAR) by McChrystal Group. As with any AAR, the goal is to provide a comprehensive overview of actions taken during the response and offer actionable recommendations for improvement or sustainment. This report does not investigate wrongdoing or assign blame. Its purpose is to assess the County's alert and evacuation systems during the January 2025 fire events and provide actionable recommendations to strengthen future response efforts.

Focused on public alert, warning, and evacuation operations, this review examined policies and procedures and analyzed over 150,000 alert and evacuation data records, minute-by-minute GPS tracking of responding units, community feedback from six public listening sessions, and interviews with emergency responders and senior officials.

The review identified no single point of failure related to how the alerts, warnings, notifications, and evacuations were conducted. Instead, a series of weaknesses, including outdated policies, inconsistent practices, and communications vulnerabilities, impacted the system's effectiveness.

These systemic issues did not manifest uniformly across the two major fires. The effects of these weaknesses varied based on environmental conditions, community readiness, and operational complexity caused by the variables of wind, power outages, and fire behavior. A comparison of the Palisades and Eaton Fires provides important context for how the alert and evacuation

systems functioned in practice, as well as where breakdowns occurred despite the efforts of first responders.

The Palisades Fire, which ignited during daylight hours in a community familiar with wildfire risk, benefited from strong interagency coordination, pre-positioned resources, and tested evacuation strategies. In contrast, the Eaton Fire broke out at night amid extreme wind and power outages. The fire occurred in an area of the County not accustomed to wildfire risks in their neighborhoods and without the benefit of aerial surveillance and fire suppression. Some residents in Altadena reported receiving little or no warning before the fire reached their neighborhoods.

Beyond alerting and evacuation operations, this review identified systemic issues that impacted the alert and evacuation response. Outdated and inconsistent policies, protocols, and standard operating procedures (SOPs) created ambiguity around evacuation authority and responsibilities. In many cases, decision-making roles were unclear, and pre-incident public messaging responsibilities lacked standardization across agencies. These gaps contributed to nonuniform preparedness strategies across jurisdictions and slowed coordinated efforts.

Longstanding challenges in training, staffing, resource management, and interagency coordination further strained the response. During this review, law enforcement and emergency managers reported inconsistent training around wildfire evacuations, highlighting the need for cross-disciplinary exercises and clearer staffing models for surge scenarios. Equipment and personnel shortages were magnified under the extreme conditions of this incident. Compounding this were gaps in situational awareness tools and communications interoperability, which impaired real-time coordination.

Meanwhile, despite strong grassroots efforts, residents expressed confusion and frustration over inconsistent messaging and a lack of clear, accessible updates. Future preparedness efforts will require a more integrated approach to public information in collaboration with interagency and community partners to enhance clarity.

The January 2025 fire events revealed both the strengths and vulnerabilities of Los Angeles County’s emergency response systems. While frontline responders acted decisively and, in many cases, heroically, in the face of extraordinary conditions, the events underscored the need for clearer policies, stronger training, integrated tools, and improved public communication. This AAR provides an opportunity for the County to translate the hard lessons learned into lasting change. The recommendations outlined in this report are more than corrective. They are investments in resilience, coordination, and life-saving decision-making.

How to Use This Document

This AAR is organized to help agency leaders, emergency managers, and County decision-makers prioritize and implement improvements quickly and effectively.

Findings and recommendations are grouped into five critical focus areas:

1. **Policies, Protocols, Standard Operating Procedures, and Authority**
2. **Training and Planning Coordination**
3. **Resource Management**
4. **Situational Awareness and Interoperability**
5. **Community Engagement and Public Information**

Each section includes a summary of key gaps, supporting data and observations, and specific recommendations for improvement. The recommendations are actionable and aligned with the County's broader emergency preparedness goals. A summary table is provided for quick reference, while a detailed analysis follows in the main body of the report.

Critical Focus Area	Summary
1. Policies, Protocols, Standard Operating Procedures, and Authority	The County has conflicting and outdated policies, protocols, and SOPs regarding who has what authority in the evacuation decision-making and implementation process, except for evacuation alerting protocols. This has led to inconsistencies in preparedness strategies across the County and a lack of clear documentation and communication processes. In terms of pre-incident preparedness notifications and evacuation messages to the public, the County should further define and clarify the applicable roles.
2. Training and Planning Coordination	The County's emergency response training can be improved to boost overall readiness and effectiveness. Establishing a structured training program for law enforcement will enhance coordination during fire incidents and evacuations, as well as improve traffic control strategies. Addressing these issues through a solid cross-training initiative, formal staffing guidelines, and enhanced teamwork will strengthen the County's emergency response abilities.
3. Resource Management	The catastrophic nature of the Palisades and Eaton Fires would have strained even fully staffed departments operating at peak capacity. However, responding agencies entered this crisis

	already facing staffing shortages and resource constraints. These pre-existing deficiencies, including personnel gaps in critical positions, aging equipment, and stretched operational budgets, were immediately magnified when the event's scale and complexity demanded resources far beyond standard operational requirements. What were previously manageable departmental challenges became limiting factors in the emergency response, stressing deployment capabilities, sustained operations, and effectiveness throughout the incident timeline.
4. Situational Awareness and Interoperability	Situational awareness and interoperability are pivotal areas requiring immediate enhancement. The lack of streamlined coordination tools and common systems among County agencies, coupled with gaps in existing antiquated systems, impacted the ability to monitor the unfolding events and ensure unified efforts across all operational levels to issue alerts and execute evacuations.
5. Community Engagement and Public Information	Effective community engagement and public information strategies are essential for fostering trust, ensuring clarity, and enhancing preparedness in emergency situations. The County must focus on revising policies and procedures related to messaging the public while simultaneously addressing gaps in proactive communication efforts. Streamlined processes, coupled with innovative tools for situational awareness, will empower responders and residents to act decisively during critical incidents. A cohesive framework for public outreach and education that is built in collaboration with local and state partner agencies will strengthen resilience and bolster the County's ability to respond effectively to emergencies.

Introduction

Purpose of the After-Action Review

This after-action review (AAR) provides a comprehensive review and evaluation of Los Angeles County's (County) emergency alert notification systems and evacuation policies and practices used during the Eaton and Palisades Fires in January 2025. It analyzes the roles and actions of various County departments, including the County's Office of Emergency Management (OEM), the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD), and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), and does not account for actions or resources of federal, state, or incorporated city partners.

Even before full containment of the Eaton and Palisades Fires on January 31, 2025, McChrystal Group was hired as a result of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passing a motion on January 28, 2025, directing County Counsel to retain a third party to conduct this comprehensive independent review.[1]

The goal of this report is to identify lessons learned, best practices, and any applicable new requirements. It also intends to recommend corrective actions and improvements to the County's existing capabilities to support a more robust response in future emergencies by providing actionable recommendations that guide the County in strengthening its emergency alert, notification, and evacuation systems, as well as its policies, procedures, and protocols.

Scope of the Review

The scope of this AAR focuses specifically on the County's emergency notification systems and evacuation policies and processes during the Eaton and Palisades Fires in January 2025. The review covers the period from December 31, 2024, to January 23, 2025, with the evaluation concentrating on alert and evacuation activities from January 6–8, 2025.

Data for this review were collected through interviews with County staff, emergency service personnel, and community stakeholders; the examination of official County records and incident logs; and the review of public communications and evacuation warnings, and evacuation orders

[1] LA County Board Motion *199710.pdf*. As directed by County Counsel, McChrystal Group's activities and work product pertaining to the AAR are confidential and subject to the attorney–client privilege (and attorney work product doctrine), and, notwithstanding the AAR, privilege is not waived; rather, privilege is expressly preserved. Last referenced September 24, 2025.

issued during the fires. Site visits were conducted to key locations related to evacuations and impacted communities to gather first-hand accounts and verify procedures.

The review focuses on the decision-making process related to the issuance of evacuation orders and evacuation warnings; the sending out of notifications along with associated messaging to the public and the related coordination among County agencies; and the execution/implementation of evacuation orders.

While every effort was made to ensure the accuracy and comprehensiveness of this review, specific operational details, such as fire containment tactics and the sufficiency and staffing of the firefighting response, are not within the scope of this report. Other entities are conducting additional AARs regarding these efforts. The scope of this AAR did not include the cause or causes of the ignition of the Eaton or Palisades Fires, which remain under investigation as of the release date of this AAR.

Data Collection

McChrystal Group employed its technical data-scraping capabilities to collect and process high volumes of publicly available information, including weather forecasts and weather-related data; social media content and engagement; and official government updates, alerts, and advisories. By synthesizing data from County departments with targeted information from publicly available resources, McChrystal Group built a unified and comprehensive set of data assets to support the focus of the AAR. The specific data sources reviewed by McChrystal Group include those identified in *Appendix 1 (Data Sources)*.

Stakeholder Interviews

Over the course of the project, interviews were conducted with 147 participants from the various stakeholder groups. Interviews were conducted in person and virtually. *Appendix 2 (List of Stakeholders Interviewed)* provides a list of these stakeholders.

For due diligence, *Appendix 2 (List of Stakeholders Interviewed)* also lists the stakeholders the County specifically requested engagement with who declined to participate or provided no response.

Incident Timeline

The AAR includes an incident timeline that incorporates timestamped publicly available data and data provided by key stakeholders. Only data with timestamped information was included. *Appendix 3 (Timeline Overview)* provides an overview of the incident timeline in summary detail. A time-lapse visual aggregation of some of this information has been provided to the County.

Community Listening Sessions

McChrystal Group also organized and facilitated six community listening sessions in Supervisorial Districts (SD) 3 and 5. The sessions focused on gathering community feedback on alerts, warnings, notifications, and evacuations. Input from staff from the districts' supervisorial offices contributed to the design of these sessions.

Small breakout groups participated in two segments. In the first segment, participants answered questions requiring them to reflect on the timeline and key details of their own experiences with the alerts and evacuations during the two fires. *Appendix 4 (Community Session Questions)* provides a list of the questions in this segment.

The second segment involved a discussion on potential improvements to emergency alerts and evacuation protocols based on the participants' experiences during the disaster. These sessions were important in providing direct feedback from the community and offered a neutral space where the public could feel comfortable expressing candid feedback. These events also evolved into informal opportunities for increasing community emergency preparedness and awareness.

Five community listening sessions were held in person, and one was conducted virtually. The listening sessions took place on the following dates for each district:

SD3	• April 7, 2025, in person from 6:00 p.m.– 8:00 p.m. at Santa Monica College • April 10, 2025, in person from 6:00 p.m.– 8:00 p.m. at the Topanga Community Center • April 29, 2025, in person from 6:00 p.m.– 8:00 p.m. at the Malibu Public Library
SD5	• April 26, 2025, in person from 11:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m. at the Pasadena Convention Center • May 3, 2025, in person from 11:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m. at the First AME Church • May 7, 2025, virtual from 6:00 p.m.– 8:00 p.m.

The registration process for these events provided community members from both districts with the opportunity to complete a survey that collected information about each person's experience with the emergency alerts, notifications, and evacuations. *Appendix 4: Community Session Questions* includes the surveys for both the Eaton and Palisades Fires. *Appendix 5: Themes in Community Feedback* summarizes the thematic results of the community listening sessions.

Final Report Compilation

Following the data compilation, document reviews, interviews, community listening sessions, and output analysis, McChrystal Group began to draft this AAR. The *McChrystal Group Team* appendix contains profiles of the McChrystal Group team members who worked on and prepared this AAR. They include professionals with extensive experience in emergency management, alerts and warnings, wildfires, law enforcement response, and meteorology.

Incident Overview

A Perfect Storm

On December 31, 2024, the National Weather Service (NWS) first mentioned the potential for Santa Ana wind-driven Red Flag conditions for the period of January 7–9, 2025. The NWS issues a Fire Weather Watch or Red Flag Warning when the combination of dry fuels and weather conditions supports extreme fire danger. On January 2, the NWS put out a warning for potential moderate-to-strong Santa Ana winds and extreme fire weather conditions for the period of January 6–9. This was followed by a Fire Weather Watch issued on January 3, again citing the potential for Red Flag conditions during that same period. On January 5, at approximately 2:40 p.m. local time, the Fire Watch was upgraded to a Red Flag Warning.

Then, on January 6, the NWS updated its forecast to a life-threatening event warning of a Particularly Dangerous Situation (PDS), emphasizing that this was a high-end Red Flag event and clearly identified the areas under Red Flag Warnings. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) NWS Glossary, "PDS wording is used in rare situations when long-lived, strong and violent tornadoes are possible. This enhanced wording may also accompany severe thunderstorm watches for intense convective windstorms."[2] *Appendix 3: Timeline Overview* contains a summary of the warnings.

Wind Conditions and Other Weather Factors

The most critical factor influencing the spread and size of the Eaton and Palisades Fires was the unprecedented strength of the Santa Ana winds. Hurricane-force Santa Ana winds reached nearly 100 mph (160 km/h) in some places, with peak gusts at the Mount Lukens Truck Trail in the eastern San Gabriel Mountains. This wind event became so extraordinary because winds in the upper atmosphere grew stronger at the same time as the Santa Ana winds. The coupling of winds and their proximity to the mountains resulted in exceptionally powerful winds.

Los Angeles County experienced its driest start to the wet season on record, with no measurable precipitation.[3] Rainfall between October 2024 and January 2025 was far below normal for that time of year, at only about 4% of the typical amount,[4] and the extreme dryness created tinder-

[2] *NOAA's National Weather Service - Glossary*. NWS Glossary. NWS and NOAA. Last referenced September 24, 2025.

[3] *The weather and climate influences on the January 2025 fires around Los Angeles | NOAA Climate.gov*. Rebecca Lindsey. NOAA. February 19, 2025. Last referenced September 24, 2025.

[4] *4 Graphics Explain Los Angeles' Rare and Devastating January Fires*. James MacCarthy and Jessica Richter. World Resources Institute. February 5, 2025. Last referenced September 24, 2025.

box conditions. Key moisture measurements were only 2%–5% of averages for that time of year, and by January 7, 2025, dead-fuel moisture was at the sixth lowest level on record for that date.[5] [6] The resultant level of fuel volatility would be notable in summer months but was extraordinary for January.

Ignition

The Palisades Fire ignited on January 7, 2025, in the Santa Monica Mountains, southeast of Palisades Drive in the Los Angeles City portion of Pacific Palisades. A live camera, operated by AlertCalifornia, captured the first sight of smoke at Temescal Trailhead 1, at 10:20 a.m. Shortly after, the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) received 911 calls reporting the fire. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) lists 10:30 a.m. as the start time of the fire, and by 10:38 a.m., the LAFD notified the LACoFD.[7] In response, the LACoFD initiated a first alarm brush assignment, deploying a full ground and air response to support the LAFD through the California Master Mutual Aid System, as the fires started outside of the County's Initial Action Zone agreement. Public reporting of the fire began at 10:33 a.m. via WatchDuty, a nonprofit public service app and website that provides updates on wildfires and other emergencies. For the Palisades Fire, it was relaying images from the Temescal Canyon camera.

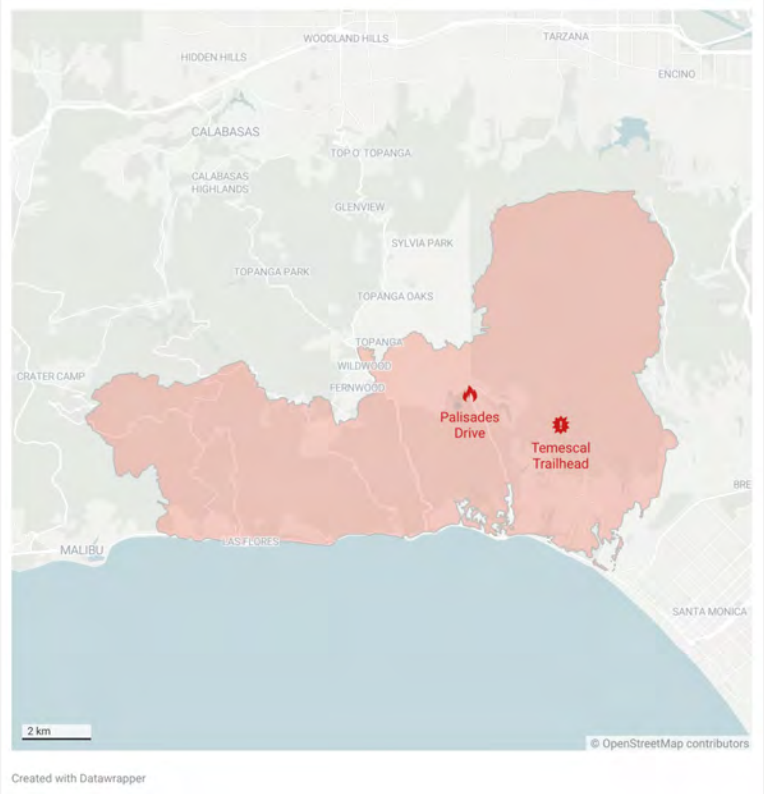


Figure 1: Map of Palisades Fire ignition sites

[5] *"Literally off the charts": LA's critically dry conditions stun scientists as fires rage*. Alastair Bland. CalMatters. January 15, 2025. Last referenced September 24, 2025.

[6] "Dead fuel moisture" is defined as the moisture content of dead organic fuels and is controlled solely by exposure to environmental conditions and is critical for determining fire potential. *Understanding Fire Danger (U.S. National Park Service)*. Understanding Fire Danger. U.S. National Parks Service. Last referenced August 29, 2025.

[7] *https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2025/1/7/palisades-fire*. Palisades Fire. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Last updated August 26, 2025, at last reference.

By 11:06 a.m., the fire had grown to ten acres. By 11:31 a.m., CAL FIRE noted that the fire had grown to 200 acres.

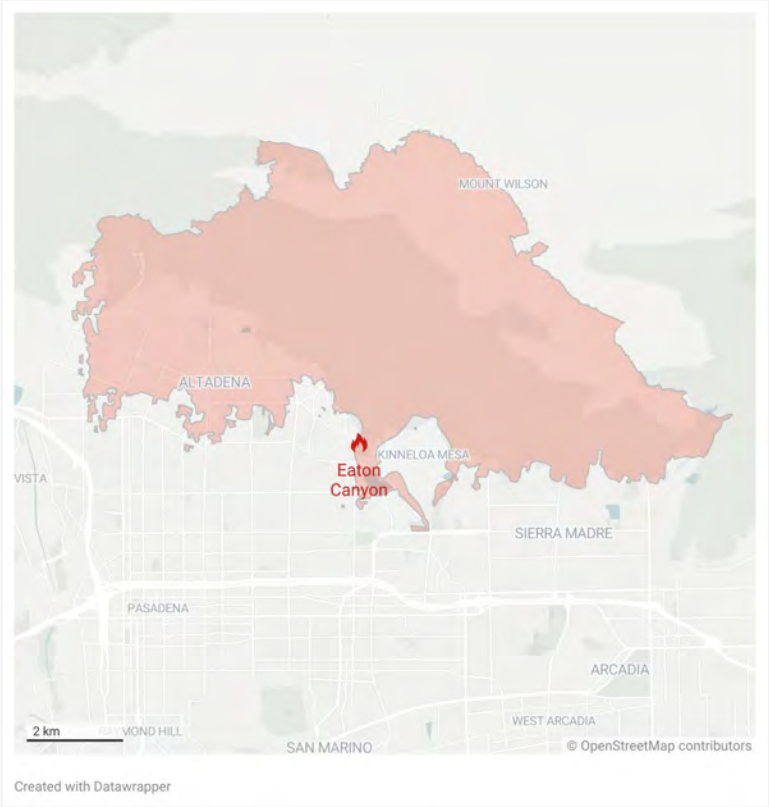


Figure 2: Map of the Eaton Fire ignition site

The Eaton Fire started on the evening of January 7, 2025, in the Eaton Canyon area of the San Gabriel Mountains of Altadena. The first report of the fire to the County came at 6:13 p.m., when LASD received a call about a possible brush fire in Eaton Canyon. The LACoFD then received a separate call at 6:17 p.m., regarding a brush fire. Shortly after, the LACoFD identified the fire and initiated its response, coordinating with the Pasadena Fire Department and the Angeles National Forest Service, which had already begun their response. WatchDuty publicly reported the incident at 6:23 p.m., describing emergency crews responding to a large glow on the hillside. By 6:27 p.m., LACoFD Dispatch reported that the fire had grown to ten acres. The initial Incident Command Post (ICP) was established at Eaton Canyon Equestrian Park at 6:27 p.m., before being moved to Farnsworth Park and then to the Rose Bowl to accommodate Unified Command and resources coming into the area as the fire rapidly expanded.

Escalation Due to Wind Conditions

Once the fires ignited, high wind speeds and highly variable wind directions made the firefight challenging. In the Palisades area, winds steadily increased throughout the day on January 7 and into January 8, reaching peak wind gusts of nearly 100 mph, and severely limiting firefighters' tactics for fighting the Palisades Fire. Around the time of ignition and over the ensuing 24 hours, wind gusts in the Palisades Fire area reached 50–70 mph, excluding an increase to 80–100 mph for four hours from 8:00 p.m. on the night of January 7. The fire grew rapidly under these conditions, consuming homes, cars, and anything else in its path, making firefighting efforts nearly impossible. Within an hour, the fire covered 200 acres. Despite the challenging wind speeds, fixed-wing retardant tankers, water scooping aircraft, and helicopters were still able to

support some of the fire suppression, but they were eventually grounded due to strong winds. Without much resistance, the Palisades Fire spread from the City of Los Angeles side of Pacific Palisades to the County unincorporated areas of Sunset Mesa, down to the coastline and Pacific Coast Highway, and to eastern Malibu.

Meanwhile, the LACoFD reported that similar wind conditions in the Eaton Fire area made it all but impossible to establish any fire perimeter. At 6:00 p.m. on January 7, wind gusts in the Eaton Fire zone had intensified to 68 mph, while nearby Altadena experienced gusts up to 39 mph. Around the time of ignition, and for the next 12 hours, the Eaton Fire area saw wind gusts of 70–90 mph. In Altadena, high winds made it impossible to fight the Eaton Fire from the air, with Unified Command grounding crucial helicopter and aerial fire surveillance operations shortly after the start of the fire.

High wind speeds prevented the use of fixed-wing aircraft to assess the fire situation or to make water or retardant drops to fight the fire. All aerial aircraft, including helicopters, were only able to operate for the first 30 minutes after their initial mobilization before being grounded at 6:45 p.m. due to the dangerous wind conditions. This significantly decreased the first responders' ability to maintain real-time situational awareness of the fire's movement and behavior.

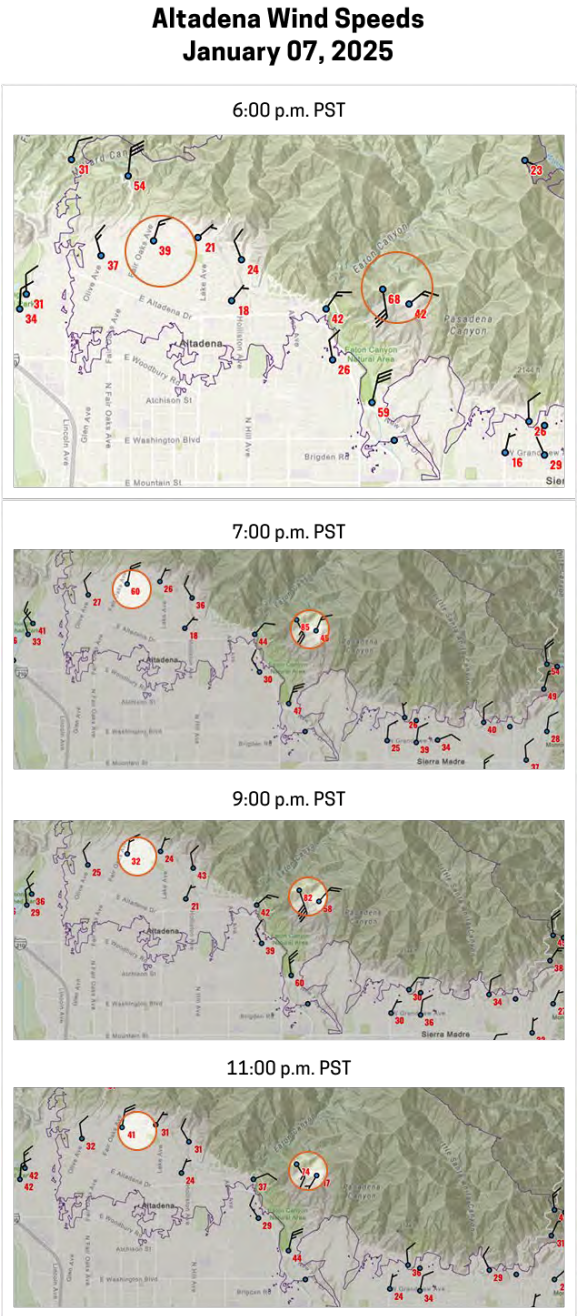


Figure 3: Wind speed comparison in Altadena at critical junctures on January 7

The winds created flames up to 200 feet long horizontally and sent embers flying up to two miles away, where they started spot fires. Firefighters observed the fire burning eastward when it first started, then reported that they were facing a fire that would eventually spread everywhere all at once rather than a single line of fire moving in one direction. Severe winds contributed to the rapid spread and intensity of the Eaton Fire, leading to widespread evacuations and significant resource mobilization.

The Eaton Fire eventually spread into the western and southern portions of Altadena and Pasadena, and concerns were raised that the Eaton Fire would threaten the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) near La Cañada Flintridge. These concerns centered around the significant robotic space exploration work at the facility, along with the elevated level of risk of materials such as lithium-ion batteries causing toxic fumes if ignited.[8]

In the Altadena area specifically, the intensity of the wind increased notably in the hours after ignition and was accompanied by highly variable wind directions. In the first couple of hours after the start of the Eaton Fire, an array of measurement stations across the Altadena area recorded wind directions towards the South (S), South- Southwest (SSW), and South-Southeast (SSE), depending on the location of the measurement station. By 3:00 a.m., those same measurement stations had recorded sustained shifts in wind direction, with winds blowing towards the S, West, and SSW. Although these readings provide valuable insight, it is important to emphasize the limited localized precision of the data, even with the presence of measurement stations. The topography and microclimates of the region can lead to significant variability that existing monitoring infrastructure may not fully capture.

By 5:00 a.m. on January 8, gusts reached 90 mph in the Eaton Fire area and 65 mph in Altadena. The sudden shift in the direction of the Eaton Fire and an increase in the wind's intensity at around 3:00 a.m. on January 8 prompted an urgent need to assess and coordinate priorities among the various responding agencies.

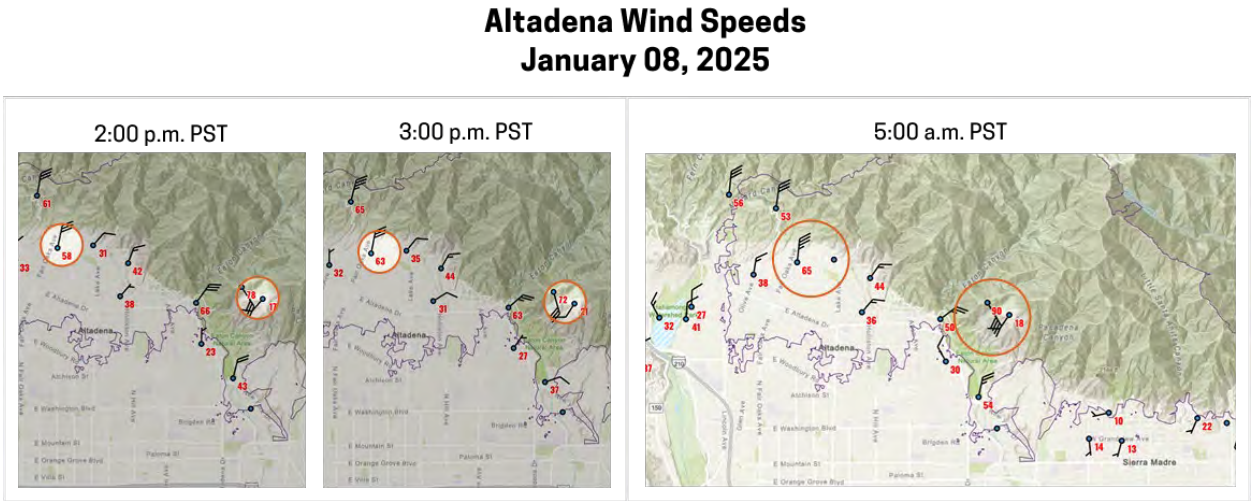


Figure 4: Wind speed comparison in Altadena at critical junctures on January 8

[8] https://llis.nasa.gov/lesson/3516. Lesson 3516. "Lithium-Ion Battery Fire." National Aeronautics and Space Administration. May 17, 2010. Last referenced September 24, 2025

The Eaton Fire moved quickly with homes burning as a result of the main body of the fire spreading or the wind-driven ember casts intensifying due to increasing wind speeds. The shifting winds caused the flames to skip homes entirely while destroying others. Compounding the urgency, the fire began to threaten a more densely populated area west of Lake Avenue.[9] This area posed a unique set of risks, especially in such wind conditions, as many of the homes were older and had been built with materials and designs that made them more vulnerable to ignition. Once burning, these buildings contributed significantly to the fire's fuel load, accelerating its spread.

The pace and intensity of the fire's movement in this area exceeded what first responders had observed during earlier stages of the Eaton Fire. Heat from the fire created microclimates, and the increase in wind speeds and shifts in wind direction in the early morning hours of January 8 made fire behavior and wind patterns within those microclimates extremely unpredictable, challenging even the most experienced responders. All first responders who had worked on other wildfires and were interviewed as part of this review, said they had never seen anything like the Eaton Fire.

[9] *LA_Wildfire_Altadena_Black_Community_Report.pdf*. LA Wildfires: Impacts on Altadena's Black Community Rapid Response Data Brief. Paul Ong, Chhandara Pech, Lorrie Frasure, Samyu Comandur, Eric Lee, and Silvia R. González. UCLA Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies, UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge, and UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute. University of Southern California. Last referenced September 24, 2025

From the very beginning of the Eaton Fire, all agencies focused on evacuation. The Eaton Fire initially spread east; however, in the early morning hours of January 8, an increase in wind speed and changes in wind direction caused the fire to aggressively spread to the west. Reviews of radio traffic, dispatch calls, and interviews with first responders indicated that ember cast from the main fire and from downed powerlines caused spot fires west of Lake Avenue after midnight on January 8th and accelerated in the following hours. At approximately 2:18 a.m., LACoFD field personnel reported over the radio that they had eyes on the fire in the foothills north of Farnsworth Park above Lake Avenue and that the fire front appeared to be moving west along the foothills. The same LACoFD field personnel said they were going to the ICP to share more details on their observations. While ICP staff were unable to confirm that LACoFD staff arrived at the ICP, LACoFD Incident Command staff heard the 2:18 a.m. radio traffic indicating that the fire was moving west and started evaluating more areas for evacuations, including those west of Lake Avenue. With this new information from the field, additional evacuation orders and evacuation warnings were sent out to address the new threat trajectory.

Satellite imagery from FireGuard, a National Guard satellite program, appears to show that the fire front itself did not cross Lake Avenue into west Altadena until after 5:00 a.m. on January 8 but that spot fires impacted west Altadena in the early morning (see *Appendix 12: Fire Front Progression*). This highlights the importance of tracking spot fires in volatile conditions, but without aerial resources, tracking the spot fires in this incident was extremely difficult. The direction shifts in the spread of the Eaton Fire required quick decision-making under pressure as agencies prioritized saving lives, minimizing property loss, and controlling the perimeter in an environment of escalating complexity and risk. Images from 5:00 a.m. also show that the Eaton Fire threatened the Altadena Sheriff's Station (approximately 250 feet west of Lake Avenue, at 780 E. Altadena Drive) (see *Appendix 12: Fire Front Progression*). The staff at the station had to evacuate and LASD staff went to the station to help remove items from the armory and secure the weapons. The Eaton Fire also threatened LACoFD's Fire Stations 11, 12, and 66 in the area.

In summary, first responders faced a combination of record-breaking hurricane-force winds, fires that created internal weather patterns at ground level, unprecedented drought, critically dry vegetation, and dramatically shifting winds. This created conditions so extreme and fire-prone that there appears to be little that could have prevented the rapid escalation to the wildfire-initiated community conflagration once the fires had started. Extreme conditions rendered first responders' efforts incapable, at least in the short term, of subduing the wildfire threats.[10]

[10] *https://www.weather.gov/wrh/hazards*. National Weather Service Weather and Hazards Data Viewer Historical Surface Observations. Last referenced August 27, 2025.

Seven Fires Strained Resources

In addition to the Eaton and Palisades Fires, three other fires that started in the Los Angeles County region between January 7 and January 8, 2025, all of which necessitated the allocation of resources, the issuance of evacuation warnings and orders, and the use of emergency alerts and notification systems. The following fires occurred within these two days:

- Hurst Fire in Sylmar
- Lidia Fire in Acton
- Sunset Fire in Hollywood Hills

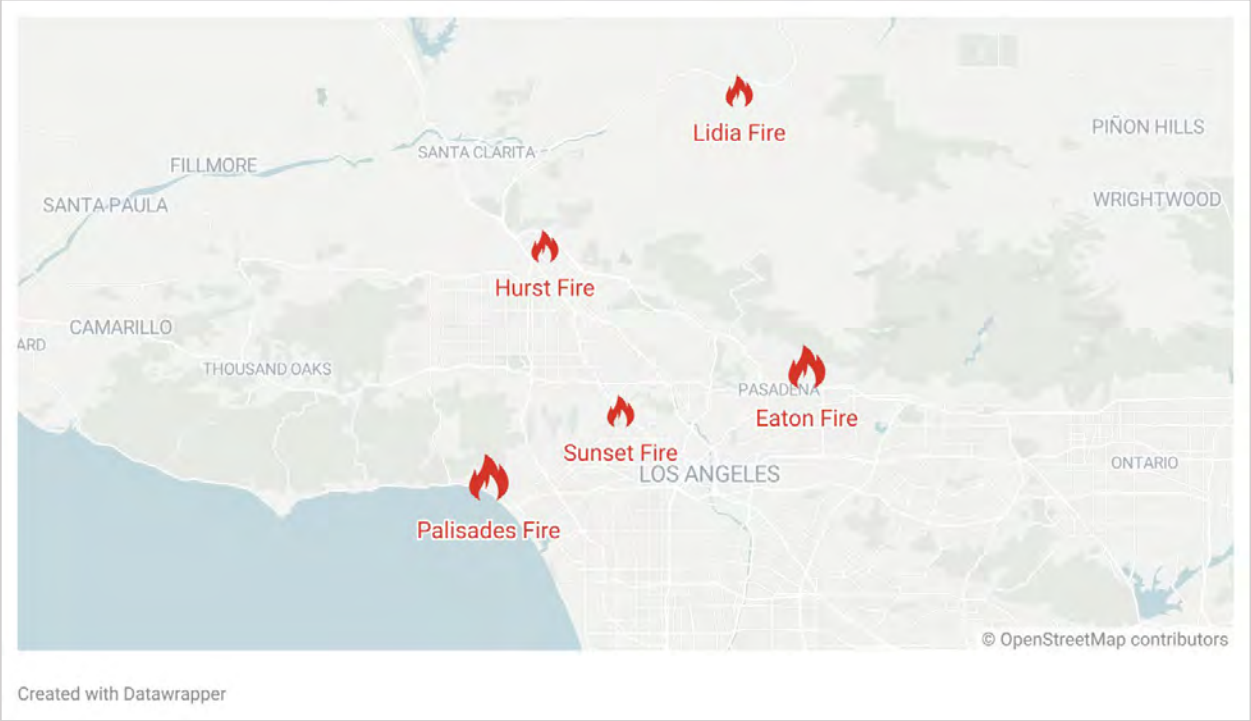
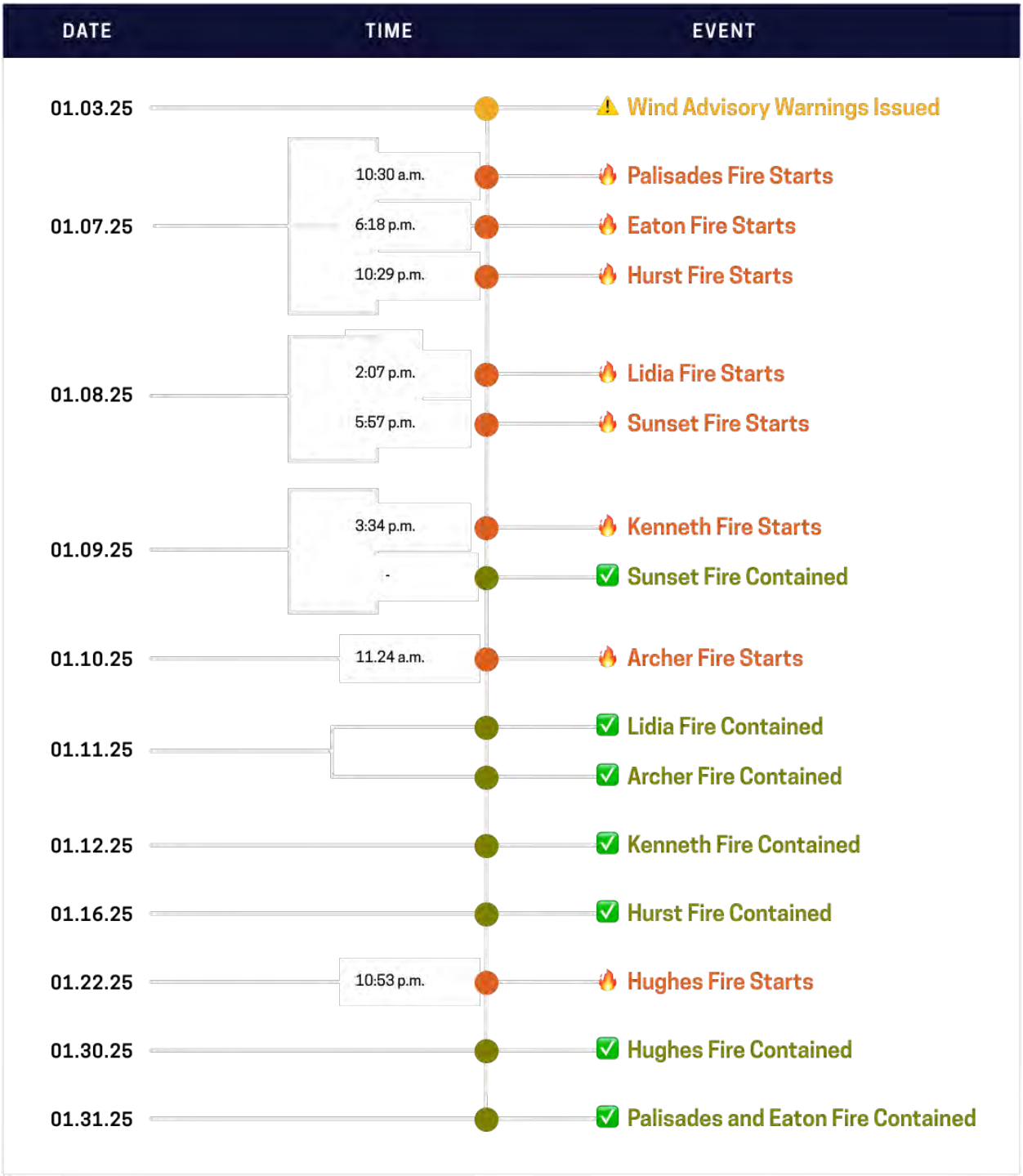


Figure 5: Location map of Hurst, Lidia, Sunset, Palisades, and Eaton Fire

The Hurst and Lidia Fires required resources from the County, including from LACoFD, LASD, and/or OEM. Some LACoFD teams that initially responded to the Eaton Fire had to leave to assist with the Hurst Fire, which started at 10:29 p.m. on January 7. Additionally, as the response to these fires continued, the Kenneth Fire started in West Hills on January 9, 2025. The Hughes Fire began in Castaic on January 22, 2025, requiring LACoFD resources not long after the other fires had been contained.

January 2025 LA Fire Ignition and Containment Timelines[11]



[11] https://www.fire.ca.gov/Incidents. Current Emergency Incident Database. CAL FIRE. Last referenced August 27, 2025.

Terrain, Fuel Load, and Fire Behavior

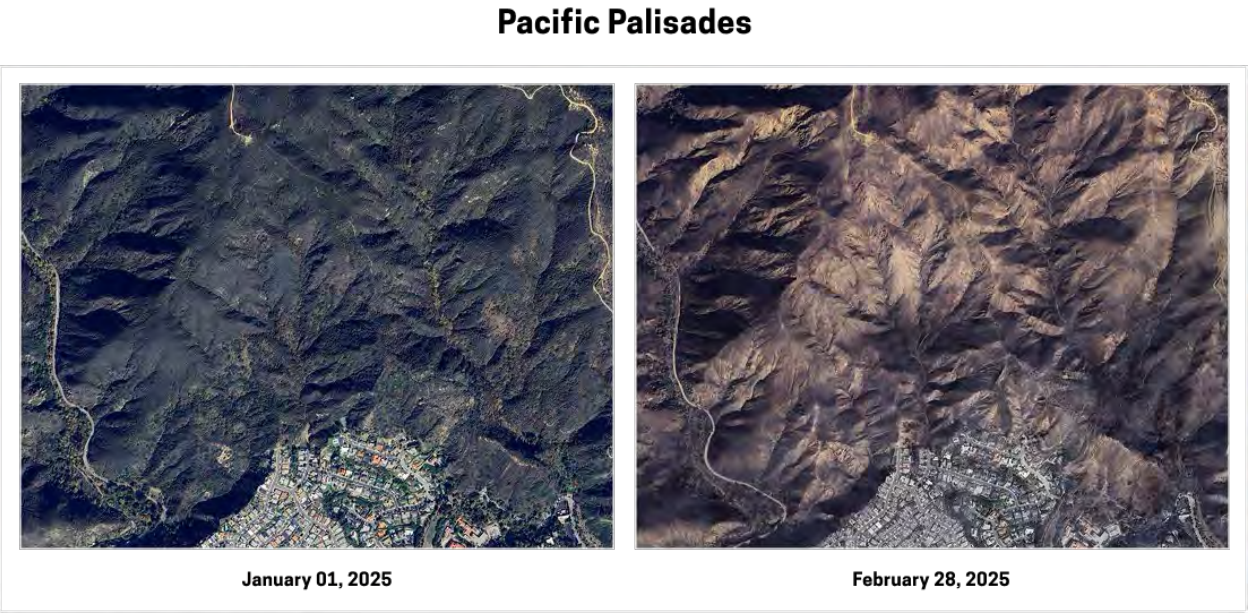


Figure 6: Before and after aerial photos of the Santa Monica Mountains

The Palisades Fire, which ignited on January 7, 2025, in the Santa Monica Mountains, presented significant challenges due to the rugged terrain, characterized by steep slopes and deep canyons. This topography hindered firefighter access and contributed to the rapid spread of the fire. The fire began near Skull Rock in the Pacific Palisades portion of the City of Los Angeles and quickly advanced across Topanga Canyon Road and Palisades Drive, moving toward the County unincorporated areas and Malibu within the first few hours. Crews had to hike into remote areas to combat the blaze, with the terrain's steep slopes influencing the fire's behavior and intensity.

The dense chaparral and coastal sage scrub in the area were exceptionally dry, creating a landscape primed for explosive fire activity. Additionally, brush management responsibilities for fire prevention purposes across the region are split between local, county, and state jurisdictions, complicating suppression efforts.

The fire's rapid expansion and unpredictable behavior, including short- and long-range spotting, were initially fueled by Santa Ana wind gusts of around 60 mph at time of ignition. Firefighting

efforts included direct suppression by fire engines, aerial retardant drops, and the construction of indirect containment lines by hand crews and bulldozers. Previous burn scars in some areas also aided containment by limiting available fuel.[12]

The Eaton Fire, which also ignited on January 7, started in the San Gabriel Mountains, and, as it spread, began impacting the canyons and foothills near Altadena and Pasadena. The area's steep and rugged terrain also challenged firefighting efforts, especially as the fire spread into foothill communities, particularly Altadena, complicating evacuation and firefighting efforts. The terrain's complexity and proximity to residential neighborhoods further hindered containment efforts.[13]

The fuel load in the Eaton Fire area was high, consisting of both chaparral and mixed conifer forests. These fuel loads, combined with warm temperatures, prolonged dry conditions, and strong Santa Ana winds, created an environment highly susceptible to rapid fire spread.

Figure 7: Before and after aerial photos of the Altadena area

[12] *Palisades Fire: Incident Update on 01/09/2025 at 8:11 AM | CAL FIRE*. Palisades Fire Incident Update on 01/09/25 at 8:11 a.m. CAL FIRE. Last referenced on August 27, 2025.

[13] *Using Lidar to Understand the Impacts of the 2025 Palisades and Eaton Fires, Los Angeles, CA | OpenTopography*. Using Lidar to Understand the Impacts of the 2025 Palisades and Eaton Fires, Los Angeles, CA. Cassandra Brigham, Chelsea Scott, and Christopher Crosby. OpenTopography. February 10, 2025. Last referenced September 24, 2025

The fire exhibited extreme burning conditions, including short- and long-range spotting, which significantly complicated containment efforts.

Transition to a Wildfire-Initiated Community Conflagration

While both the Eaton and Palisades Fires began as wildfires, both quickly transitioned to wildfire-initiated community conflagration fires. A wildfire-initiated community conflagration fire is a large, uncontrollable blaze that spreads quickly through densely populated areas, causing widespread destruction. Fires that ignite near tightly spaced buildings and infrastructure are particularly susceptible to escalating into conflagrations, especially when driven by high winds, and usually occur under conditions where fire suppression efforts are overwhelmed. Additional factors, such as prolonged dry weather, outdated building materials, and inadequate vegetation clearance around structures, further increase the risk and severity of these destructive fires.

These factors were all present during the ignition and transition into conflagration in both the Eaton and Palisades Fires. Despite strong winds, January and February are not typically high-risk months for fire in Los Angeles County, as these months usually have around five inches of rain. However, in this case, there had been no appreciable rain since April 2024, leaving the region exceptionally dry in the lead-up to the fires. At the time of the fires, fuel moisture levels were below 60%, with dead-fuel moisture in the brush as low as 20%–40%. This unusually dry fuel load, combined with the strong Santa Ana winds that reached hurricane force speeds, created

particularly hazardous conditions that contributed to the rapid escalation of both fires into conflagration events.[14]

The Palisades Fire transitioned to a wildfire-initiated community conflagration shortly after its ignition. By 11:30 a.m. on January 7, just one hour after it was first reported, the fire had grown to 200 acres. It consumed homes, vehicles, and other structures in its path, prompting the County and City of Los Angeles to issue evacuation orders extending from the fire ignition area to the Pacific Coast Highway. The strong winds fueled the fire's rapid expansion, making it one of the most destructive fires in Los Angeles County's history.

Shortly after ignition, the Eaton Fire transitioned to a wildfire-initiated community conflagration once it moved into established residential neighborhoods. House-to-house ignition significantly influenced the fire's behavior and spread. Protecting nearby residential areas, local infrastructure, and critical facilities further challenged containment efforts. Interior flare-ups and smoldering in heavy fuels hampered firefighting crews throughout the fire.

The Eaton Fire also occurred in the evening, in darkness and intense smoke, as Southern California Edison (SCE) public safety shutoffs ensued and the fire impacted power lines in the Altadena and Pasadena areas, which took out streetlights and ambient lighting in homes in some of the areas.

Evacuation

Messaging During the Eaton and Palisades Fires

OEM sent messages communicating evacuation warnings and orders only after receiving directions from the LACoFD and/or the LASD to do so. *Appendix 10: Evacuation Warnings and Orders* lists all messages sent by OEM communicating evacuation warnings and orders for the Eaton and Palisades Fires. For the Palisades Fire, OEM sent a message with the first emergency alert and notification at 11:30 a.m. on January 7, 2025, based on Incident Command's decision to issue an evacuation warning for Sunset Mesa. Given their prior experience with the Woolsey Fire in 2018 and Franklin Fire in 2024, along with the Santa Monica Mountains' high-risk designation for wildfires, LACoFD and LASD were side by side as they were part of Incident Command and joined forces in Unified Command at 11:36 a.m.

The first emergency alert and notification for an evacuation order issued by Incident Command was sent by OEM at 11:52 a.m. on January 7 for east Sunset Mesa. This was followed shortly after by another emergency alert and notification sent by OEM for an evacuation order from Incident Command at 12:42 p.m. for Malibu (see *Appendix 10: Evacuation Warnings and*

[14] *https://gacc.nifc.gov/oscc/fuelsFireDanger.php*. Southern California Predictive Services Area 8, 100-hour fuel moisture chart. Southern California Geographic Coordination Center. Last referenced August 27, 2025.

Orders for more information). Subsequent evacuation orders covered areas from the town of Topanga Canyon in the north to the Pacific Coast Highway to the south. Incident Command also directed OEM to send emergency alerts, notifications, and evacuation warnings for nearby areas. The final evacuation warning issued by Incident Command for the Palisades Fire was sent by OEM on January 8 at 1:12 a.m.

OEM sent an advisory alert to the 12 evacuation zones (areas of Pasadena/Eaton Canyon, North of I-210, South of Eaton Canyon, Altadena East of Lake Ave) at potential risk of the Eaton Fire at approximately 6:48 p.m. on January 7, at the direction of Incident Command. The alert advised the public to "BE ALERT AND MONITOR." At 7:26 p.m. on January 7, Incident Command directed OEM to send the first Eaton Fire evacuation orders for the seven evacuation zones shown in the table below.

ZONE	EVACUATION ZONE NAME	DESCRIPTION OF AREA
Zone 1	US-CA-XLA-PAS-E019	Pasadena—North of NY Drive, South of FairPoint Street, East of Edgecliff Lane, West of Sierra Madre
Zone 2	US-CA-XLA-ALD-EASTLOMA	North of East Altadena Drive, South of Zane Grey Terrace, East of Sunny Oaks Circle, West of Altadena Drive
Zone 3	US-CA-XLA-ALD-EATONCANYON	North of Eaton Canyon Drive, South of Mount Wilson Toll Road, East of Altadena Drive, West of Eaton Canyon Drive
Zone 4	US-CA-XLA-ALD-GARFIAS	North of Galbert Road, South of NY Drive, East of North Hill Avenue, West of Meguiar Drive
Zone 5	US-CA-XLA-ALD-MENDOCINO	All four zones in Mendocino ABCD
Zone 6	US-CA-XLA-ALD-MIDLOTHIAN	North of NY Drive, South of Altadena Drive, East of North Allen Avenue, West of Altadena Drive
Zone 7	US-CA-XLA-KIN-KINNELOA	Zones A and B in Kinneloa Mesa

Additional evacuation warnings and orders were sent throughout the night as the Eaton Fire continued to spread. By 9:00 p.m., evacuation orders and warnings were expanded to include 11 more zones, followed by 16 more by 10:30 p.m.

Before issuing further evacuation warnings and orders, Incident Command needed to confirm the fire's trajectory and ensure that information being shared with OEM, and the Emergency

Operations Center (EOC) was accurate and aligned with updates from sheriff and fire personnel on the ground and at Incident Command.

The LACoFD first received a call suggesting that the fire may have been west of Lake Avenue at 10:50 p.m. The call originated from 512 Calaveras Street. However, it is not clear that the fire front or spot fires were in that location at that time, as neither the address (512 Calaveras Street) nor any houses on the same block appear on the CAL FIRE Damage Inspection (DINS) reports. Furthermore, no fire damage was observed in the 500-block area when it was visited. This visit also determined that 512 Calaveras Street was not an official street or house number.

The DINS reports represent structures impacted by wildland fire that are inside or within 100 meters of the fire perimeter. There were multiple calls in the LACoFD's dispatch records for houses on fire or people trapped in burning homes that were not on the DINS reports for either the Eaton or Palisades Fires. Although there were reports of fire west of Lake Avenue as early as 10:50 p.m. on January 7, the data shows that none of the locations cited in those 911 calls are listed in the DINS reports. The first validated instance of a structure on fire west of Lake Avenue (as identified in the DINS report) was at 500 E Las Flores Drive at 12:55 a.m. on January 8.

Between 1:12 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. on the morning of January 8, OEM did not receive direction from LACoFD or LASD to send any evacuation warnings or evacuation orders for the Eaton Fire, as all areas LACoFD believed were directly impacted by or at risk from the Eaton Fire had already received an evacuation warning or order. OEM was again directed to send evacuation messages with both evacuation orders and warnings by Incident Command at approximately 3:00 a.m. The evacuation orders and warnings were relayed to OEM staff in the EOC, who then sent out the evacuation messages at 3:25 a.m. for the Eaton Fire, with the initial alert covering areas west of Lake Avenue.

OEM was directed by Incident Command to send the final evacuation warnings of the Eaton Fire's first 24 hours for Scholl Canyon on January 8 at 8:22 a.m., and the only other evacuation orders issued after that were those for Mt. Wilson at 11:57 a.m. on January 9.

Once LACoFD at the ICP made the decision to issue an evacuation warning or evacuation order, that decision was quickly communicated from the field to OEM personnel at the EOC so that OEM could send evacuation notifications to the public. However, deciding which zones to put under evacuation was often difficult due to the fire's unpredictability and the complex operating conditions. It was difficult to maintain situational awareness to predict fire behaviors and, therefore, challenging to issue warnings and orders aligned to predicted behavior, which left the public feeling inadequately warned and underprepared to evacuate. This highlights the challenges of messaging the public in fast-evolving emergencies where the speed of events can outpace public warning systems.

	Fires					
	Post Fire June 2024	Bridge Fire Sep-Nov 2024	Franklin Fire Dec 2024	Hurst Fire Jan 2025	Palisades Fire Jan 2025	Eaton Fire Jan 2025
Number of Campaigns	3	12	9	2	25	29

Figure 8: Alert Campaign Volumes (Historical Fires vs January 2025 Fires (First 24 hours))

Additionally, the County had concerns about over-warning. Issuing evacuation orders for areas not under immediate threat could have added to public confusion, contributed to unnecessary panic, and led to greater congestion on roads, potentially hindering the movement of those truly at risk. The complexity and speed at which the incident unfolded highlights the critical need for precise coordination and underscores the inherent challenges of real-time emergency communication.

Some residents, both west and east of Lake Avenue, reported not receiving alerts at all, or receiving notifications as if they were preparing to leave or after they had already evacuated. This could have been attributed to a variety of variables such as a public safety power shutoff (PSPS), downed powerlines, or cell towers being impacted by the wind, fire, or smoke. Some individuals left the area on January 7, while others reportedly found themselves unable to evacuate before the fire front reached their neighborhoods and they were faced with just-in-time, spontaneous evacuation, or chose to remain and defend their homes.

Impact Summary

The Eaton and Palisades Fires had a profound impact on the local population and infrastructure. The Palisades Fire affected over 20,000 people and destroyed 6,837 structures, including homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure such as power, sewer, and water systems.[15] [16] Similarly, the Eaton Fire impacted nearly 23,000 residents, destroyed approximately 9,400 structures, and

[15] *Assessment of the January 2025 Los Angeles County Wildfires: A Multi-Modal Analysis of Impact, Response, and Population Exposure*. Assessment of the January 2025 Los Angeles County Wildfires: A Multi-Modal Analysis of Impact, Response, and Population Exposure. Seyd Teymoor Seydi. January 20, 2025. Department of Civil Engineering. Boise State University. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[16] *Palisades Fire—LA County Recovers*. Palisades Fire Damage Maps. Los Angeles County. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

damaged over 1,000 more.[17] [18] Both fires led to significant disruptions to daily life and necessitated extensive evacuation efforts.[19] [20]

The fires resulted in a tragic loss of life and numerous injuries. The Palisades Fire claimed 12 lives and caused at least four non-fatal injuries. The Eaton Fire resulted in at least 19 confirmed deaths and nine non-fatal injuries.[21] [22] Additionally, several LACoFD firefighters and LASD deputies sustained injuries while battling the blazes.[23]

The economic impact of both fires is substantial and still not fully known, with estimates suggesting that the combined damage from the Eaton and Palisades Fires could cost the local economy up to $9 billion over the next five years.[24] Property damage alone is estimated to be between $28 billion and $53.8 billion.[25] The fires also caused severe environmental damage, burning approximately 37,000 acres of land, including parks, nature centers, and trails.[26] [27] The

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[17] *Assessment of the January 2025 Los Angeles County Wildfires: A Multi-Modal Analysis of Impact, Response, and Population Exposure*. Assessment of the January 2025 Los Angeles County Wildfires: A Multi-Modal Analysis of Impact, Response, and Population Exposure. Seyd Teymoor Seydi. January 20, 2025. Department of Civil Engineering. Boise State University. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[18] *Eaton Fire—LA County Recovers*. Eaton Fire Damage Maps. Los Angeles County. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[19] *Assessment of the January 2025 Los Angeles County Wildfires: A Multi-Modal Analysis of Impact, Response, and Population Exposure*. Assessment of the January 2025 Los Angeles County Wildfires: A Multi-Modal Analysis of Impact, Response, and Population Exposure. Seyd Teymoor Seydi. January 20, 2025. Department of Civil Engineering. Boise State University. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[20] *LAEDC-2025-LA-Wildfires-Study.pdf*. Impact of 2025 Los Angeles Wildfires and Comparative Study. Matt Horton, Shannon M. Sedgwick, Justin Adams, Dan Wei, and Matthew Skyberg. Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation Institute for Applied Economics. February 2025. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[21] *Eaton Fire: Incident Update on 01/27/2025 at 10:04 AM | CAL FIRE*. Eaton Fire Incident Update on 01/27/25 at 10:04 A.M. CAL FIRE. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[22] *WILDFIRE UPDATE | 18 Victims Identified by Medical Examiner—County of Los Angeles Medical Examiner* *January 24, 2025.* Last referenced September 24, 2025.

[23] *LA County Sues Edison Over Eaton Fire, Seeking to Recover Costs and Damages Due to Widespread Devastation—LA County Recovers* *March 5, 2025*. Last referenced September 24, 2025.

[24] *LAEDC-2025-LA-Wildfires-Study.pdf*. Impact of 2025 Los Angeles Wildfires and Comparative Study. Matt Horton, Shannon M. Sedgwick, Justin Adams, Dan Wei, and Matthew Skyberg. Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation Institute for Applied Economics. February 2025. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[25] *LAEDC-2025-LA-Wildfires-Study.pdf*. Impact of 2025 Los Angeles Wildfires and Comparative Study. Matt Horton, Shannon M. Sedgwick, Justin Adams, Dan Wei, and Matthew Skyberg. Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation Institute for Applied Economics. February 2025. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[26] *LA County Sues Edison Over Eaton Fire, Seeking to Recover Costs and Damages Due to Widespread Devastation—LA County Recovers* Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[27] *Eaton Fire—LA County Recovers*. Eaton Fire Damage Maps. Los Angeles County. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

destruction of natural habitats and wildlife, along with the long-term effects on air and water quality, poses significant challenges for environmental recovery.[28] [29] [30]

[28] *LA County Sues Edison Over Eaton Fire, Seeking to Recover Costs and Damages Due to Widespread Devastation—LA County Recovers* Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[29] *Palisades Fire Damage Inspection Dashboard | Emergency Management Department* City of Los Angeles, Emergency Management Department Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[30] *City of Los Angeles/Palisades Fire Recovery Information & Resources—LA County Recovers* Last referenced September 3, 2025.

County Pre-Incident Preparedness

In preparation for the January wind event and the increased fire risk it posed, the County took proactive measures and implemented strategies to enhance the readiness of its emergency response staff and the public. This section discusses the proactive staffing, coordination, and resourcing measures, as well as preventative public education on fire risk and evacuation procedures, pre-established emergency communication plans, and the utilization of various alert systems.

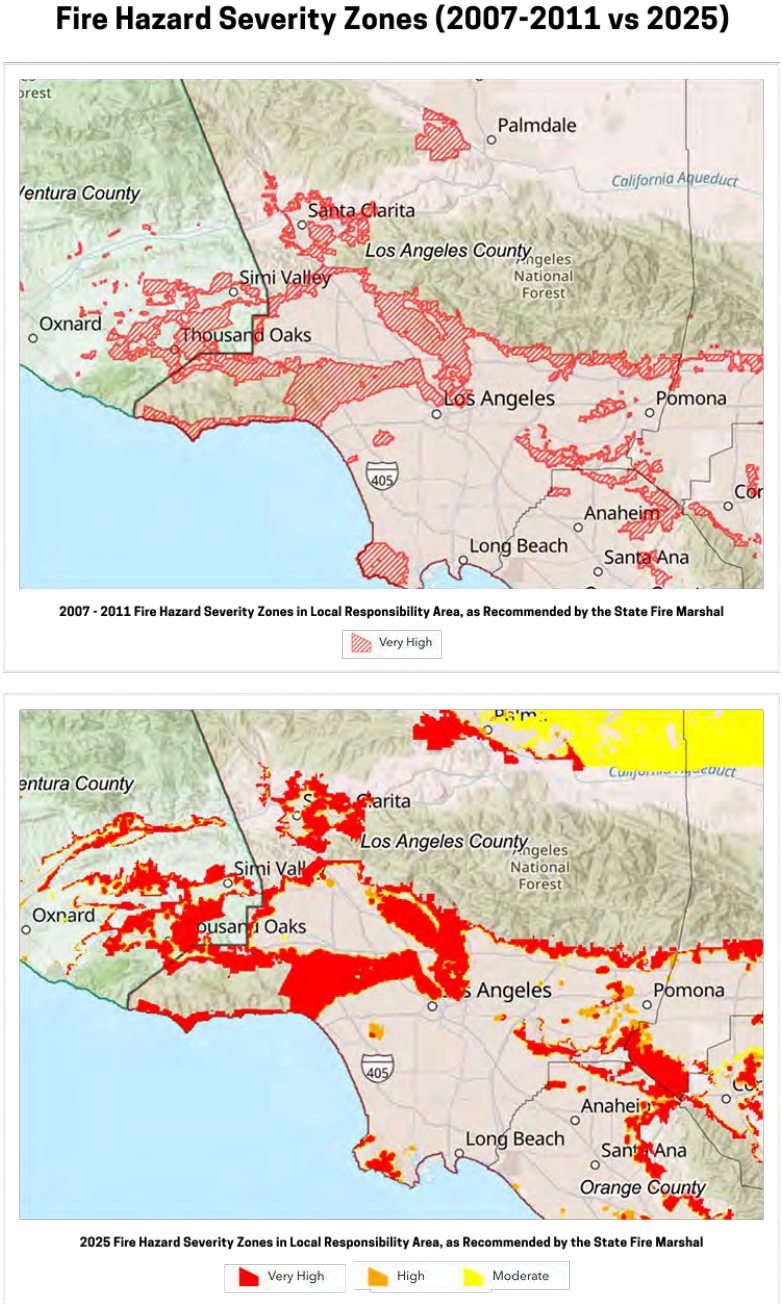

Figure 9: High fire risk areas in Los Angeles County

It is important to note that the preparedness activities undertaken by County stakeholders varied between the two impacted areas examined in this report. Due to the historical fire risk in the Santa Monica Mountains and the Palisades area and the lessons learned from the Woolsey Fire; the stakeholders of the Palisades Fire area had significantly more fire response experience with their communities than those in the Eaton Fire area in Altadena. The Eaton Fire burned into areas and communities that historically and presently do not appear in high fire risk areas on CAL FIRE's fire hazard severity zone (FHSZ) maps; those communities had not previously experienced this type of fire event. Figure 9 shows the designated high fire risk areas in Los Angeles County prior to 2025.

Pre-Incident Preparedness

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Pre-Incident Preparedness

LASD undertook several fire-related preparation activities leading up to the Eaton and Palisades Fires in January 2025. It did so in the face of other events and challenges, including the LASD's involvement in the Rose Parade in Pasadena, California; the recurring failure of its 38-year-old computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system; preparing for the anniversary of the January 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol attack; and the Presidential Inauguration.

Resource Coordination

On January 6, 2025, the LASD notified the Sheriff Information Bureau (SIB) to begin collecting Mobile Field Force rosters for all shifts in preparation for the Red Flag Warnings. LASD also notified Incident Management Team (IMT) 1 and Department Operations Center (DOC) Team 1 to be ready for possible activation based on the expected wind event. The incident management teams are activated when an incident escalates or is anticipated to escalate beyond the local station level response. The teams are responsible for evacuation planning, resource deployment, and interagency coordination. The coordination of resources in January 2025 included collecting rosters of available personnel from all stations who could assist in the event of a fire. The Emergency Operations Bureau (EOB) assigned an LASD representative to the County Emergency Operations Center (CEOC) prior to the onset of the January 7 fires and developed a 72-hour staffing roster to ensure continuous LASD representation. The EOB maintains a 24-hour on-call duty sergeant, deputy, logistics deputy, and law enforcement technician to support large-scale incidents and emergencies countywide and assist outside agencies if requested. The Sheriff's department also discussed the allocation of resources, including holding over LASD personnel, coordinating with other stations, and mobilizing special teams to assist with evacuations.

Proactive Emergency Operations Center Opening

As part of 2024 preparedness efforts and prior to this incident, the EOB provided EOC station training and/or initial critical incident response and management training to EOC personnel at Malibu/Lost Hills, Altadena, Crescenta Valley, and Santa Clarita stations, which are fire-centric stations. Once the Palisades Fire started, LASD was proactive in opening the Malibu EOC station before the Palisades Fire reached the County unincorporated area of Sunset Mesa, facilitating early warning and evacuation efforts. Early activation ensured that all necessary personnel and resources were in place to respond effectively. This included appointing scribes, tracking personnel, and maintaining communication with LASD's DOC.

Los Angeles County Fire Department's Pre-Incident Preparedness

The LACoFD began their pre-planning activities on January 2, 2025. The LACoFD identified pre-planning as important in their preparation for a possible incident response and focused on staffing and coordination as their primary preparedness activities.

Augmented Staffing, Pre-positioning Resources, and Coordination Decisions

On January 2, the LACoFD began preparing for possible wildfires that the NWS predicted for January 7 and 8. The LACoFD discussed the upcoming weather event and prepared an augmented staffing plan. On January 3, the LACoFD determined that a request to the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) to pre-position resources would be necessary.

On January 4 and 5, multiple discussions regarding the augmented staffing plan took place between the LACoFD and CalOES, and the initial staffing plan was sent out to staff. On January 5, the LACoFD contacted CalOES and submitted the official packet requesting CalOES pre-position resources, which was approved. As the NWS confirmed the wind event was severe, the LACoFD held additional discussions on January 6 to adjust the staffing plan.

The adjustments to the initial staffing plan included the addition of three strike teams, water tenders, and other resources to enhance coverage and preparedness, as well as adding augmented LACoFD staffing and CAL FIRE Southern Region staffing pattern resources. CAL FIRE also provided two additional strike teams that LACoFD deployed to Fire Station 126 and Fire Station 150.

In addition, at approximately 7:18 a.m. on January 7, the LACoFD held over the outgoing shift from the previous day, effectively doubling the number of staff available when combined with the incoming shift. The LACoFD determined this would provide the personnel necessary, if needed, to staff all available fire apparatus and fill critical command and control positions.

Finally, all other LACoFD personnel were placed on telephone standby effective January 7.

Resource Mobilization

In anticipation of critical fire weather, the LACoFD pre-deployed resources, including three LACoFD strike teams and two CAL FIRE strike teams (pre-positioned for the State Responsibility Area (SRA) State Mission) that were available to all areas throughout the County; staffed and deployed additional engine companies, wildland hand crews, Incident Command teams, and brush patrols; and brought in water tenders, firefighting aircraft, bulldozers, dispatchers, and other resources. These resources were strategically positioned in areas of greatest concern, particularly the Highways 118/210 corridors, San Gabriel, Santa Susana, Santa Monica Mountains and foothills, and the San Gabriel and San Fernando Valleys.

Notifications

On January 6, the LACoFD issued a memo to each of the County board supervisors advising them of the distinct threat of the windstorm and its potential impact on areas "not normally impacted," including the San Gabriel Valley.

Office of Emergency Management Pre-Incident Preparedness

On January 2, OEM began preparing for the wind event. Their efforts included coordinating with partners, general preparations, and resource and staff planning. On January 6, OEM took several steps toward general preparedness for this event. This included activating the County EOC in preparation for the January 7 wind event and ensuring that all its necessary and available personnel and resources were in place. OEM also maintained regular communication with federal, state, and local partners, including the NWS, which had a representative physically located in the EOC during the Eaton and Palisades Fires, and closely monitored weather conditions, anticipating strong winds and preparing accordingly.

Resources and Staffing

On January 3, well in advance of the wind event, OEM began developing its EOC staffing roster. In organizing the response team, OEM relied on a skills matrix and the department's master calendar to assess staff availability and capabilities. However, OEM staff noted that the skills matrix was not optimal for determining the staffing needs of operations for this emergency.

A specific focus when developing the staffing roster was to ensure that OEM staff assigned to manage emergency evacuation notifications were dedicated solely to that role and not assigned any other tasks or responsibilities. Additionally, OEM attempted to assign the most qualified individuals to critical roles. However, OEM has a limited number of staff overall, so staffing critical 24/7 positions is problematic when a staff member is unavailable to perform their function. An OEM staff member who was proficient in sending out alert notifications was at a

prescheduled training opportunity outside the County prior to the issuance of the PDS warning. As a result, several less experienced staff members were placed in key positions. In addition, Genasys ALERT was a relatively new system for OEM. However, while the general functionality of Genasys ALERT differed from OEM's previous system, CodeRED, the process for developing and sending emergency alerts and notifications was similar. At the time of the incident, four OEM staff members had working knowledge of the new system, leaving the alert and notification function less than optimally resourced for a catastrophic disaster.

Partner Coordination

OEM regularly coordinates with cities and County partners for evacuation planning and alerting, stressing the importance of unified command and timely communication. OEM later reported that during the incident, incorporated cities were responsible for verifying and adjusting their designated evacuation zones, while the County provided support and ensured overall coordination.

As an SOP, OEM initiates and coordinates the Unified Command Group (UCG) calls. UCG meetings proved valuable in ensuring that all County departments were kept up to date. These meetings helped the departments share situational knowledge and coordinate response efforts. For this wind event, OEM initiated and ran the UCG calls at 10:00 a.m. on January 6; at 10:00 a.m. on January 7, prior to the start of the Palisades Fire; and every day at 10 a.m. thereafter until January 27.

County Supervisorial District 3 and Supervisorial District 5 Pre-Incident Preparedness

Both impacted Supervisorial District Offices in District 3 and District 5 participated in and supported various pre-incident preparedness activities leading up to the January windstorm event and the Eaton and Palisades Fires.

Supervisorial District 3 Office

Community Preparedness

Due to the historical risk of fires in Supervisorial District 3 (SD3) in the Santa Monica Mountains and the Woolsey Fire in 2018, SD3 implemented and supported several initiatives related to preparedness. SD3 emphasizes the importance of continuous education and training for the community, hosts annual emergency preparedness events at each of their district offices, and provides training and resources to the community. These events cover a wide range of topics related to emergency preparedness.

SD3 also supports community organizations, such as the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program and Arson Watch and has provided financial assistance to entities such

as the Santa Monica Mountains Regional Fire Safe Council, Emergency Preparedness in Calabasas—A Fire Safe Council, Topanga Coalition for Emergency Preparedness (TCEP), Los Angeles Emergency Preparedness Foundation, and Emergency Network Los Angeles. These organizations play a crucial role in emergency preparedness and response in their communities.

The Community Brigade program also exists in SD3 and appears to be the first of its kind in the country.[31] The Community Brigade program trains volunteers to help their communities prepare for and respond to wildfires and other hazards. With intimate local knowledge of their communities, the Community Brigade can be a key resource for first responders. This program was developed by the Los Angeles Emergency Preparedness Foundation in partnership with LACoFD and supported by the Board of Supervisors and has been successful in multiple fires. It involves rigorous training and community participation to be effective.

Community Engagement

SD3 builds and maintains a broad-based mailing list and social media following to ensure effective communication with the community during emergencies. Their mailing list comprises over 50,000 subscribers across SD3 and is used to send out advisories and updates during emergencies. Their community affairs team keeps in regular contact with community organizations and leaders to keep them informed and gather updates.

Alert and Messaging

During emergencies, SD3 receives notifications from LACoFD, LASD, OEM, and other law enforcement agencies. This information is then escalated to Supervisor Lindsey Horvath and disseminated to the public through various channels, including text messages, emails, and social media. SD3 collaborates with cities to ensure that its communications colleagues in those jurisdictions have the necessary information to share with their communities. SD3 also leverages various social media platforms, including X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Facebook, and Nextdoor, to disseminate information. Nextdoor enables SD3 to target specific neighborhoods in need of protection. They also collaborate with cities and local media to disseminate information.

On January 5, 2025, Supervisor Horvath amplified the NWS's post about the high wind watch expected on January 7 via social media.

[31] *https://www.communitybrigade.org/* Los Angeles Emergency Preparedness Foundation. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

Supervisorial District 5 Office

Preparedness Activities

The Supervisorial District 5 (SD5) office tracked the wind event via social media, using platforms such as X, Facebook, and Instagram to monitor updates from the NWS and other sources. They also issued a press release on January 7, urging individuals to prepare for the upcoming windstorm. This press release was posted on Supervisor Kathryn Barger's website and social media. SD5 supports and promotes community engagement in fire and emergency preparedness efforts, working alongside the LACoFD's Community Services Liaison to educate residents on Genasys, Ready-Set, Go, and other platforms for alerts.

Alert Messaging Amplification

Like SD3, during emergencies, SD5 receives notifications from LACoFD, LASD, OEM, and other law enforcement agencies. This information is then escalated to Supervisor Barger and disseminated to the public through various social media platforms, including X, Facebook, and Instagram.

Community Preparedness

SD5's community preparedness efforts are ongoing throughout the year and include supporting local LASD sheriff and LACoFD fire stations both directly—using discretionary funding—and indirectly—through their non-profit branches like Boosters—with the goal of enhancing their access to critical equipment and overtime budgets to protect public safety. SD5 has also funded CERT training and hosts regular press conferences and community events to raise awareness around wildfire risk and preparedness. It also promotes platforms such as Nixle, as well as utilizing community service liaisons from LACoFD and LASD departments for community events. SD5 also builds and maintains a broad-based mailing list and social media following to ensure effective communication with the community and the ability to amplify preparedness messaging shared by partners across the County family. Their mailing list comprises over 99,800 subscribers across SD5. SD5 also has a field deputy dedicated to reaching out to community organizations, churches, and leaders to keep them informed and gather updates.

Joint Pre-Incident Preparedness

County partners engaged in and conducted a number of pre-incident preparedness activities. Specifically, in the areas of the County designated as "high fire hazard severity zones," the LACoFD, LASD, and OEM established significant day-to-day coordination and preparedness efforts with their response partners and the communities. Daily efforts in emergency preparedness are often referred to as taking place on "blue sky" days, which alludes to being prepared for times of incident response, or "gray sky" days.

Blue Sky Preparedness

The LACoFD, LASD, and/or OEM undertake pre-fire preparations throughout the year, outside of specific incident preparedness efforts. These blue-sky preparations include, but are not limited to:

- Activities conducted by the Malibu/Lost Hills Sheriff Station and Fire Station 70 in Malibu, including meetings with fire officials, training events, tabletop exercises, and community engagement to prepare for potential fires and evacuations.
- Regular meetings between the LACoFD, LASD, and OEM to discuss fire scenarios, evacuation plans, and community-specific strategies.
- Various training and exercise events; for example, a full-day event was held at Camp 2, during which past fires were reviewed, and response strategies were discussed.
- Tabletop exercises, which follow the Incident Command System (ICS) format and involve multiple agencies and engagements with community organizations, such as the TCEP and various homeowner associations, to discuss evacuation procedures and conduct driving tours of vulnerable areas. LACoFD and LASD also coordinated with the TCEP to develop a contraflow plan for the Topanga area. While it was not necessary to implement the plan during the Palisades Fire, it is a tool they can use in the future.
- The LACoFD and Pepperdine University's annual review of the university's comprehensive shelter-in-place plan; LACoFD has a strong presence on the campus and supports the plan as the safest course of action. This has proven very successful in mitigating fires and has resulted in national recognition of the university as a leader in wildfire and emergency response.[32]
- General preparedness measures, including creating fire bags with personal protective equipment (PPE) for LASD deputies, conducting radio advertisements during high-wind events, implementing resident-only closures in Topanga Canyon, and encouraging schools in that area to close during Red Flag days.
- Joint monthly meetings between the LACoFD, LA City Fire Department, U.S. Forest Service, Pasadena Fire Department, Glendale Fire Department, and the Mountains, Recreation & Conservancy Authority aim to build relationships, discuss operations and best practices, review incidents, and pre-plan for incidents that frequently occur on a jurisdiction's borders.

[32] *Brush Fires « Pepperdine Emergency Information* Pepperdine University Emergency Information Last referenced September 3, 2025.

Importance of Relationships and Training

During the interviews for this AAR, County staff highlighted the importance of established relationships and training between fire and law enforcement agencies, which facilitates better coordination during incidents. They noted that the annual Susana Workshop is a key training program that brings together various agencies to practice and improve their response to an incident, and they placed particular emphasis on the need for better training for law enforcement officers to understand the fire ICS and their role within it. Participants from LASD, LACoFD, and OEM emphasized the need for continuous engagement and improved communication and coordination to ensure agencies remain prepared for future incidents.

UCG Meetings: As previously mentioned, UCG meetings are the standard operating procedure, facilitated by OEM, for response organizations in the County during a significant event. The establishment of these meetings cultivates relationship and trust building and fosters situational awareness. The first UCG meeting for the January wind event was held on January 6. During this first call, County departments discussed staff augmentation, resource allocation, communications, and coordination in preparation for the predicted possible fire event.

Multi-Threat Zone (MTZ) Plan: The County is involved in the MTZ plan, which establishes the roles of Ventura County, Los Angeles County, and the City of Los Angeles in managing fire incidents in this zone. The MTZ has a high risk of fire incidents and includes various jurisdictions and agencies, each with specific roles and responsibilities. The MTZ includes areas such as the 118 Santa Susana Pass, known for its frequent fires driven by the Santa Ana winds. The MTZ plan takes into account historical fire patterns, ensuring a proactive approach to fire management in these high-risk areas.

Each year, stakeholders from Ventura County, Los Angeles County, and the City of Los Angeles meet to review and update the MTZ plan. This ensures that all parties are prepared and coordinated in the event of a fire, reducing the need for negotiations during an actual incident. As contracted counties with CAL FIRE, Ventura County and Los Angeles County fire departments provide watershed fire protection for SRAs within the MTZ, while the City of Los Angeles handles local responsibilities. This division of roles helps streamline the response and management of fire incidents in the area.

Pre-Incident Preparedness Messaging and Evacuation Messaging

This section discusses the County's efforts to increase the public's engagement and awareness of preparedness messaging protocols before the ignition of the Eaton and Palisades Fires. It explores the systems used to distribute pre-event preparedness messaging; provides an overview of the channels the County leveraged to distribute alert messages; discusses the public response to the County's emergency preparedness messaging; and highlights gaps, challenges, and opportunities to elevate public awareness of fire readiness and evacuation preparedness in response to an increased fire risk.

Public Pre-Incident Preparedness and Awareness

In the days leading up to the Eaton and Palisades Fire, the NWS issued increasingly urgent warnings about dangerous fire weather conditions. On January 6, at around 2:00 p.m., the NWS posted a tweet that highlighted the severity of the incoming windstorm, calling it life-threatening and destructive. At 9:47 p.m. on January 6, they tweeted that it was now a Red Flag Warning and that there was high fire risk. Despite these early notifications, public awareness of the fire risk and preparedness varied across individuals and communities due to several factors.

Primary among these factors was the frequency of fires in the communities. In the community listening sessions, County residents reported being desensitized to fire notifications, preparedness, and evacuation messaging content, and they felt that messaging did not provide sufficient context on the severity of a fire, potentially due to the character limitations of wire emergency alerts (WEAs) constraining how much detail can be included in a message. A common theme in the sessions was that residents vividly

Figure 10: Example of the NWS's December 30, 2024, critical fire weather warning

recalled receiving their first notification about the Eaton or Palisades Fires but were reluctant to act, as the severity of the fires was not discernible in the notification messaging.

For residents in SD3, fires are frequent and have necessitated strong, battle-tested public communication and interagency coordination efforts among official preparedness and response entities, including the LACoFD, LASD, OEM, City of Malibu, City of Los Angeles, and SD3 Office. Many in the community experienced the Broad and/or Franklin Fires in November and December 2024, and a significant number participated in and were aware of community preparedness programs, with an increase in participation following the devastating Woolsey Fire in 2018.

In the Altadena area of SD5, which was impacted by the Eaton Fire, it had been a very long time since a fire prompted an evacuation. Areas west of Eaton Canyon had not burned since the 1930s and areas east had likely not been evacuated since the Kinneloa Mesa Fire in 1993.[33] Prior to the Eaton Fire, Altadena was not classified as a high-hazard area for wildfires in CAL FIRE's FHSZ maps, whereas the entire perimeter of the Palisades Fire was within a very high FHSZ. While fires do burn in the area, they have rarely threatened the urban unincorporated areas of Altadena and Pasadena and have remained within the San Gabriel Mountains and Angeles National Forest, which borders Altadena. Significant fires in the area include the Station Fire in 2009 and the Kinneloa Fire in 1993. While those two fires prompted evacuations along the base of the

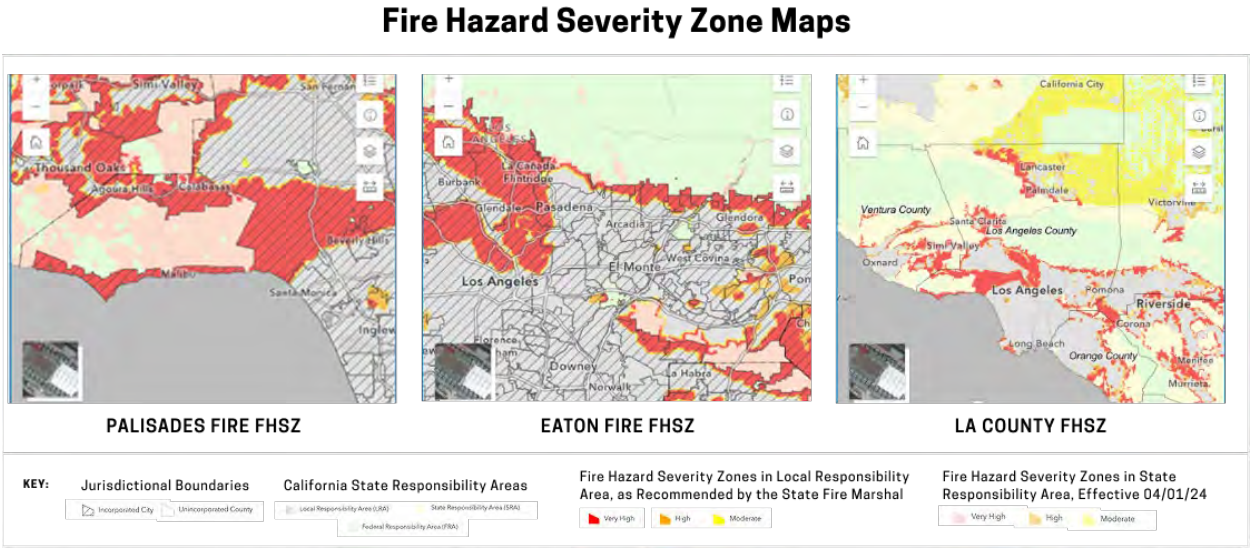

Figure 11: Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps for Palisades Fire, Eaton Fire, and LA County

[33] *Wildfire Ravages Eaton Canyon, Destroys Nature Center 30 Years Ago Today—MyEatonCanyon.com*, Edgar McGregor. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

foothills in Altadena, other fires in the area rarely resulted in large-scale urban impact or evacuations. While the LASD and LACoFD have strong ties to the Altadena and Pasadena community, their public communication and coordination efforts in response to fire events have not been thoroughly tested due to the lower frequency of fires in these areas in recent years.

Official Preparedness Messaging

Official preparedness messaging to the public prior to the ignition of the Eaton and Palisades Fires was disseminated in several phases. The earliest public preparedness messaging for the dangerous wind event forecast for the week of January 6 came from the NWS's Los Angeles/Oxnard office. Messaging began with fire weather forecasts for the week of January 6 on December 31, 2024, with the NWS first issuing a Red Flag Warning. Later on December 31, wind projections were downgraded, and NWS Los Angeles/Oxnard communicated via X that all Red Flag Warnings had been cancelled but that an elevated fire danger still existed. However, on January 2, NWS Los Angeles/Oxnard communicated via X and other platforms about the potential for moderate to strong Santa Ana winds and extreme fire weather conditions from Tuesday through Thursday of that week. This tweet garnered over 191,000 views and was retweeted 57 times. The NWS increased the frequency of warning messages in the days leading up to the event. Its advisories warned of increased severity in the subsequent days, leading to messaging on X and other social media platforms on January 6 that warned of a "life-threatening and destructive" rare event category called a PDS.

Figure 12: Example of the NWS's social media messaging on January 5, 2025, warning of high winds and fire risk

As previously mentioned, a memo from the LACoFD leadership on January 6 (the day before the Eaton and Palisades Fire ignitions) advised the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors of a PDS Red Flag Warning that was projected to impact parts of the County "not normally prone to

strong winds."[34] This memo likened the potential impact of these winds "to the November/December 2011 wind event," which caused widespread damage throughout the County. On January 6 and 7, OEM informed staff for the Board of Supervisors of the County's preparedness actions and highlighted the risk and threats posed by this weather event.

Following the memo to the Board of Supervisors, press releases and statements with preparedness messaging were issued by Supervisor Horvath and Supervisor Barger as follows:

- **January 6, 2025:** At 4:22 p.m., SD3 issued an advisory titled "Prepare for the Red Flag Warning," urging residents to be aware of their surroundings and monitor the situation closely.
- **January 7, 2025:** At 5:00 a.m., SD5 issued a statement on the upcoming windstorm and high fire risk, urging residents to prepare for the extreme weather conditions and potential fire hazards.

In addition to the advisory and press releases from SD3 and SD5 (as noted above) and LACoFD on January 7, and the LACoFD's memo to the Board of Supervisors, most other official preparedness messaging from the County and its departments was the reposting and amplification of NWS information, primarily via X, Instagram, and Facebook. OEM also issued original posts in addition to amplifying NWS messaging. These messages are essential tools the County leverages to increase community awareness of fire hazard information shared by the NWS.

For preparedness messaging shared via social media to be effective, residents must follow and pay active attention to these County accounts. Anyone not following these accounts could also be notified of fire risk and dangerous weather conditions through local media coverage or other non-official channels, such as WatchDuty. This means that official messaging serves as an important information source not only for the public but also for media outlets that amplify this messaging to broader public audiences who do not follow County-official social media accounts. Therefore, the content and frequency of this messaging are crucial in ensuring the public is adequately notified of potential fire threats.

Local Media Coverage Impacting Public Pre-Incident Awareness

In the days leading up to January 7, 2025, local news outlets covered the intensifying fire risk, echoing the warnings issued by the NWS and other official entities. On January 5, 2025, news

[34] Memo from Chief Anthony Marrone to all LA County Supervisors re: Life Threatening and Destructive Widespread Windstorm and Fire Weather, January 6, 2025 (physical document).

broadcasts reported on the looming wintertime fire threat in Southern California, underscoring the significant potential for fire activity driven by the anticipated windstorm.

By January 6, news reports highlighted the NSW's prediction of the life-threatening nature of the windstorm forecast to batter Ventura and Los Angeles counties. The coverage stressed the threatening and destructive nature of the impending storm and the heightened fire risk it posed, with outlets continuously reporting on the wind event and warning residents about the severe fire weather conditions accompanying the powerful windstorm.

On the morning of January 7, updates from local news outlets were punctuated with reports of fires igniting in various locations, the critically severe fire weather conditions, and the life-threatening windstorm sweeping through Southern California. This vital coverage served as an additional warning call, urging residents to heed the warnings and take necessary precautions, just as the official messages from other sources had earlier emphasized.

Enhancing County Preparedness Messaging

There are four main mechanisms through which County preparedness messaging can flow to the public for a weather event such as the one that led to the January 2025 fires: primary weather reports deriving from the NWS, amplification efforts of NWS messages through official County departmental mechanisms and cities/municipalities, Board of Supervisors' offices, and local media reports. All channels must be leveraged to ensure the public is aware of upcoming risky weather events.

However, responsibility for who leads the County's efforts to disseminate preparedness messaging in cases of extreme weather risk and danger is not clearly identified in County policies, the County's Emergency Operating Plan (EOP), or the operating manuals and/or policies for the LASD, LACoFD, or OEM. This means that, despite the actions taken and described above, messaging the high level of risk to the public regarding the Santa Ana wind event in early January 2025 was not emphasized as effectively as it could have been. Knowledge existed at the County level about the danger of the PDS/Red Flag Warning for the week of January 6, and incident response teams were preparing internally to respond. However, official communication to the public indicating the high risk and potential impact of this weather event and its associated fire risk did not go out in a universally accessible format from County sources beyond a handful of posts and the amplification of NWS language through County social media and press releases. The County reposted and amplified messaging but did not send out any stand-alone countywide preparedness messaging to residents. The lack of an official message from the County is particularly concerning because the County knew that this was a PDS event, which signals a significantly higher risk than regular Red Flag events.

Emergency Alert Messaging Tools

Following preparation efforts to ready emergency responders and notify the public of the potential impact of a fire event, ignition of both the Eaton and Palisades Fires prompted the County and its partners to employ multiple systems to communicate emergency evacuation warnings and orders information to the public. These systems included WEAs sent by OEM through the Genasys ALERT platform, NOAA Weather Radio, social media platforms, vehicle sirens, door knocks, and other emergency communication tools, as summarized in Figure 9 and described in detail below.

Figure 13: Los Angeles County's Protective Action Notification Hierarchy (County of Los Angeles Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan)

Universal (No Opt-In or Subscription Required) Tools

Universal tools available to Los Angeles County residents include:

- **WEAs:** WEAs are free, 90 to 360-character emergency text messages sent to mobile devices within range of cell towers broadcasting in an affected area. Residents do not have to sign up for WEAs. In Los Angeles County, OEM can send WEAs from the Genasys ALERT system. WEAs can be sent countywide or targeted to specific areas/zones and provide alerts to both residents and visitors in the targeted area. Within the Genasys ALERT system, OEM can target messages directly to identified zones in the accompanying Genasys EVAC system. WEAs are limited to English and Spanish but cannot include special characters in Spanish. They are also limited to text/URLs—photographs and maps cannot be included. It should be noted that many of the 88 cities in Los Angeles County can disseminate alert and warning messages to their residents and visitors, and most of them have different systems from the County for doing so. This creates a level of complexity regarding responsibilities and consistent messaging. Some jurisdictions are Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Alerting Authorities and can send WEA messages, while others are not, so in multi-jurisdictional incidents, the coordination of alert and warning efforts is essential. If local authorities cannot send messages, the California State Warning Center operated by CalOES can issue alerts within the Los Angeles County operational area.

- **NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR):** The nationwide NWR network broadcasts forecasts, warnings, and emergency information 24 hours a day. A special weather radio receiver is required to receive NWR broadcasts. While accessing a weather radio is optional, no sign-up is necessary to receive alerts when they go out. These radios can receive alerts about fires and other hazards, including dangerous weather conditions. Weather radios with battery backup are not dependent on power, internet, or cell towers. Approximately 3500 NOAA weather radios had been distributed in SD3 by the time of the Palisades Fire.
- **IPAWS:** The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) manages IPAWS, which is used to send notifications for three alert categories—Presidential, AMBER, and Imminent Threat. Residents do not have to sign up for IPAWS alerts. IPAWS includes systems such as the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and WEAs. The County also manages **IPAWS Aware** through its Internal Services Department. IPAWS Aware automates IPAWS monitoring and increases situational awareness by providing activation reports emailed to stakeholders with message details, images of impacted areas, geographic information system (GIS) shapefiles, etc.
- **EAS:** The EAS is a national public warning system that allows authorized officials to broadcast emergency alerts and warning messages to the public via various media, including cable, satellite, and broadcast television, as well as AM, FM, and satellite radio. EAS messages can be delivered to all listeners/viewers of stations across Los Angeles County, regardless of the location impacted by an incident. While the EAS is a far-reaching and well-intentioned system, it has notable shortcomings, especially during fast-spreading emergencies like wildfires because EAS messages rely on people actively watching television or listening to the radio; those who are not tuned in or are asleep at the time the alert is sent out will not receive the EAS messages. Additionally, the system's limitation to English-only messages can reduce accessibility for non-English speakers. So, although the EAS is a valuable tool during emergencies, these gaps highlight the need for complementary alert systems to ensure that timely warnings reach everyone at risk.
- **Tactical Evacuation Alerts by the LACoFD and LASD:** The LASD and LACoFD also use various tactical methods to alert residents, including running vehicle sirens, announcing evacuation messages on loudspeakers, and individual door-to-door notifications. LASD deputies knocked on doors during the Eaton and Palisades Fires to instruct citizens to evacuate immediately, and some played pre-recorded messages on their vehicles' public address (PA) systems. LACoFD firefighters also assisted with evacuations during the Eaton and Palisades Fires when they received calls to assist with rescues and encountered residents in neighborhoods threatened by the fires.

- **Public Broadcasting Service Warning, Alert, and Response Network (PBS WARN):** The PBS WARN acts as a crucial backup system in emergency communications. In the event of a crisis, an alert originator, such as a local emergency manager or authorized government agency, sends an alert through FEMA's IPAWS system. FEMA then disseminates the alert, primarily through mobile carriers, which deliver it to user devices, such as smartphones. Simultaneously, FEMA routes the alert to the PBS WARN, which uses satellite uplinks to deliver the message to public television stations. This ensures alerts are broadcast even if mobile networks are down, providing redundancy and broader public reach.

  In addition to this broadcast capability, the PBS WARN website displays every WEA issued in the United States and its territories. FEMA and public safety professionals rely on the PBS WARN site for real-time situational awareness, alert validation, and historical searches for expired alerts to support AARs and training. Complementing this tool is the Eyes on IPAWS app, which provides emergency managers with real-time access to WEAs. The app receives alerts directly from local PBS member station airwaves using a television antenna and receiver. It is completely independent of internet or cellular networks, making it an invaluable backup resource for EOCs.

Self-Sought Emergency Information Sources and Opt-In Alert Systems

Emergency Messaging tools available to Los Angeles County residents to learn about and maintain awareness of emergencies include a range of resources including opt-in emergency notification messaging, subscription-based applications, relevant social media accounts and channels, local news outlets, and public information sources like the Los Angeles County emergency webpage:

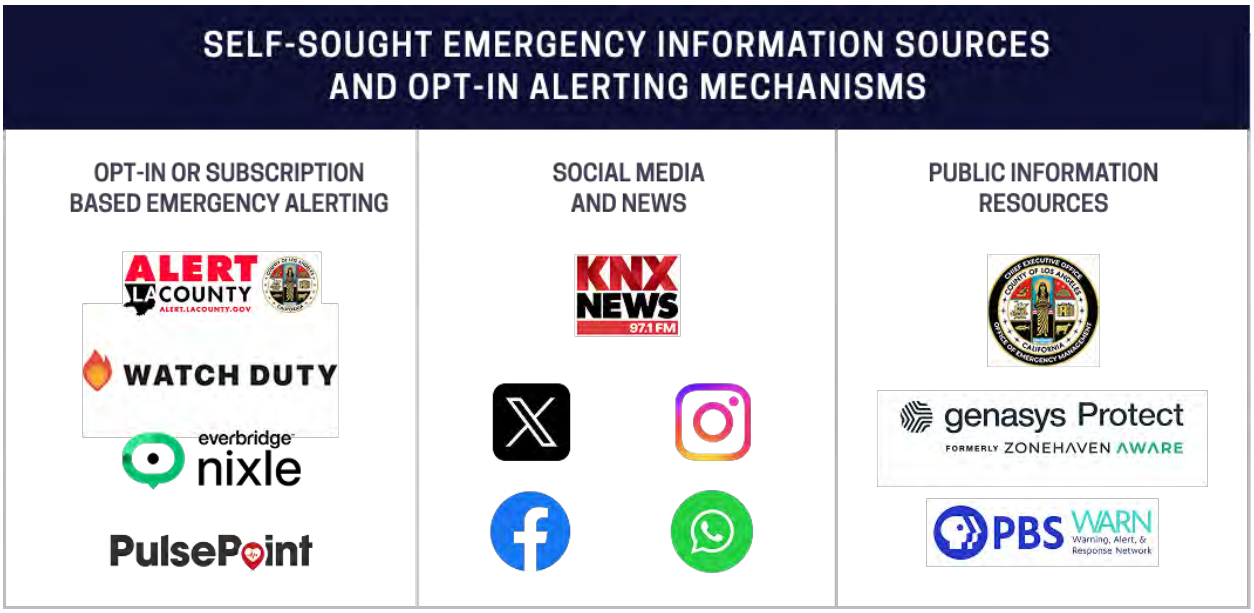

Figure 14: Examples of opt-in alert systems

- **Alert LA County:** Alert LA County is the County's branded mass notification tool. The County can send mass notifications using Genasys ALERT, which can send text, email, teletypewriter, and voice phone call messages to registered users and a select number of landline phones within the County's 911 database.
- **LACounty.gov/Emergency:** *LACounty.gov/Emergency* is the County's website activated during an emergency. The website provides a range of information for the public's reference. It indicates the areas affected by an emergency, impacts to County services and facilities, information regarding human and animal shelters, water and health alerts, road closures, and transportation information, and provides links to media releases and other public information sources.
- **Ready LA County:** Ready LA County (*ready.lacounty.gov*) is the County's emergency preparedness website, which has resources available to residents on how to plan for emergencies, keep supplies, stay informed, and get involved in preparedness efforts.

- **Genasys PROTECT:** Genasys PROTECT allows residents to view a map of evacuation zones and any corresponding warnings or orders via the Genasys PROTECT website or through an application for smart devices.
- **WatchDuty:** WatchDuty provides real-time updates on fire incidents, evacuation orders, and warnings. While it is a third-party application unaffiliated with the County, it aggregates information from several official sources, including the County. During the community listening sessions and in the community surveys, many community members referred to it as their best and most consistently reliable source of information throughout both the Eaton and Palisades Fires. LACoFD and LASD personnel also mentioned using it during the Eaton and Palisades Fires. Although it proved to be useful for many, it is a privately owned platform and requires users to opt in to receive notifications through the WatchDuty app or website.
- **Social Media:** Social media platforms, particularly X, were actively used by NWS Los Angeles/Oxnard to communicate the impending fire threat and by local County and city officials to amplify important messaging and provide updates throughout the event.
- **Local News Outlets:** Many local news outlets offer opt-in services where residents can sign up to receive alerts and updates via email or text messages. Local outlets, such as KNX News Radio, were heavily messaging about the impending threat and reporting on the Eaton and Palisades Fires following ignition.

Considerations Accompanying the Use of Existing Alert Systems

While many methods exist for Los Angeles County to communicate emergency preparedness and alert information to its 10 million residents, several factors impact their efficacy. Many alert and notification services are opt-in, which, although openly available to the public, do not reach every resident. If residents are not aware of or do not sign up for these services, such as Alert Los Angeles County, Genasys PROTECT, and WatchDuty, they will not benefit from the alerts and notifications sent from these systems.

Despite the multiple ways they allow the public to receive notifications, issues with opt-in and universal emergency alert notification systems are exacerbated by their reliance on adequate cellular, radio, and Wi-Fi signals and coverage, and, most importantly, commercial power. While redundancies in communication mechanisms exist in the county, they still rely on effective cellular coverage and do not work when there is poor cellular coverage or when commercial power is lost to an area. Cellular coverage is weakened when there are fewer cell towers in an area, while signal quality suffers when its use exceeds available capacity or when heavy smoke from a fire interferes, reflects, or absorbs radio signals.

Cell towers are particularly vulnerable—a PSPS can shut down their power, or a fire can destroy them. In these cases, it is difficult and sometimes impossible for Alert LA County notifications to get through, decreasing the reliability of receiving a message relayed through any of the existing methods. In such conditions, the only reliable redundancy to ensure residents are made aware of a protective order impacting their area is field-based notifications by public safety officers, often in the form of door knocks or announcements made over a vehicle-mounted loudspeaker.

Messaging and Public Response

The County issued numerous evacuation orders and warnings and sent evacuation messages: 51 total zone status changes for the Palisades Fire (32 evacuation warnings and 19 evacuation orders), and 158 total zone status changes for the Eaton Fire (58 evacuation warnings and 100 evacuation orders). In total, almost 250,000 people were under evacuation warnings or orders for the Eaton and Palisades Fires.

Before evaluating the effectiveness of evacuation messaging during the Eaton and Palisades Fires and the public's response to such messaging, it is essential to acknowledge that some residents during the community listening sessions and through the community surveys stated that they did not receive an evacuation warning or evacuation order before deciding to evacuate or only received the messaging hours after they had already self-evacuated. Additionally, some individuals reported not receiving any official evacuation messaging, even as the fire approached their homes. For at least some people, then, formal evacuation messaging had no bearing on their decision to evacuate; they determined they might be in danger and took action.

Reasons why some residents did not receive any of these alerts may have been the limited cellular coverage in the Santa Monica Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains, PSPSs shutting down the power of commercial cell towers that would have transmitted the messages (see *Appendix 8: Public Safety Power Shutoffs* for a summary of the PSPSs that impacted the Eaton and Palisades Fire areas), downed power lines, or signal strength degradation due to heavy smoke from the fires.

Residents highlighted gaps in the efficacy of evacuation messaging, beginning with what they perceived to be the underwhelming urgency and severity of preparedness messaging to adequately communicate the potential impact of a PDS Red Flag Warning versus a regular Red Flag Warning (the difference between the two is discussed earlier in the document).[35] Many

[35] See page 12, *paragraph 1* in section titled "A Perfect Storm."

residents had experienced Red Flag Warnings before and had trouble discerning the greater risk conveyed in a PDS. Many residents noted this as an issue, as it impacted their readiness posture.

Residents also described having trouble with the format of the evacuation messages they did receive, as the messages required them to click a link to get the information, rather than providing detailed information in the alert. Due to the limited number of characters allowed in alerts, each evacuation message sent provided a link to the County's emergency information website, (lacounty.gov/emergency, also known as alertla.org), where they could then access updated information and available resources on shelters, traffic and transportation routes, and other information.

Figure 15: Example of a WEA

Some residents said that they relied on third-party apps, such as WatchDuty, or social media for updates; some were alerted by neighbors or family members; and some observed the conditions outside their homes and made the decision to leave. The feedback indicates that there was no clearly recognized, centralized source of accurate information that community members knew about or were able to use for guidance, particularly regarding available resources and the latest evacuation routes.

Residents also noted other issues that occurred after the fires ignited and evacuation warnings and orders began being issued and sent to the public:

- **Fire Update Communication Gaps:** The communication system for alerts and warnings did not provide complete information about the fire's progression, including the names and locations of evacuation zones or general areas of evacuation. The extreme and rapidly moving fire conditions challenged the situational awareness of fire and law enforcement first responders, making it difficult to communicate the fire's location to the public. This was especially prevalent during the Eaton Fire, when wind conditions grounded aerial resources, including surveillance, almost immediately after the fire started. As a result, residents expressed frustration over wanting more frequent updates and their reliance on unofficial sources, such as social media and community groups.

- **Messaging Timing:** The County made decisions to issue evacuation warnings and evacuation orders to the public as soon as the County ascertained the fires' status, which rapidly evolved throughout the incident. This sometimes left residents with little time to prepare and evacuate. Evacuation decisions and messages could not keep pace with the fire. Once Unified Command communicated an evacuation decision, the fire had already impacted another zone. Some areas did not receive an evacuation warning before residents decided to leave, as was the case in many neighborhoods west of Lake Avenue in Altadena during the Eaton Fire. This contributed to confusion and panic, with many evacuating residents feeling that they had little time to collect essential belongings.
- **Power Outages:** PSPS and unplanned outages caused by wind and fire damage significantly disrupted the effectiveness of evacuation messaging. These power interruptions hindered residents' access to emergency notifications, especially in areas with limited cellular backup or where internet service was compromised. In some neighborhoods, automated call systems failed to operate due to the loss of electricity, while residents without battery-powered radios or charged devices missed critical evacuation updates. The compounded effect of PSPS and infrastructure damage created communication gaps, delayed public awareness, and added complexity to coordinated evacuation efforts, underscoring the importance of redundant, multi-channel alert systems in wildfire-prone regions.
- **Challenges in Evacuation Process Due to Inadequate Information in Evacuation Messages:** Residents reported that evacuations were chaotic due to a lack of clear instructions in evacuation messaging, and many reported that they evacuated based on their own observations or advice from neighbors rather than on official guidance. Some said that while evacuating, they encountered blocked roads and did not witness any emergency personnel helping to direct traffic—this applied to both the Eaton and Palisades Fires. Many reported having no support from first responders to evacuate and experiencing difficulties navigating through smoke, fallen trees, and debris.

For many, evacuation alert fatigue played a role in their decision to leave or not leave their homes. This was especially true for residents in SD3, who experienced frequent wildfire threats and associated evacuation warnings and alerts. Just a few months prior to the Eaton and Palisades Fires, SD3 residents received approximately three different PDS messages from the NWS. While these earlier PDS events were significant and did result in destructive fires (Broad Fire, Mountain Fire, and Franklin Fire) that posed significant risk to life and resulted in property loss, many residents who received the three PDS messages did not experience the fires since they did not reach their neighborhoods. As a result, many residents did not take the NWS's PDS on January 6, 2025, for a notable wind event and potential fire hazard seriously. Community members frequently described this as warning fatigue.

Community members also reported that deciphering language used in the messages for evacuation warnings and evacuation orders alerts was challenging, with language such as “fast-moving wildfire in your area” reportedly not being specific or actionable enough for residents. Names of evacuation zones also posed a challenge—residents highlighted the need for messaging about evacuation zones to include street names and/or landmarks as geographic boundaries instead of the current system of letters and numbers. Some residents indicated they did not know the name of their evacuation zones, which made understanding the evacuation messaging more difficult.

Coordination and Resources

Roles of County Departments

This section provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the three main County entities involved in the decision-making process to issue evacuation warnings and evacuation orders, send evacuation messaging, and effectuate evacuations.

Working in close coordination with city-level partners and other mutual aid partners, the LACoFD, LASD, and OEM are the critical decision-makers and implementors of messaging and evacuations during a fire event. Each of these three organizations has a distinct role, and they are reliant on input from and coordination between each other to execute a safe and successful evacuation process. The LACoFD and LASD decide whether there is a need to issue evacuation warnings and evacuation orders during a fire event, while OEM is tasked with evacuation messaging to the public regarding evacuation decisions. Although multiple agencies have the flexibility to decide whether an emergency notification should be sent, in practice, OEM sends the WEAs once the decision has been made.

Determining which entity has the authority to make evacuation decisions varies from event to event and is often based on expertise related to the nature of the incident. During the interviews for this AAR, Unified Commanders from LASD, LACoFD, and OEM, almost universally acknowledged that for a wildfire LACoFD would typically make evacuation recommendations for its jurisdiction with input and community knowledge from LASD and other jurisdictional law enforcement and fire officials.

The LASD shared their EOB's SOPs for fire, which states, "Evacuation Branch Managers of both Fire and Law…co-located and making joint decisions" at the ICP.[36] This was the procedure that was supposed to be followed during both the Eaton and Palisades Fires, with the LACoFD leading decision-making on which evacuation zones to call for warnings or orders, the LASD advising based on its knowledge of the community and the operational resources needed to execute the evacuation, and OEM sending evacuation messaging to the public. Each of these three County entities had a distinct role to play in the process, as described in interviews summarized below and featured in Figure 16.

[36] Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department EOB SOP Fires

Figure 16:Summary of evacuation decision-making and alerting roles and responsibilities based on stakeholder interviews and review of County documents.

Los Angeles County Fire Department

LACoFD provides firefighting, medical emergency, ocean lifeguard, and health hazardous materials services for the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County and 13 cities through contractual agreements and to another 47 areas that became part of the Fire District when the district was formed. In addition to its local government responsibilities, LACoFD operates as a contractor with CAL FIRE and is responsible for wildland fire protection on SRA lands through a cooperative agreement with the State of California. LACoFD also serves as CalOES's Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid Coordinator for Region I, coordinating local government fire resources in Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo counties.

As of the LACoFD 2024 Statistical Summary, LACoFD is responsible for 3,965,562 residents, 1,301,527 housing units, 60 district cities, and all unincorporated communities over 2,311 square miles. LACoFD employs 3,114 firefighting personnel *(Internal Document – Staffing Ratio Information)*. This equates to roughly one firefighter for every 1,284 residents. In total, Los Angeles County is home to approximately 9,000 firefighters, including those from LACoFD and 29 other independent fire agencies that operate within the County.

LACoFD operates a robust network of resources, including 176 fire stations, 163 engine companies, 76 paramedic units, nine helicopters, ten bulldozers, and nine fire suppression camps.

In terms of specialized resources, the department maintains four hazardous materials squads, two urban search and rescue squads, and two fireboats.

During a fire incident, fire agencies serve as the primary monitoring entities of fire behavior at the ICP and are tasked with determining evacuation warnings and orders based on their specialized knowledge of fire behavior patterns and progression. According to the established procedures outlined in the LACoFD's Fire Manual, V11-C1-S1, the Incident Commander (IC) is responsible for evaluating and determining the need for evacuation. When an evacuation is deemed necessary, the IC contacts Command and Control to request assistance from the local law enforcement agency.[37] Command and Control then request that a law enforcement agency representative report to the Command Post to prepare evacuation plans. The IC is to coordinate closely with law enforcement in the development of these evacuation plans, while the law enforcement agency implements the finalized evacuation plan.[38]

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

The LASD executes evacuations and issues field evacuation notifications aligned with the appropriate evacuation order declared, be it a warning or an order. LASD notifies the public of threats and evacuation orders through direct door-to-door notifications and vehicle-embedded PA systems while also leading traffic control efforts by implementing necessary road closures to facilitate safe evacuation routes.

As the largest Sheriff's department in the United States, with approximately 17,000 staff members, including sworn officers and professional staff, the LASD plays a fundamental role in ensuring public safety and coordinating emergency response efforts.[39] The LASD works closely with various agencies and organizations to effectively respond to emergencies, maintain law and order, and protect the community's well-being. The LASD's responsibilities encompass a broad range of tasks, including search and rescue operations, evacuation coordination, traffic control, and ensuring order in affected areas. Deputies are deployed to disaster sites to provide immediate assistance, assess situations, and support relief efforts. Additionally, they establish law enforcement command structures and collaborate with emergency management to establish vital communication channels for disseminating critical information to the public.

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[37] LACoFD Wildland Fire Manual V11-C1-S1 November 1994

[38] LACoFD Wildland Fire Manual V11-C1-S1 November 1994

[39] *Executive Staff | Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department* Staff Bios. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

With respect to the decision to issue an evacuation warning or evacuation order according to Los Angeles County's Emergency Operations Plan (2023) and the LASD's internal Manual of Policy and Procedures, the LASD's role during a fire incident is primarily supportive.[40]

According to the LASD's Emergency Operating Procedure, EOP 2-6 (Evacuations) (2006), the established evacuation policy for the LASD indicates that, normally, the decision to evacuate an area during a fire will be made by the LACoFD IC.[41] Once this decision has been made, they communicate the need to the Law Enforcement IC. The responsibility to conduct the evacuation in the field rests with the Law Enforcement IC. However, if the Law Enforcement IC receives conflicting information regarding the need to evacuate, if there is an unreasonable delay in receiving this information, or if, in their professional opinion, an evacuation is warranted, it is the Sheriff department's policy to evacuate and protect the health and safety of the community affected by the incident.[42] Similarly, Los Angeles County's EOP identifies the LACoFD as the leading agency that manages wildfires.

In practice, these seemingly conflicting guidelines, plans, and procedures have caused uncertainty around who has the responsibility to make the decision to issue an evacuation warning or order during fire emergencies.

Evacuation Messaging

County policies lack the direction and specificity needed for residents to make informed evacuation decisions. Evacuation notifications and messaging to the public are detailed in County Code 2.68.160 (Authority for Alerts, Warnings, and Emergency Notifications to the Public), which provides "The Chief Executive Officer, the Sheriff, the Fire Chief and the County Director of Public Health authority to issue, disseminate and coordinate alerts, warnings and emergency notifications to the public. With respect to such alerts, warnings, and emergency notifications, the Office of Emergency Management is authorized to coordinate consistency of messaging." Based on this, LACoFD, LASD, and OEM each have the authority to message and communicate evacuation warnings and orders. In practice, during a wildfire, OEM has the critical role of capturing decisions made by ICs and message evacuation decisions using emergency alert and notification systems. There is a need to review County Code 2.68 and give further clarity and direction around messaging to the public when evacuation warnings and evacuation orders have been issued.

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[40] Fig 7, Page 29 *County of Los Angeles Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan* November 2023. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[41] LASD EOP 2-6 Evacuations May 2006

[42] LASD EOP 2-6 Evacuations May 2006

Office of Emergency Management

OEM is an all-hazards emergency management organization responsible for the coordination of all phases of the disaster continuum—planning, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation—for large-scale emergencies and disasters across Los Angeles County. OEM is organizationally located within the Chief Executive Office, Administrative Services Division, and has a staff of 37 personnel and no dedicated operating budget. Compared to OEMs in jurisdictions of similar size (although not as large or complex), Los Angeles County's OEM has significantly less staff, budget, and autonomy over its operating capabilities. The table below provides a comparison for reference.

Emergency Management Staffing and Funding for Population-Comparable Counties and Cities			
Location	**Population**	**Staffing Level**	**Budget***
Los Angeles County	**10,000,000**	**37**	**$15 Million****
New York City	8,500,000	200+ (current) 93 (2026 Preliminary)[43]	approx. $88 Million (FY26 Preliminary)[44]
Cook County, IL	5,183,000	54	$131,653 Million[45]
San Diego County[46]	3,300,000	43	$12.3 Million
City of Chicago[47]	2,600,000[48]	815	Approx. $110 Million

OEM acts as the day-to-day coordinator for the County's entire geographic area, working with 88 cities, 137 unincorporated communities, and 288 special districts. OEM maintains, activates, and operates the CEOC and operates a 24/7 emergency management watch center to address

[43] *New-York-City-Emergency-Management.pdf*. Page 4, Report on the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Plan and the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan for the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. New York City Council. Last reference September 3, 2025.

[44] *New-York-City-Emergency-Management.pdf*. Page 2, Report on the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Plan and the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan for the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. New York City Council. Last reference September 3, 2025.

[45] *https://www.cookcountyil.gov/sites/g/files/ywwepo161/files/documents/2025-02/Volume%202%20%20Adopted%202025_Web.pdf* Cook County, IL Budget Report. Last referenced September 17, 2025.

[46] *https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/hr/jobs/Director_OES.pdf* San Diego County, CA Director of Emergency Services position announcement. Last referenced September 14, 2025.

[47] *Number of Employees by Department - Based on Current Employee Names, Salaries, and Position Titles | City of Chicago | Data Portal* Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[48] *Chicago, Illinois Population 2025* World Population Review. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

*Some of these comparison budgets and staffing levels may include functions and responsibilities not currently included in LA County's Office of Emergency Management's functions or responsibilities.

**Budget number represents operational staff budget managed under CEO's office.

emergency conditions. OEM also plays a crucial role in public education and information, building community resilience by performing preparedness functions.

OEM captures finalized decision information on evacuation zones and evacuation orders from Unified Command to update the Genasys EVAC platform and subsequently launch WEAs through Genasys ALERT. This role positions OEM as the central coordination hub for ensuring consistent and accurate messaging reaches the public through established emergency notification systems.

In addition to this central role in coordinating messaging of evacuation decisions, OEM has several other emergency preparedness and response responsibilities. According to Section 2.68.270 (Powers and Duties) of Part 5 (Emergency and Disaster Activities and Operations—Roles and Responsibilities) of County Code 2.68 (Emergency Services), the Director of OEM has extensive duties that support the overall emergency response framework.[49] These responsibilities include organizing and coordinating the emergency organization of the County, which encompasses coordinating training, developing and reviewing the Los Angeles County Operational Area Emergency Plan and Board-ordered departmental emergency plans, as well as County emergency preparedness activities. The director establishes and maintains liaison with city governments within Los Angeles County and other governmental and quasi-governmental agencies, as well as volunteer organizations relating to emergency preparedness.[50]

[49] *https://library.municode.com/ca/los_angeles_County/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2AD_DIV3DEOTADBO_CH2.68EMSE_PT5EMDIACOPOLRE_2.68.270PODU* June 24, 2025. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[50] *https://library.municode.com/ca/los_angeles_County/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2AD_DIV3DEOTADBO_CH2.68EMSE_PT5EMDIACOPOLRE_2.68.270PODU* June 24, 2025. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

LACoFD, LASD, and OEM work together and with additional partners to decide on, communicate, and implement evacuation decisions. Significant forethought and preparation are required to prepare for incidents where evacuation is possible. An overview of the steps followed by key stakeholders to determine and communicate evacuation decisions is described in further detail in subsequent sections.

It is worth noting that in addition to the roles of the three County departments, other jurisdictions covering the City of Los Angeles and surrounding unincorporated areas play an important role. The City of Los Angeles (including LAPD, LAFD, and the Department of Emergency Management), as well as the emergency management agencies of the City of Pasadena and City of Malibu, were involved in managing the Eaton and Palisades Fires. They were a part of Unified Command and were often the first responders on scene.

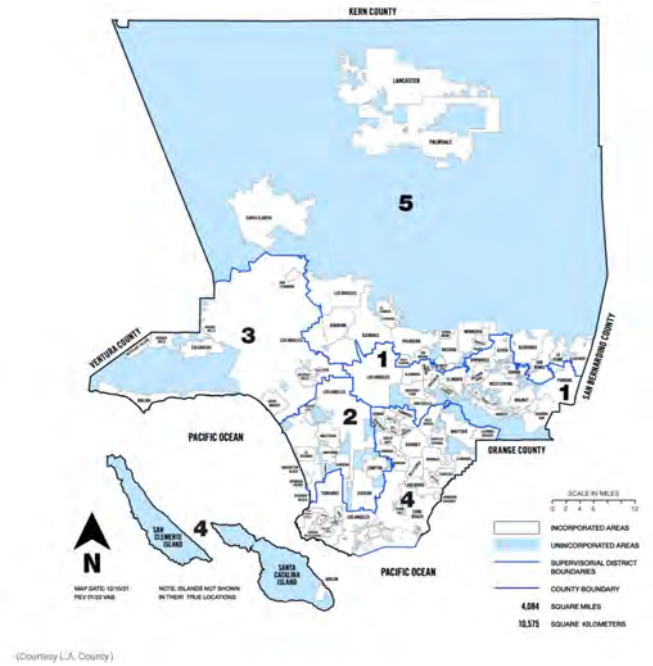

Figure 17: Map of incorporated an unincorporated areas in Los Angeles County (Source)

Evacuation Processes and Public Safety Measures

The Los Angeles County Emergency Operations Plan (2023) defines an evacuation as the organized and systematic process of relocating people from an area or location that is at risk or threatened by an imminent hazard or disaster to designated evacuation centers or safer areas, out of harm's way.[51] The County uses the state approved evacuation terminology when making evacuation-related decisions and sending notifications regarding such decisions:

1. **Evacuation Warning:** Potential threat to life and/or property. Those who require additional time to evacuate and those with pets and livestock should leave now.
2. **Evacuation Order:** Immediate threat to life. This is a lawful order to leave now. The area is lawfully closed to public access.

Planning, deciding upon, communicating, and executing evacuation-related actions is a multi-step process. This rest of this section discusses how evacuations were determined and executed for the Eaton and Palisades Fires, highlights gaps or deviations from the established processes, and causative factors affecting evacuation efforts.

Process and Decision-Making for Evacuation Issuance

Evacuation Decision-Making

Evacuation warnings and evacuation orders are issued based on pre-defined zones, which are developed in the County's evacuation planning system, Genasys EVAC. While pre-defined, these zones are modifiable as needed during an incident. During a fire event, Unified Command monitors fire behavior and should coordinate to determine evacuation zones and issue evacuation warnings and evacuation alerts. Zone recommendations are made based on real-time assessments of the fire's progression and knowledge of the operational area. Once a decision on protective action is made (whether an evacuation warning or an order), this decision needs to be documented in Genasys EVAC.

For the Palisades Fire, the zones receiving evacuation warnings and evacuation orders were identified by Unified Commanders, including the LACoFD and LASD. The zones were communicated directly to OEM's agency representative (A-Rep) in the field at Incident Command. OEM's A-Rep then communicated these zones by phone call and/or text with OEM

[51] *County of Los Angeles Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan* November 2023. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

staff in the EOC, who then updated the zones in the Genasys EVAC system and thereafter sent evacuation messaging out via Genasys ALERT. In a few instances, OEM's A-Rep was able to select the zones in the Genasys EVAC system while in the field prior to calling or texting the zone updates to their teammates in the EOC.

For the Eaton Fire, the evacuation zones receiving evacuation warnings and orders were identified by LACoFD staff as part of Unified Command. They were then communicated to OEM's A-Rep in the ICP. OEM's A-Rep then communicated the zones by phone call and/or text with OEM staff in the EOC, who then selected the zones in the Genasys EVAC system and thereafter sent evacuation messages out via the Genasys ALERT system. It does not appear that LASD staff were always initially aware in real time of what zones were designated for evacuation orders or warnings by Unified Command, because while they were co-located in the same area at the ICP, they were not physically side by side when all evacuation warning and order decisions were made.

During the interview process, LACoFD staff in the field in Altadena recall suggesting to Unified Command LACoFD staff a little before 12:00 a.m. on January 8 that due to high winds, evacuation orders should go out for the foothills of Altadena, all the way to La Canada. Unified Command staff did not recall this occurring and reported that the fire front for the Eaton Fire was not moving west into those areas at that time (see *Appendix 12: Fire Front Progression*). What is clear, however, is that Unified Command was dealing with a multitude of issues caused by the catastrophic wind-driven fire and the concerns raised regarding the Eaton Fire reaching the JPL during the same time frame and having potentially catastrophic impacts across the San Gabriel Valley. Alerts were not sent out to this area until later in the early morning of January 8, but they were sent before the fire front crossed west of Lake Avenue.

All evacuation decisions appear to have been communicated to OEM staff in the EOC via phone call and/or text message. Some stakeholders stated that they had taken field notes about this; however, those notes were either incomplete, not time-stamped, or not maintained. No official form or documentation was used by LACoFD, LASD or OEM to jointly and formally record which zones should receive evacuation orders or warnings, the time the decision was made, or the time the zones were communicated to OEM staff at the EOC.

Documentation of Evacuation Warnings and Orders

Once OEM receives the information to message an evacuation warning or order for a zone, a trained individual from OEM logs it into the Genasys EVAC system, selects a zone or zones on the map, and changes the zone's status to "Warning" or "Order," identifiable as a yellow or red color on the map in the system. Depending on the pace and severity of an incident, this documentation step is typically done by OEM staff within the County EOC who receive zone and alert instructions via phone call or text from the designated OEM A-Rep assigned to the

incident, but this step can sometimes be done in the field by the OEM A-Rep at the ICP if they have connectivity to Genasys EVAC.

Once a protective action is documented in Genasys EVAC by OEM staff, it should be visible to anyone, including members of the public, monitoring the Genasys PROTECT application. However, documenting an evacuation action in Genasys EVAC does not mean that the emergency alert for that action has been sent—only those closely monitoring Genasys PROTECT will know that a protective action has been put in place. For the broader public in the affected area to be notified, a WEA or EAS alert must be issued. When these notifications are issued, they trigger updates to third-party apps, like WatchDuty and some websites, but the public must be subscribed to and/or monitor these third-party sources to get these notifications.

Communication of Evacuation Protective Orders to the Public

Once an evacuation decision is determined in the field and documented in the Genasys EVAC system, it is ready to be communicated to the public via a WEA, which is sent through the Genasys ALERT system. To accomplish this, trained OEM staff use the zones documented in Genasys EVAC to log pre-templated messaging in English and Spanish into the Genasys ALERT system, which then uses geofencing technology to launch that messaging to all cellphones in the corresponding location for those zones. As long as they are turned on, have reception, and local cell towers are transmitting the message, cell phones should receive the WEA shortly after it is sent. OEM does not have the authority to issue evacuation WEAs for any given zone until its A-Rep in the field or the Unified Commanders explicitly notify it of Incident Command's decision to issue an evacuation order or warning and instruct it to issue said order or warning.

The average time between an evacuation decision being communicated by Unified Command to OEM A-Reps, OEM A-Reps contacting OEM EOC staff, OEM EOC staff updating the zones in Genasys EVAC, and OEM EOC staff launching evacuation messages in Genasys ALERT so that they can be communicated to the public, was approximately 20–30 minutes during these fires. Despite the newness of this process and the Genasys ALERT system for County OEM staff, this is a marked improvement in the time taken between an evacuation decision being made and it being communicated to the public. Previously, the process using the CodeRed platform reportedly took 30–60 minutes from receiving the evacuation decision to messaging the public. This demonstrates that some of the many successes with emergency alerts and notification during the January 2025 wildfires were due to the initiative and adaptability of the relevant OEM staff members. These staffers specifically acknowledged the quick thinking and composure of those who sent out WEAs during the intense pressure of the Eaton and Palisades Fires.

In parallel, as WEAs were sent out through the Genasys ALERT system, a select number of landline phones within the County's 911 database also received calls via the Genasys ALERT

system. In addition, emails were sent and voice phone call messages made to registered users of Alert LA County, the County's branded mass notification tool for Genasys ALERT.

As previously discussed, WEAs and EAS alerts are not the only way decisions regarding evacuation actions are shared with the public. While WEAs and emergency alerts can broadly inform the public, there are additional ways to ensure residents understand the danger of the situation and the necessity to evacuate. Primary among these is the execution of evacuations, which are conducted primarily by the LASD. LASD deputies drive through impacted neighborhoods using their vehicles' PA systems to alert residents to the threat and order to leave. Deputies also knock on the doors of homes in the impacted area to ensure residents are aware of the threat and order them to leave. Evacuation execution is discussed in the next section.

Evacuation Execution

The Palisades Fire erupted in the Santa Monica Mountains before spreading rapidly toward Pacific Palisades and was initially under LAPD jurisdiction. However, because input from the LAPD was not provided for this review, official insight into the initial evacuation management is limited. As the Palisades Fire grew, County LASD began its own evacuation efforts, for which emergency alert and warning messages were disseminated. The Malibu/Lost Hills Sheriff Station was among the first to respond, deploying deputies door-to-door and using PA systems with prerecorded messaging to urge evacuations in the Sunset Mesa community. Prior to LASD's DOC assuming full operational control, the SIB immediately coordinated initial response actions, the mobilization of resources, and critical information flow, and initiated notifications until DOC personnel arrived and assumed incident oversight. Recognizing the escalating complexity and intensity of the fires, field personnel recommended activating their IMT 2, a pivotal move that improved coordination, resource allocation, and strategic decision-making.

The LASD DOC was activated to manage high-level coordination and logistical support. The DOC oversaw resource tracking, personnel assignments, and asset deployment across multiple fire zones. Its early activation allowed a timely response to resource requests, including deploying squads to both the Eaton and Palisades Fire areas. Structured tools such as Microsoft Lists and ICS 213 resource request forms ensured the organized management of personnel and equipment. Additionally, the EOB embedded representatives within the DOC and IMT teams to streamline operations and reduce duplication.

Once the Eaton Fire started, LASD's Altadena and Crescenta Valley Sheriff staff began evacuations in the neighborhoods initially impacted, and as more resources were deployed to the area, they continued evacuations throughout the night and early morning hours. On January 7, before the Eaton Fire started, LASD staff and patrol cars were sent to assist in the Palisades Fire, but they subsequently returned to Altadena to assist with evacuations. Additional personnel and

mobile field forces from nearby Sheriff Stations (Crescenta Valley, Industry, San Dimas, and Pico Rivera) and Twin Towers Correctional Facility were also deployed to the area to assist, along with LASD search and rescue (SAR) teams.

Once a formal Unified Command was established for the Eaton Fire—initially at Eaton Canyon Equestrian Park and later relocating to Farnsworth Park and finally to the Rose Bowl—LASD staff were co-located in the same parking lot with the LACoFD, OEM, and other local partners, like the Pasadena Police Department and California Highway Patrol, to handle incident management and dispatch personnel in real time. They dispatched resources for evacuation missions to LASD units and LASD SAR teams. Despite utilizing additional personnel, a shortage of LASD duty vehicles hindered comprehensive coverage across all impacted neighborhoods. Vulnerable populations, especially older residents who were not monitoring alerts due to a digital divide and possible mobility challenges, faced increased risks of delayed evacuation.

The LASD and LACoFD were also involved in evacuating residents from several senior care facilities, including the Pasadena Park Healthcare and Wellness Center within the first hour of the fire and the MonteCedro Senior Care Community in Altadena from approximately 4:00 a.m. on January 8. LASD staff worked to mobilize Pasadena transit buses to these facilities, with some LASD staff leading bus drivers into and through the impacted fire areas. The use of these buses allowed the quick evacuation of many vulnerable residents.

For both the Eaton and Palisades Fire, the LACoFD participated in and/or assisted with evacuations when they encountered residents in neighborhoods or structures or received dispatch calls to homes for assistance.

Given the catastrophic nature of the Eaton Fire and the demand for resources to assist with evacuations, both LASD and LACoFD command level personnel in the field either conducted individual evacuations or ordered evacuations directly in neighborhoods. This heroic response was driven by urgency and their commitment to save lives, but it also added additional complexity to their responsibilities as they worked to maintain broader operational oversight in the field. However, other staff in the field and at the ICP were available and also handled incident command and operational responsibilities.

For both fires, some LASD and LACoFD personnel conducting evacuations and rescues of residents where fires were already burning homes performed heroic actions. In some areas, they worked with limited to no visibility due to thick smoke or with downed trees and power lines blocking road access.

Public Compliance Challenges

During the Eaton Fire, information being shared on social media exacerbated compliance issues. A trending phrase, “The fire is moving east,” fostered some complacency and reluctance in residents in Altadena and those west of Lake Avenue to evacuate and remain vigilant of potential risks. Vulnerable groups, including the elderly and non-ambulatory individuals, often relied on caregivers, family members, or neighbors for evacuation alerts. Many older residents remained unaware of the danger during the early hours of January 8, leading to a reluctance to evacuate.

In certain areas, for both fires, some homeowners believed their properties were safe or had confidence in extinguishing flames with garden hoses, while others, particularly those in generational homes, resisted evacuation due to emotional ties. Some citizens who used garden hoses to battle the flames held the view that not enough fire resources had been deployed to defend their homes.

In addition, community members observed citizen volunteers managing traffic at key intersections instead of law enforcement, raising citizen concerns about the visibility and availability of official personnel. This highlights the need for a review and possible updating of the LASD’s evacuation procedures and training to account for fast-moving fire scenarios.

Findings and Recommendations

The findings and recommendations in this section are grounded in factual evidence and practical experience. The goal is to provide valuable insights that can inform the development of more effective and coordinated emergency response strategies for future emergencies.

This section first discusses the strengths and best practices related to evacuation messaging and processes that emerged during the incidents and identifies which practices that have not yet been institutionalized should be. Following this, specific areas for improvement in the current systems and processes are identified. Finally, recommendations for policy and technology enhancements that address these weaknesses and improve overall preparedness and response are provided.

Strengths and Best Practices

This AAR's in-depth analysis identified several areas where coordination, resource allocation, and communication strategies were particularly effective. By recognizing and building upon these best practices, the County can develop its framework for future emergencies to better protect the community's safety and well-being.

Many of the best practices outlined below were derived from activities and strategies implemented in the Palisades Fire area and represent lessons learned from the Woolsey Fire. Additionally, formalized partnerships with community groups led to successful self-evacuations, and the co-location of incident management teams helped the decision-making process.

Relationships

Cultivated relationships between the various organizations played a critical role in the response to the fires. All stakeholders interviewed in this AAR discussed the close coordination and relationships built between the LACoFD, LASD, OEM, and community organizations, city partners, and other fire and law enforcement agencies in the Santa Monica Mountains area. These relationships and coordination partnerships have been built over the years due to the historical risk of fire in that area. The use of formalized fire preparedness partnerships with community groups in the Pacific Palisades, Sunset Mesa, Topanga Canyon, and Malibu led to many successful self-evacuations in the absence of evacuation notifications being received by some residents; many individuals had the necessary tools and habits already in place to prepare themselves for evacuation.

Resources

Activating the UCG and County EOC ahead of time established a County structure that identified the strategic priorities and resources that would be required. Establishing Unified

Command early in the response facilitated the co-location of ICs in a single ICP. This was beneficial for effective coordination and information flow, ensuring that all teams identified priorities and collaborated effectively. Additionally, the role of LASD's DOC was crucial in coordinating LASD resources, ensuring that, despite its limited staffing resources, requests from the field were fulfilled and that personnel were deployed effectively in alignment with Unified Command.

Two best practices that should be formalized are the utilization of public transit buses for evacuations, as was done in the Eaton Fire, and the activation of ambulance companies. Requested by law enforcement, the use of the buses was praised for its effectiveness in transporting a large number of people quickly. The activation of emergency medical services (EMS), including private ambulance providers and other contracted EMS service operators in Southern California, was highlighted as a successful strategy that ensured that sufficient ambulances were available for evacuations.[52] Another valuable aspect of this strategy was having ambulance company supervisors co-located at the Unified Command post to ensure that vehicles were deployed as they were requested.

OEM's A-Rep program played a critical role during this catastrophic, fast-moving emergency event. While these efforts were not institutionalized during the Eaton and Palisades Fires and depended heavily on the initiative of individual OEM staff, it is a valuable program that should be further formalized. Clear opportunities exist to introduce more structure, consistency, and regular training to ensure that OEM staff are better prepared and equipped in the future.

Evacuation Decisions

In certain instances, for both fires, ICs applied a systematic approach to decide which zones should be issued with evacuation warnings and evacuation orders—when an evacuation order was issued, any zone adjacent to that order would be issued an evacuation warning. This is a best practice that should be codified as an SOP for future fires.

[52] *Heroes of the Eaton Fire: California EMS Professionals Recognized With Star of Life Award* EMS World Print Online. Rob Lawrence, MCMI, March 14, 2025. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

Critical Focus Area #1: Policies, Protocols, Standard Operating Procedures, and Authority

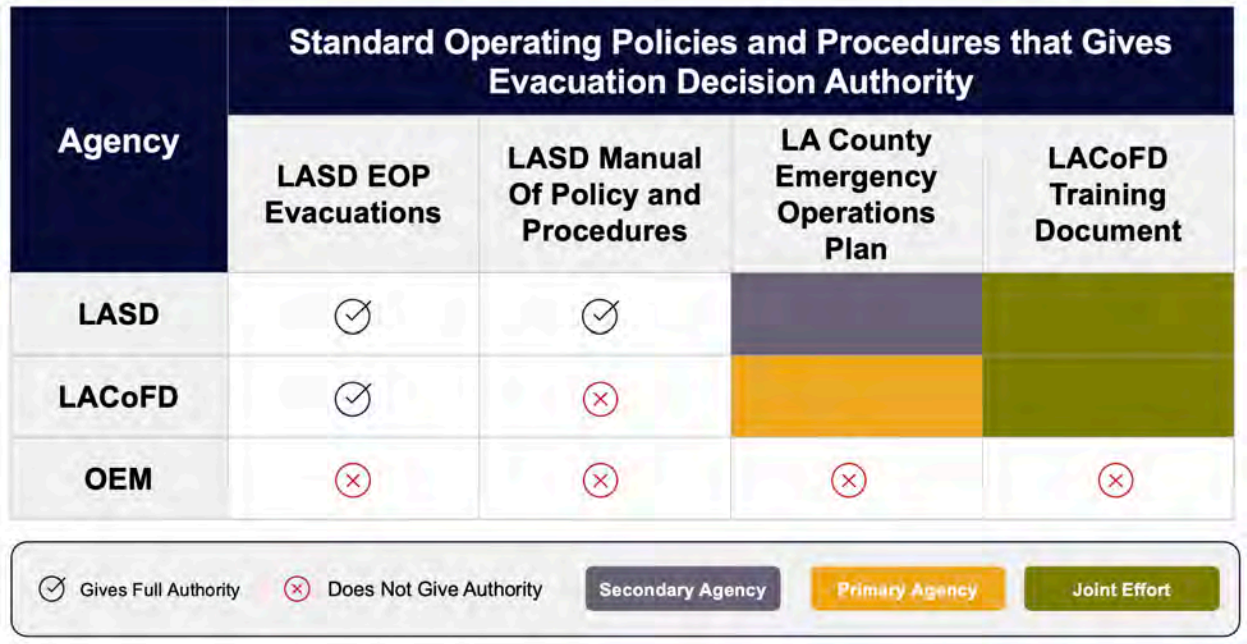

Figure 18: Chart of policies, procedures, protocols, and SOPs showing the evacuation procedures and policies of each agency, and where they conflict or do not align[53]

The County has conflicting and outdated policies, protocols, and SOPs regarding who has what authority in the evacuation decision-making and implementation process, except for evacuation alerting protocols. This has led to inconsistencies in preparedness strategies across the County and a lack of clear documentation and communication processes. In terms of pre-incident preparedness notifications and evacuation messages to the public, the County should further define and clarify the applicable roles.

Key Challenges:

- Policies and protocols are outdated and unclear regarding the roles and responsibilities involved in the decision to issue an evacuation warning or evacuation order.
- Protocols do not explicitly outline the process or chain of command for the decision to issue an evacuation warning or evacuation order.

[53] Internal LACoFD training document—PowerPoint Presentation named "The Evacuation Need—how it comes together" 2024,

- Standard procedure does not include having County departments issue general preparedness notifications and messaging through any of the communication mechanisms they use.
- The County Code and policies should be aligned and clarified regarding roles and protocols for messaging evacuation decisions to the public.

Given the complexities and ambiguities surrounding the current evacuation protocols, a more structured and clear approach is necessary. The challenges highlighted above underscore the need for a comprehensive review and update of existing policies and procedures, and relevant County Code sections. Addressing these issues will ensure that all relevant parties are well-informed and prepared to act decisively in emergencies.

The priority recommendations and actions listed below will help streamline and formalize policies, authorities, and processes, ensuring a more efficient and effective response during critical times.

Priority Recommendations and Actions:

- Update policies, procedures, and the County Code to ensure that first responders and emergency management clearly understand their roles and responsibilities related to making the decision to issue evacuation warnings and orders, messaging evacuation decisions, and conducting evacuation procedures.
- Revise key departmental policies, procedures, and processes related to the process for deciding and sending evacuation warnings and orders so that they align with each other.
- Formalize all aspects of the evacuation process.
- Formalize the process of knowing who sends preparedness messaging, how it is sent, and when it is sent.

The next section discusses the specific findings that support the priority recommendations and actions and provide more detailed recommendations for implementation.

Finding

Policies And Protocols of LASD And LACoFD Regarding Evacuation Warnings and Orders are Often Unclear and Contradictory

LASD and LACoFD policies and protocols regarding making the decision to issue evacuation warnings and evacuation orders are frequently unclear and contradictory and create an overly complex process for issuing evacuation warnings and orders. In addition, the County Code authorizes the LASD, LACoFD, and OEM to message evacuation warnings and orders to the public. It also provides that OEM is authorized to coordinate the consistency of messaging.

These roles are not fully defined in the County Code and are not captured in other policies or protocols.

Recommendations

The County's three primary emergency response agencies, LACoFD, LASD, and OEM, must develop and implement a comprehensive countywide strategy that addresses evacuation and emergency communication challenges identified across their operations. While these agencies serve as the County's core emergency response framework, they must establish formal coordination mechanisms with the 29 other fire agencies and 88 cities within Los Angeles County that also play critical roles in evacuation operations. The strategy should establish clear County policies, assign appropriate agency responsibilities, and formalize collaborative structures with municipal partners to ensure effective implementation and execution. The overarching objective is to enhance the County's preparedness capabilities, streamline decision-making processes, improve public safety messaging, and strengthen both internal agency accountability and external coordination with local jurisdictions.

Develop a Unified Alert, Warning, and Evacuation Policy Framework

- Update the evacuation roles for the LASD, LACoFD, and OEM based on scenario-specific needs.
    - Clarify that during a fire, the LACoFD determines which zones to evacuate based on fire behavior; the LASD implements evacuations in the field; and OEM manages evacuation messages sent to the public.
    - Reiterate that LACoFD and LASD deputies in the field have the authority and are empowered to initiate evacuations as an incident unfolds as they deem it warranted. Moreover, field staff require additional training to ensure they communicate if they initiate evacuations to the ICP for official evacuation orders or warnings to be issued.
- Reduce decision latency by empowering and equipping the A-Rep in the ICP to initiate zone updates in Genasys EVAC while coordinating with EOC for public communication.
- Establish a clear and unified leader's intent between the LASD, LACoFD, OEM, and appropriate partners regarding authorities, roles and responsibilities, cooperation, and expectations during emergencies.

Revise and Standardize Evacuation Procedures

- Create a defined flow path for the initiation and implementation of evacuations to eliminate unnecessary handoffs between the field, command, and OEM for the messaging of evacuation alerts and orders.
- Establish a formal policy that requires that a protective order, whether it be an evacuation warning or shelter-in-place order, be determined by the ICs and that it is always issued for

any zone adjacent to a zone being placed under an evacuation order. This codification will require that Incident Command is consistent in determining protective orders when an emergency is unfolding quickly, ensuring the public is informed of potential risks sooner.

- Establish clear documentation and communication mechanisms within the process of capturing decisions and execution.
- Develop and distribute comprehensive system job aids with alert templates, escalation instructions, and troubleshooting steps.
- Call log documentation—While a new system integration is being finalized, obtain and provide screenshots of call logs before midnight each day to facilitate cross-referencing data and identify any gaps in information from the field to the EOC.

Finding

OEM Operates with Critical Structural and Resource Deficiencies Hindering Emergency Management

OEM faces substantial difficulties in fulfilling its emergency management responsibilities due to a lack of organizational autonomy, a fragmented authority framework, and critical resource deficiencies. The absence of clear authority undermines OEM's ability to enforce standardized practices across County organizations, creating accountability gaps and reducing the effectiveness of coordinated planning and response efforts. OEM also lacks permanent emergency management staff. OEM's insufficient operational resources, including the lack of dedicated response vehicles equipped with essential emergency systems, creating reliance on personal vehicles, increases liability risks and diminishes response capacity. These issues are compounded by insufficient funding to procure and maintain necessary equipment, modernize technologies, and support adequate staffing during emergency activations. Addressing these structural and resource gaps is vital to enable OEM to operate as a cohesive and effective entity capable of safeguarding community preparedness and managing emergencies efficiently.

Recommendations

The County should initiate and authorize a restructuring of OEM to address the lack of autonomy and fragmented authority that currently undermines its ability to coordinate emergency management effectively. When determining what organizational framework should be put in place, the County should consider the factors that would enhance OEM's autonomy and authority. Establishing clear authority frameworks and standardized operational protocols should be the priority, including updates to SOPs for emergency activations, messaging protocols, and partner coordination. These measures will enable OEM to facilitate consistency across County organizations and improve accountability in preparedness functions.

To strengthen its internal capacity, OEM should assess whether its current structure aligns with its coordination responsibilities and best practices in emergency management. This evaluation

should inform the establishment of a dedicated operating budget, an increase in permanent staffing capable of supporting community preparedness activities, funding for staffing surges during activations, the modernization of essential technologies, and the enhancement of field representation capabilities.

To enhance effectiveness, leadership engagement should be prioritized to foster a shared sense of purpose and ensure strategic alignment across all emergency management functions. Clear policies must be established to define roles, responsibilities, and authority levels, eliminating operational confusion and guiding staff toward common objectives and enhancing trust and unity within the organization. This restructuring initiative should bridge gaps in coordination, planning, and communication, cultivating a unified approach and aligning emergency management efforts throughout the County with overarching strategic goals.

Simultaneously, critical resource gaps must be addressed urgently. Dedicated response vehicles equipped with emergency lighting and communication systems must be procured to eliminate a reliance on personal vehicles, reduce liability risks, decrease travel time to the ICP, and enhance response capacity. This will require that staff take the necessary level of training to operate these types of vehicles.

Critical Focus Area #2: Training and Planning Coordination

The County's emergency response training can be improved to boost overall readiness and effectiveness. Establishing a structured training program for law enforcement will enhance coordination during fire incidents and evacuations, as well as improve traffic control strategies. Addressing these issues through a solid cross-training initiative, formal staffing guidelines, and enhanced teamwork will strengthen the County's emergency response abilities.

Key Challenges:

- There was a marked difference in the collaboration and preparedness of the response organizations and community members for the Palisades Fire compared to the Eaton Fire.
- Formalized training programs are essential to improve preparedness and coordination during fire and evacuation scenarios.
- Residents noted that traffic control during future incidents is an area that could be enhanced.

These challenges underscore the necessity for a comprehensive cross-training program, standardized staffing protocols, and enhanced collaboration and preparedness efforts throughout the County.

Priority Recommendations and Actions:

- Standardize collaboration and preparedness training across all County departments and partners.
- Enhance wildfire- and evacuation-specific training and planning for all responders.

This review emphasized the necessity to develop and implement a more strategic and intentional cross-training program within the County, specifically focusing on wildfire and evacuation scenarios.

Finding

Standardized Collaboration and Preparedness Training is Needed Across County Departments

As noted earlier, there was a difference in how response organizations and community members collaborated and prepared in the area impacted by the Palisades Fire and in the area impacted by the Eaton Fire. The level of collaboration and preparedness demonstrated in the Palisades Fire was the result of a long-term partnership between the LACoFD and LASD's leadership in the region. This relationship developed over several years and numerous incidents due to the area being a high FHSZ. The Eaton Fire area was not a designated high hazard area, and the last significant fire in the Altadena area was in 1993. The preparation discussed earlier in this report encompassed establishing training initiatives, forming community response groups, coordinating with homeowners' associations, and working alongside schools. It involved building relationships, maintaining regular communication, and assessing improvements post-event. Such efforts should be standard practice rather than exceptions throughout the County.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the efforts and expectations established in the Palisades area be used to develop standard baseline efforts, processes, and activities across the County for fire preparedness. These should include, but not be limited to:

- Conducting annual joint training and tabletop exercises involving the LACoFD, LASD, OEM, and city emergency managers.
    - The training and exercises should address the more complex scenarios in other parts of the County that involve multiple cities, fire departments, and law enforcement agencies, particularly focusing on areas that were previously not typically considered vulnerable to wildfire.
- Providing focused training on fire dynamics, evacuation warning and order issuance, evacuation messaging and evacuation execution, and interagency coordination.

- Engaging with, and supporting the formation of community groups, such as those in the Palisades, in other parts of the County.

It is also recommended that OEM, LACoFD, and LASD co-lead the development, organization, and facilitation of a cross-department training for LACoFD, LASD, and OEM leadership and staff. This, of course, will only be possible if the recommendations regarding organizational changes noted above are implemented, and department command chains emphasize the importance of participation.

Finding

Enhance LASD's Department Training on Fire and Evacuation Operations

While some parts of the LASD have completed fire response and evacuation operations training, not all have. It was noted during the review process that some surge staff brought in to support the operations did not have the full training to understand these types of events and operations. Enhanced and consistent department-wide training is required to effectively support fire response and evacuation operations. Gaps in role clarity, chain of command integration, and field-level coordination during recent wildfire events underscore the need for a formalized training and exercise program tailored to the LASD's operational responsibilities.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Emergency Management Council (as authorized by Los Angeles County Code Section 2.68.180(A)) should direct and support the LASD in developing a targeted wildfire and evacuation operations training initiative for all staff, modeled on best practices from high-risk jurisdictions such as Sonoma County,[54] [55] CA; Boulder County, CO;[56] and San Diego County, CA.[57] The training program should be executed in close collaboration with the LACoFD and OEM and include the following key actions:

- **Develop an LASD-Specific Wildfire Evacuation Training Program:** Create mandatory, scenario-based training modules that define LASD roles in each phase of evacuation: warning dissemination, traffic control, perimeter enforcement, and re-entry authorization.

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[54] *Evacuation Annex Operational Area EOP* - Sonoma County Operational Area EOP, August 2021. Last referenced September 23, 2025.

[55] *Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan Annex* – Community Alert and Warning, March 2021. Last referenced September 23, 2025.

[56] *2022-2027- Boulder County Hazard Mitigation Plan* Last referenced September 23, 2025.

[57] *Unified San Diego County Emergency Services Organization and County of San Diego, Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan*, Sept 2022. Last referenced September 23, 2025.

- **Formalize Training in Policy and SOPs:** Finalize the ongoing review and revision of the LASD's EOPs, including evacuation-specific procedures initiated prior to this incident, and ensure station-level training is conducted upon completion to align field response with the countywide Wildfire Protection Plan.
- **Establish Performance Evaluation and Accountability Measures:** Integrate evacuation preparedness metrics into the LASD's training compliance system. Sonoma County Sheriff's Office adopted a similar model post-2017,[58] requiring documented participation in wildfire training and the use of structured AARs to improve performance.[59] [60]
- **Leverage Technology for Situational Awareness Training:** Incorporate GIS-based evacuation modelling tools and alert system simulations (e.g., Genasys PROTECT) into the LASD's emergency operations training curriculum to improve spatial awareness and decision-making during evacuations.
- **Specialized Wildfire Evacuation Response Team:** The LASD may want to consider having a standing specialized wildfire evacuation response team, similar to the IMTs, that receives specialized training on evacuation for wildfires that can be deployed during emergencies like the January 2025 fires.

By embedding these practices into the LASD's annual training cycle and aligning them with interagency planning efforts, the County will enhance operational effectiveness, reduce confusion during evacuations, and improve outcomes for communities at risk of wildfire threats.

Critical Focus Area #3: Resource Management

The catastrophic nature of the Palisades and Eaton Fires would have strained even fully staffed departments operating at peak capacity. However, responding agencies entered this crisis already facing staffing shortages and resource constraints. These pre-existing deficiencies, including personnel gaps in critical positions, aging equipment, and stretched operational budgets, were immediately magnified when the event's scale and complexity demanded resources far beyond standard operational requirements. What were previously manageable departmental challenges became limiting factors in the emergency response, stressing deployment capabilities, sustained operations, and effectiveness throughout the incident timeline.

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[58] *Sonoma County, October 2017 Complex Fires, Emergency Operations Center, After Action Report and Improvement Plan* – June 2018. Last referenced September 23, 2025.

[59] *Boulder County Marshall Fire Operational After-Action Report (AAR)*, December 30,2022. Last referenced September 23, 2025.

[60] *Sonoma Operational Area and the County of Sonoma, Department of Emergency Management, 2019 Power Shutoffs After Action Report* – March 2020. Last referenced September 23, 2025.

Key Challenges:

- Current staffing limitations constrain response capabilities during events.
- OEM lacks a formal A-Rep program.

Staffing limitations have constrained response capabilities, resulting in insufficient personnel trained in essential functions, which has created an environment for potential single points of failure.

Priority Recommendations and Actions:

- Undertake additional planning within the LASD to identify surge resources and strategies.
- Formalize staffing protocols, training, equipment needs, and the field A-Rep program within OEM.

The next section discusses the specific findings that support the priority recommendations and actions and provides more detailed recommendations for implementation.

Finding

Shortages of Law Enforcement Personnel

The emergency response revealed deficiencies in staffing levels, resource allocation, and the deployment of trained personnel, although these shortcomings must be understood within the context of extraordinary operational demands resulting from catastrophic wildfires and more than 900 LASD deputy vacancies. While the LASD had developed a staffing strategy utilizing available personnel in anticipation of the PDS, staffing challenges did occur because the LASD was involved in managing five simultaneous fires during the same timeframe while also maintaining essential public safety services countywide.

The staffing challenges were compounded by structural limitations, including a recent 50% reduction in the SIB, which left the department with insufficient public information officers (PIOs) during a crisis requiring extensive community communication. Additional LASD divisions faced similar constraints, and custody and court services operated without the personnel and patrol vehicles required to meet operational needs. These cumulative resource limitations forced the DOC team to adjust and reallocate personnel and equipment to where they were needed most.

While these staffing deficiencies significantly hampered response capabilities, they reflect broader systemic resource challenges from a shortage in staffing due to more than 900 LASD deputy vacancies. These deficiencies should be resolved by the County, and in the interim, additional strategies to increase personnel for emergency response should be considered given

the importance of having comprehensive staffing and resources that can handle multi-incident scenarios.

Several interviewees experienced communication challenges in the field, many of which were attributed to an outdated dispatch system and the absence of the internet at the command post. The already-activated EOB and the Fleet Management Bureau were critical in providing essential services and technological support to overcome these challenges. Furthermore, the LASD had been occupied with preparations for multiple planned events, including the Rose Parade, the anniversary of the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, and the Presidential Inauguration. While the department had resources in place for a potential extreme wind and fire event, the competing priorities understandably stretched their capacity.

Recommendations

To address the critical staffing and resource shortages affecting emergency response capabilities, this review recommends that the LASD implement the following strategies:

- **Expansion of Personnel Capacity:** Conduct a comprehensive audit of current staffing levels and develop a prioritized hiring plan to fill essential roles. Focus on divisions such as custody, court services, and patrol to ensure adequate personnel and vehicle availability during emergencies. Additionally, increase emphasis and pipeline into existing departmental CERT training and volunteer programs.
- **Implement Tiered Response and Resource Typing:** Continue to implement and adopt a tiered response model, where personnel are assigned to missions based on training and risk level. Use typed law enforcement resource packages, like Type 1-4, to facilitate scalable deployment. Sonoma County uses pre-defined mission sets (traffic control, security patrols, evacuation support) and assignments based on resource type and availability during wildfire evacuations.[61]
- **Strategically Leverage Existing Reserve and Volunteer Officer Programs:** Similar to the Fire Brigade Program in the Palisades area, the LASD maintains a trained reserve deputy program and/or auxiliary law enforcement corps to support routine, non-enforcement duties during surges. These reserves can be activated during wildfires for road closures and perimeter security, freeing sworn deputies for high-priority work. While this type of program already exists within the LASD, better strategic deployment of these resources in future incidents may assist with mitigating some of the resource challenges.
- **Maximize Mutual Aid:** Strengthen collaboration with already established mutual aid partners and implement targeted training programs for both new recruits and seasoned

[61] *Sonoma County Operational Area EOP Annex: Evacuation* -August 2021. Last referenced September 23, 2025.

personnel to build resilience and enhance capabilities during future crises. Ensure mutual aid partners are aware and engaged as part of pre-event preparedness activities.

By adopting these measures, the LASD can significantly enhance its emergency response effectiveness, ensure operational continuity, and develop a resilient workforce. This proactive approach will further mitigate vulnerabilities and bolster public safety during critical events.

Finding

OEM Staffing, Protocols, Training, and Formalizing the Agency Representative Program

Three interrelated challenges hindered the operational performance of OEM during the event:

- The limited staffing and funding necessary to adequately respond
- The absence of formalized staffing protocols for major incidents
- The informal and under-resourced A-Rep program

Current staffing limitations significantly impacted OEM's ability to support sustained operations. There were not enough personnel trained in essential EOC roles, particularly in alert and warning systems, planning, and situational awareness. Because of this, OEM relied on the few individuals who were sufficiently trained, which created the potential for single points of failure. While OEM staff demonstrated remarkable resourcefulness and adaptability by leveraging both the old system (CodeRED) and the new alerting platform (Genasys ALERT) to issue evacuation orders within 15 minutes (for example, the January 8, 3:25 a.m., evacuation order sent to zones in Altadena west of Lake Avenue), it is critical that the County continues to invest in regular training and system drills. This will help ensure that all team members can fully utilize the new system's capabilities efficiently and confidently.

Due to significant staffing constraints at OEM, even essential staff attendance at critical training directly affects the department's ability to respond to incidents. For instance, when non-leadership personnel are required to participate in necessary pre-event training during periods of elevated risk, the organization faces difficult tradeoffs that compromise operational capacity and effectiveness. Over time, these constraints introduce inefficiencies, lead to staff frustration, and ultimately undermine overall organizational readiness.

Additionally, while A-Reps were critical to field coordination and operational success, the lack of a formal program structure, such as defined roles, pre-deployment briefings, reliable transportation, safety protocols, and appropriate shift rotations, resulted in avoidable safety concerns, inconsistent field performance, and logistical complications. For example, A-Reps were required to use personal vehicles to travel between the EOC, home, and field command posts, often with minimal rest, creating potentially unsafe and difficult conditions.

Recommendations

OEM has a staff of 37 for a population of 10.5 million people and does not have a dedicated operating budget. We recommend that OEM and County leadership address these challenges and build sustainable operational resilience by taking the following strategic and actionable steps:

Increase Permanent Emergency Management Staff

OEM requires adequate permanent staffing commensurate with other major metropolitan jurisdictions that face similar threat profiles and manage comparable emergency management functions, activities, and duties. The current staffing model has proven fundamentally inadequate for Los Angeles County's complex emergency management needs. OEM has faced persistent challenges in securing stable staffing and an adequate budget, and its needs have not been prioritized in recent years. Although some staffing increases have been approved, these increases have not been sufficient to build the professional capacity necessary for effective emergency management in the nation's most populous county.

Our recommendation is to assess the organizational structure of OEM as an office under the chief executive officer (CEO), provided that organizational authority and budget stability are obtained to address critical staffing deficiencies. Reporting directly to the CEO, and ultimately the County Executive, would be consistent with Measure G requirements in Section 11.36, where:

> "Subject to State law, the County Executive shall be responsible for initiating, coordinating, and directing the County's activities and operations relating to emergency and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery, and shall be the designated operational area coordinator and the chair of the County's Emergency Management Council. Any ordinance adopted by the Board of Supervisors relating to the County's emergency and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery, and the exercise of the County's emergency powers shall be consistent with this Section."[62]

However, residing at the executive level may bring challenges to add staff and direct funding for OEM. OEM must develop a strategic hiring approach focused on filling essential roles, including a dedicated preparedness team and regional coordinators who are OEM employees to replace the disaster management area coordinators and support collaboration with all 88 cities throughout the Los Angeles County region. Inadequate resources extend beyond personnel numbers to basic operational resources. OEM currently lacks funding for the proper PPE necessary for staff deployment to command posts during emergencies and lacks the vehicles needed for countywide

[62] *https://measureg.lacounty.gov/* Measure G Government Reform County of Los Angeles. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

mobility before, during, and after disasters. These gaps directly compromise response effectiveness.

While OEM and the County work to achieve appropriate permanent staffing levels, interim measures must be implemented to better position OEM for future events:

- Develop a **structured cross-training and credentialing program** that ensures multiple OEM staff are qualified in each core EOC function, including planning, operations, logistics, and public information.
- Establish a **minimum staffing matrix** for major incidents and planned events, aligned with FEMA's National Incident Management System guidance and scalable to incident complexity.
- Implement a **succession planning strategy** for critical roles, particularly positions such as EOC manager, situation unit leader, and alert & warning coordinator.

Implement Formalized Staffing Protocols

- Develop written **staffing activation protocols** that define staffing thresholds for each incident type and phase (preparedness, response, recovery).
- Create **"red zone" staffing restrictions** that limit non-essential leave and off-site training during elevated threat periods.
- Establish a **pre-incident readiness policy** that defines criteria for personnel availability, pre-staging, and standby status based on predictive hazard indicators.

Formalize and Resource the A-Rep Program

- Codify the A-Rep program with defined roles, responsibilities, position descriptions, and reporting protocols.
- Develop **standardized job aids and quick-reference guides** to support consistent performance in the field.
- Require all A-Reps to complete **scenario-based training modules** focused on field coordination, evacuation support, public warning implementation, and ICS integration.
- Assign **County-owned vehicles** with lights and communication equipment to designated A-Reps and provide necessary and required training for using these types of vehicles to support safe, timely, and mission-ready deployment.
- Create a **staffing and scheduling framework** for A-Reps that ensures adequate rest periods and minimizes fatigue during extended operations.

By implementing these recommendations, OEM will be better positioned to manage extended emergency operations; eliminate operational single points of failure; and ensure safer, more effective field coordination through a properly staffed and supported A-Rep program.

Critical Focus Area #4: Situational Awareness and Interoperability

Situational awareness and interoperability are pivotal areas requiring immediate enhancement. The lack of streamlined coordination tools and common systems among County agencies, coupled with gaps in existing antiquated systems, impacted the ability to monitor the unfolding events and ensure unified efforts across all operational levels to issue alerts and execute evacuations.

Key Challenges:

- Gaps in communications systems, making it challenging to maintain clear situational awareness
- Outdated and inconsistent use of technology tools
- Process gaps for new evacuation systems and processes

These challenges underscore the need for robust policies, training protocols, and integrated tools to ensure that personnel across all levels can respond effectively during high-risk periods.

Priority Recommendations and Actions:

- Align situational awareness and interoperability across County departments and agencies.
- Update obsolete systems and technology and enable all emergency response communications to leverage the Los Angeles Regional Interoperable Communications System's Land Mobile Radio System.
- Ensure consistent implementation, training, and use of tools and systems.

The following specific findings support our priority recommendations and actions. We also provide more detailed recommendations for implementation.

Finding

Situational Awareness and Interoperability Across Departments

Despite aligned priorities among departments, significant challenges with situational awareness and interoperability hampered effective coordination during fires. Field personnel and command staff operated with inconsistent access to real-time information due to unreliable cellular connectivity; inconsistent field reporting methods; and the use of disparate, non-integrated platforms—such as Genasys ALERT/EVAC, Tablet Command, and outdated dispatch systems (e.g., the LASD's 38-year-old CAD platform).

LASD introduced a Teams channel to consolidate operational information within its department one hour after the Palisades fire began, with incident coordination conducted through that channel for the duration of the response. LACoFD employed several resource-tracking tools, but

these were inconsistently used and lacked full integration across field and command environments. OEM platforms from the same vendor (Genasys) did not operate in a unified manner, leading to information fragmentation. Most importantly, the three departments within the LACoFD, LASD, and OEM did not have a single technology-based interdepartmental common operating platform (COP) to coordinate their efforts beyond face-to-face collaboration at the command post and calls, emails, texts, and radio communication. As a result, personnel lacked a COP, limiting cross-agency coordination and impeding timely, informed decision-making at all levels.

Recommendations

To improve operational coordination and ensure shared situational awareness, the County should implement a multi-pronged strategy that prioritizes system integration, SOPs, and frontline accessibility.

Establish a Unified Situational Awareness Framework

- Convene a **multi-agency technology integration working group**, led by the chief information officer and including representatives from OEM, LACoFD, LASD, and other key departments (e.g., the Department of Public Works), to evaluate current platforms and define interoperability requirements.
- Finalize the customization and implementation of WebEOC as the **COP** for the County and ensure it is capable of ingesting data from existing platforms (Tablet Command, Genasys, SharePoint, CAD) and sharing it in real time with both command and field personnel. Also, develop and implement a comprehensive transition and training plan for the use of the platform.

Implement Field-Accessible Mobile Dashboards

- Ensure field personnel across all agencies have **mobile-enabled access** to live situational dashboards showing evacuation zones, resource assignments, incident maps, and status updates.
- Deploy **offline-capable apps or data caching** tools to maintain functionality in areas with limited or no connectivity.

Integrate Tools into Post-Incident Documentation and AARs

- Create a standardized process for **archiving digital field inputs** (e.g., notes, photos, maps, voice logs) into a central repository for post-incident review and analysis.
- Ensure that **situational awareness tools and outputs** are consistently captured and evaluated during AARs to inform future improvements.

By integrating these technologies, protocols, and redundancies, the County will establish a shared, real-time understanding of incident dynamics—empowering both field responders and

command personnel to make faster, better-informed decisions and work as a unified team during complex emergencies.

Finding

38-Year-Old CAD System

A key resource for many first responder organizations is the use of a CAD system, but it is almost 40 years old and extremely outdated. This limits situational awareness and coordination capabilities for field staff. Updating and modernizing the CAD system will streamline communication, improve resource allocation, and enhance overall operational efficiency.

Recommendations

The LASD is in the process of replacing its existing CAD system with a new and more modern system. It is recommended that, as part of that upgrade, the department conduct a full system audit of the current CAD platform and deploy a phased replacement plan that prioritizes integration with the LACoFD, OEM, and local law enforcement systems, as well as determine if it is capable of CAD-to-CAD between the LACoFD and LASD. The new system should incorporate modernized capabilities and functionality, including zone overlays, evacuation tracking, and GIS data syncing for real-time updates. Since the January fires, the LASD has taken steps to launch a comprehensive tracking tool called the Citizen Evacuation Tracker, which provides real-time visibility into who has been evacuated, who needs to be evacuated, and where resources are needed most. This is a strong initiative by the LASD and should prove useful in future incidents for evacuation coordination and planning.

Finding

Knowledge and Process Gaps for New Evacuation Technology

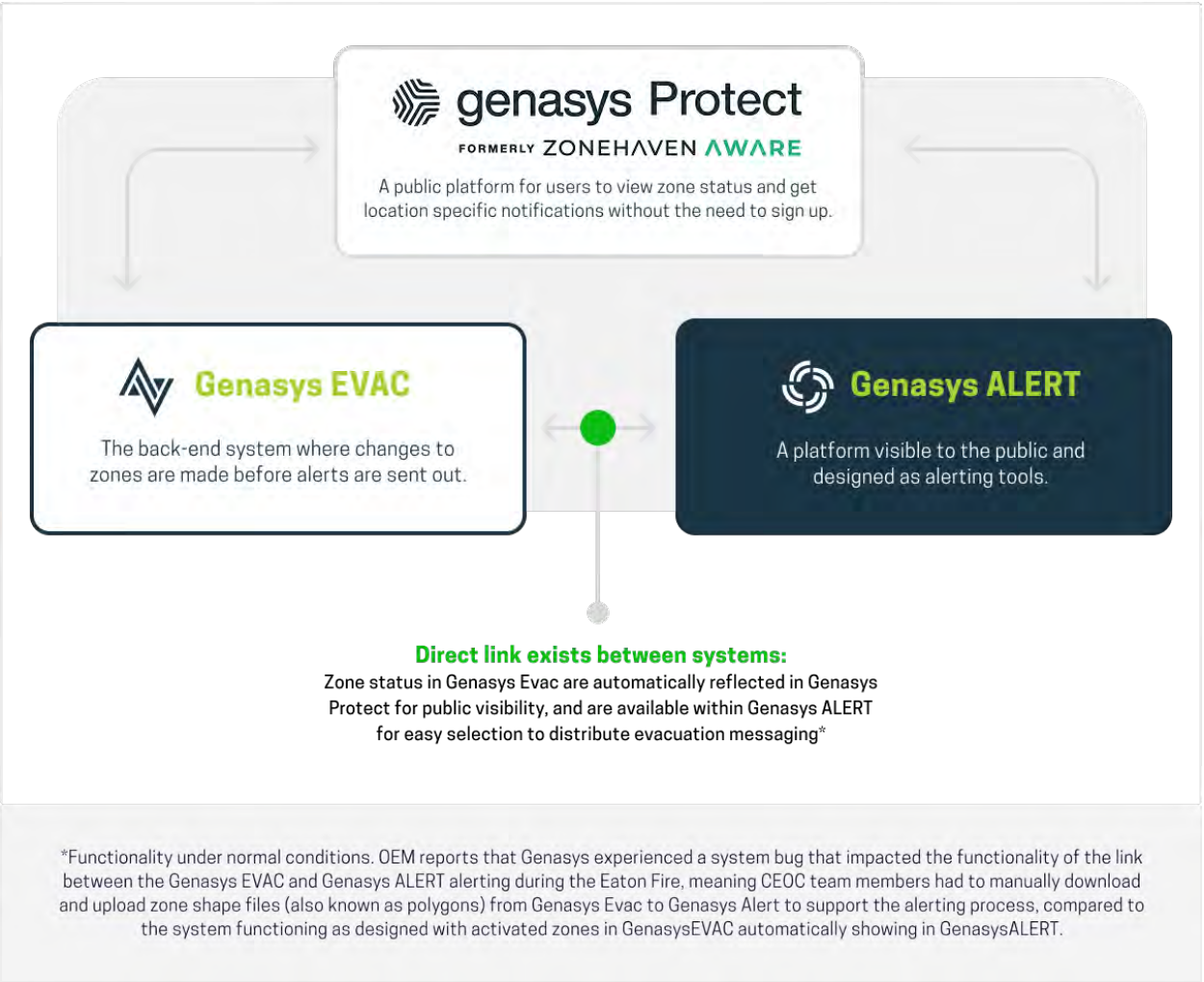


Figure 19: Interplay of Genasys EVAC, Genasys ALERT, and Genasys PROTECT

There was a clear gap in the transition between the previously used alert and notification system, CodeRED, and the new system, Genasys ALERT, including the need for more training and familiarity with Genasys ALERT. While transitioning between the two systems did not appear to cause significant messaging issues, there are opportunities to enhance real-time situational awareness through improved interoperability measures and system integration, as discussed below.

Recommendations

OEM should develop a more comprehensive SOP and training program that all OEM staff and partner agencies can participate in. This would include the update and/or development of job aids

with detailed instructions and templates for various incident scenarios. It would also include in-person training sessions for the Genasys ALERT system, including quarterly drills and annual exercises, to ensure all staff are comfortable and proficient with the system.

OEM should also work with the vendor to identify any additional functionality for the system, including but not limited to:

- Integrated login capabilities—logging into Genasys EVAC to update the zones that will be notified of a warning or order, and then logging into Genasys ALERT separately, is inefficient and error-prone. This could be resolved by integrating the two systems or creating a single sign on, so that when Genasys EVAC is updated, an alert is sent to Genasys ALERT notifying the user to send out a specific message. This way, if a zone is updated in the field, the staff responsible for sending evacuation messages will be notified directly, instead of relying on someone else to make a call and update a separate system.
- Archived records—requiring alert entry logs and screenshots to be archived will allow them to be reviewed during post-incident AARs.

Finding

Inconsistent Access and Use of Information Sharing Tools

The LACoFD utilizes a variety of situational awareness and information-sharing tools; however, their application across the department and among mutual aid partners is inconsistent. Many of these platforms are not uniformly available to all units, particularly those in the field or from assisting agencies. This lack of access and standardization created a disconnect between field personnel and command staff. Incident Commanders were often unable to see what field units were observing in real time, limiting their ability to make informed decisions about evacuation timing, resource deployment, and incident escalation. A streamlined, two-way flow of real-time information between field and command would significantly enhance operational efficiency, safety, and decision-making. Additionally, the over-reliance on cellular connectivity and cellular data was often cited as a challenge, as coverage was limited at times due to tower outages. Access to reliable satellite data and internet connectivity would allow for more consistent information sharing, including access to satellite-powered situational awareness tools in real time (such as FireGuard).

Recommendations

To address these information-sharing challenges and enhance situational awareness across all levels of the LACoFD and its mutual aid partners, this review recommends the following:

Technology Audit

- Audit all current tools in use (e.g., Tablet Command, Genasys, ArcGIS, FireMapper).
    - Evaluate their effectiveness, overlap, and gaps in coverage.

- Identify opportunities for integration and alignment with external systems used by partners such as CAL FIRE, CalOES, and local law enforcement.

Standardize Access and Deployment of Information Tools

- Ensure all frontline personnel, including mutual aid units, have **access** to core situational awareness platforms via mobile devices or vehicle-mounted systems.
- Establish **minimum technology requirements** and field kits for incident deployment, including pre-loaded applications, user credentials, and connectivity solutions (e.g., satellite technology).
- Evaluate and deploy satellite resources to provide information and data, and for connectivity that is not dependent on cellular connections.
- Provide **brief, field-friendly training** or quick-reference job aids to ensure consistent use across varied personnel and agencies.

Integrate Emerging Technologies and Real-Time Data Feeds

- Actively participate in and support ongoing efforts with **CAL FIRE**, **CalOES**, and **Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies** to pilot and implement cutting-edge fire detection and monitoring tools, including:
  - **FireGuard**, satellite-enabled hotspot tracking
  - NASA/NOAA-based thermal imaging platforms
  - Unmanned aerial vehicles/drones for near-real-time mapping
- Develop **SOPs** for how data from these systems is accessed, validated, and used during incident response and planning.

Implement Feedback Loops Between Field and Command

- Develop a process to allow field crews to **push real-time observations, images, and geotagged data** directly to command dashboards.
- Use tools like **ArcGIS Survey123 or Tablet Command enhancements** to enable structured field reporting that feeds into the COP.

By implementing these actions, the LACoFD can create a more cohesive and integrated information environment that empowers both field units and command staff with shared, timely data—ultimately improving safety, resource allocation, and operational outcomes.

Critical Focus Area #5: Community Engagement and Public Information

Effective community engagement and public information strategies are essential for fostering trust, ensuring clarity, and enhancing preparedness in emergency situations. The County must

focus on revising policies and procedures related to messaging the public while simultaneously addressing gaps in proactive communication efforts. Streamlined processes, coupled with innovative tools for situational awareness, will empower responders and residents to act decisively during critical incidents. A cohesive framework for public outreach and education that is built in collaboration with local and state partner agencies will strengthen resilience and bolster the County's ability to respond effectively to emergencies.

Key Challenges

- Fragmented messaging due to not establishing a joint information center (JIC) ahead of the event or at the onset
- Insufficient public education on evacuation zones, personal preparedness, expectations, and preparedness resources
- Missed opportunity to use elected officials in community preparedness initiatives and activities

Addressing these key challenges is vital to enhancing the County's emergency response capabilities. By establishing a cohesive communication framework and prioritizing coordinated community outreach, the County can transform fragmented messaging into unified, actionable information.

Priority Recommendations and Actions

- Establish a consistent and formalized JIC.
- Develop a robust and consistent public education campaign across the County.
- Engage elected officials at a more grassroots level in the preparedness initiatives.
- Foster a sense of responsibility for personal preparedness.

These actions will not only elevate public understanding of risks but also strengthen partnerships between emergency management agencies, elected officials, and residents. Below are detailed findings and recommendations designed to tackle these challenges and pave the way for a more resilient approach to crisis management.

Finding

Establishment of a Joint Information Center

Early in the incident, County department communication teams, along with ICP JICs, led communications for the disaster. Due to staffing limitations, OEM staff that maintain a communications skill set were not able to establish a countywide JIC until January 9, with the support of countywide communications organization from the Chief Executive Office. The purpose of a JIC is to coordinate and disseminate accurate, consistent, and timely messages to

the public, stakeholders, and media, before, during, and after an emergency or coordinated event when the EOC is activated. A JIC also ensures the coordination of public information during incidents involving multiple agencies and/or jurisdictions.

Given the scope of this wind event and the risk it posed, there was a clear need for cross-jurisdictional coordination. Los Angeles County has many emergency management jurisdictions, each with responsibility for its designated area. There does not appear to be any written policy or procedures in place to ensure that the County, local emergency management officials, the LASD, and LACoFD coordinate and communicate a unified message about the event.

Additionally, based on community input, the public did not effectively understand the potential impact of the PDS issued by the NWS. Even with extensive media coverage and public messaging prior to the event, some residents did not feel they were informed enough and/or feel the potential risk was effectively communicated.

As early as January 2, the County was sharing consistent real-time updates to the public through its social media channels and centralized emergency website. Between January 2 and January 9, before OEM established a JIC, the County shared 122 preparedness and emergency messages on its @CountyofLA social media channels, and the emergency website had more than three million views from the public. The earlier establishment of a JIC would have surged communications support to the emergency response and could have played a critical role in providing coordinated, accurate and consistent real-time updates to the public at the onset of the fires.

Recommendations

Joint Information Center Readiness

In complex events or incidents involving more than one agency, organization, or jurisdiction, it is best practice to establish a JIC, especially in advance of a known event. The establishment of a JIC in Los Angeles County in the case of a countywide event should be OEM's responsibility. Given the coordination responsibilities during an event, this review recommends that OEM maintain this responsibility and establish an increased level of readiness and staffing. However, the County Communications Office should serve as a backup to support opening the JIC, especially when OEM has staffing limitations. Steps the County can take to achieve this include, but are not limited to:

- Improving outreach to vulnerable, non-English-speaking, and transit-dependent populations
- Pre-identifying multilingual PIOs and back-up, trained PIOs
- Establishing or using mutual aid for additional support
- Developing pre-approved message libraries to reduce delays in alerts and public updates

- Establishing a standard cadence for press conferences and notifications leading up to an event
    - Notifications should be pre-scheduled leading up to a known event and then pushed out as information changes or at regular intervals.
- Developing and initiating a community information campaign, in coordination with other County departments and partners, to help educate the community on expectations and sources of information during an event
- Suggesting the use of social science to evaluate the public's understanding of evacuation messaging and recommend language and messaging prototypes that are easily understood by the public

As a best practice to expand outreach and public education, partnering with existing preparedness programs to increase awareness and training opportunities is effective. May is Wildfire Awareness Month, and many organizations and agencies plan activities throughout the month. The County could use the opportunity to:

- Increase public awareness of zone-based evacuation protocols and alert systems
- Implement evacuation drills that involve real-time evacuation of residents within a predetermined area, which would involve utilizing alert and warning tools, as well as door-to-door visits, to evacuate residents to a predetermined location, then using the gathering to debrief the exercise and educate residents

Recommendations

Public Information Strategy (Joint Information Center)

County departments need to collaborate in establishing a strategy for providing the public with information and establishing a JIC. This strategy should include, but not be limited to:

- **Activation:** Standing up the JIC as soon as the EOC is activated should be standard practice to ensure consistent, coordinated messages are transmitted to the public. It is also essential to ensure that media outlets, such as television, radio, and print, are aware of the activation and understand who they should expect to receive information from.
- **Cross-Jurisdictional Coordination:** A directed coordination call can facilitate the exchange of critical information and help ensure that all entities communicate the same information to the public.
- **Informing the Public:** Over 10 million people live in Los Angeles County. Reaching them during critical events presents a significant challenge. As previously discussed, there are multiple ways to communicate information to the public, including FEMA's IPAWS, the EAS, social media, television, radio, newspapers (apps and social media), NOAA Weather Radio, police and fire sirens, and Alert LA County, among others. The public

needs to be able to receive emergency messages through multiple channels, using two or three of the methods mentioned. However, it was noted that, given some of the variables experienced in the January fires, such as power outages and cell towers being down, less technological ways of sharing information need to be utilized. This can be accomplished by identifying information that LASD deputies and firefighters are sharing as they manage the incident and using PA systems to communicate risk and evacuation warnings and orders. Most importantly, all messaging must be concise and offer simple, straightforward, and direct courses of action.

Finding

Gaps in Public Understanding of Evacuation Zones and Alerts

Interviews and field observations revealed gaps in the public's understanding of evacuation zones, alert types (e.g., WEA vs Genasys), alert and notification access, and expected behaviors during fast-moving wildfire events. With the LASD responsible for executing evacuations, community preparedness directly affects response speed, officer safety, and public compliance.

Recommendations

Develop and implement an OEM-led Public Education and Community Preparedness Program focused on wildfire evacuation awareness, zone-based planning, and knowledge of the various alert and notification systems. This could include:

- An update of the existing "Ready! Set! Go!" program to promote awareness of Genasys and WEA alerts, and the reinforcement of "GoEarlY" behavior in high-risk events[63]
- Annual community evacuation drills in high-risk fire zones, which can also be used to simulate alert reception, route familiarization, and public Q&A sessions
- Targeted outreach for vulnerable populations by partnering with faith groups, schools, nonprofits, and senior centers to disseminate evacuation readiness materials
- Public dissemination of a "Do's and Don'ts" list including actions that the public should or should not do during an incident. Examples of "do's" would include checking on neighbors throughout an emergency (as many members of the public did during both the Eaton and Palisades Fires). Examples of "don'ts" include calling 911 with false reports to prompt movement of first responder resources to a given location; while individuals may do this out of fear if they can see smoke in the distance, doing so slows the response to calls about active fires that callers can see and provide detailed information about so responders can take action.

[63] *City of San Diego, Wildfire Ready Set Go!* – Evacuation Guide. Last referenced September 24, 2025.

Establish a dedicated public information platform that consolidates all available alert and notification methods in one accessible location. This platform should include a comprehensive webpage and distributable materials for community meetings that explain how residents can connect to emergency alerts, while also addressing community concerns about notification tools. For example, many residents have inquired about sirens as an alert method, but the County's previous research demonstrated that this approach is not feasible for the region's geography and infrastructure. By transparently communicating both available options and the rationale behind decisions about other potential tools, the program can build public trust while ensuring residents understand how to access reliable emergency information.

Finding

Leveraging Elected Officials for Community Engagement

Engagement with and by the Board of Supervisors Offices is a critical component in helping communities prepare for and stay informed during an event, making the district supervisors and their staff a valuable resource at the grassroots level. This review has highlighted how elected officials can be leveraged in relation to community engagement around preparedness and information sharing.

Recommendations

- Create a formal liaison protocol between the EOC and Board of Supervisors during major incidents.
- Assign a dedicated point of contact to brief each supervisor's office with timely updates and coordinated messaging.
- Provide training to supervisors' staff on emergency communications, resource activation, and constituent support roles during incidents.
- Involve Board of Supervisors staff in policy workgroups, evacuation exercises, and pre-event planning meetings.

Finding

Lack of Community Preparedness

Individuals and communities play a crucial role in emergency preparedness. It is essential for everyone to take responsibility for their own safety and well-being during emergencies. Many community members noted that they were waiting for someone to tell them to evacuate, which in many cases resulted in them leaving at a point in the fire that was much riskier than if they had left sooner. Additionally, many community members noted that they were not prepared for a fire and were not aware of the resources available to them to stay informed, specifically in the area impacted by the Eaton Fire.

Recommendations

We recommend that individuals and communities be and/or remain proactive in staying informed about potential risks, creating and practicing emergency plans, and ensuring that necessary supplies are readily available. Communities can enhance their preparedness by fostering strong relationships and communication channels among residents, local organizations, and emergency services. By working together, communities can build resilience and ensure a coordinated response when disasters strike. Ultimately, being prepared for emergencies can significantly reduce the impact of such events and save lives.

While the best practices in the Palisades area provide useful guidance, for example, the dedicated relationship building and community exercising mentioned in previous sections, some additional recommendations for the whole County include:

- **Individual Preparedness:** Individuals and families should prepare an emergency plan that considers specific risks and vulnerabilities for where they live and regularly discuss and practice the plan. A number of resources are available for creating a personal emergency plan.[64]
- **Disaster Preparedness Councils**: The County should develop disaster preparedness councils, similar to the Topanga Coalition for Emergency Preparedness, in vulnerable areas across the county.
- **Map Your Neighborhood:** In addition to some of the community group examples from the Palisades area, there is a structured program that neighborhoods, community groups, and homeowner associations can utilize to organize together. The Washington State Emergency Management Division developed the Map Your Neighborhood program, which provides instructions for how communities can come together and plan for an emergency. The program includes guided activities to identify the capabilities and vulnerabilities of each community member, assign responsibilities, and develop a community plan.[65]
- **Buddy System:** A buddy system can be implemented for people with access and functional needs. This would ensure that vulnerable individuals have neighbors or community members assigned to assist them during evacuations.

[64] *https://www.ready.gov/* Ready.Gov Department of Homeland Security. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

[65] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMOFtk8xeV0&list=PLaYp9JZofBz3RSYyvL57jo_95G8ziwuTV* Map Your Neighborhood Video for Facilitators EMD Prepare, and *5dbc4d5ff2af3* Map Your Neighborhood Overview. Last referenced September 3, 2025.

Action Plan and Next Steps

The final exercise in this review process was to conduct an After-Action Action Planning Meeting. This is a structured method organizations use to translate the findings, lessons learned, and recommendations from an AAR into actionable steps for improvement. While the AAR itself documents what happened, what worked well, and what gaps or challenges were identified, the action planning process ensures that these insights lead to concrete changes in policy, training, procedures, or resource allocation.

McChrystal Group worked with County stakeholders to conduct a focused review of the AAR's strengths, gaps, and recommendations and assign prioritization to issues that pose the highest operational or organizational risk. Once prioritization was validated by County stakeholders, corrective actions were defined with more specificity to include measurable outcomes or deliverables and a timeline for implementation. Each action was assigned to an individual, department, or agency with the authority and resources to implement the change. The action planning process also included the identification of any anticipated integration challenges the County would face, including regulatory concerns, budget, and organizational hurdles.

Given the number of recommendations outlined in this report, McChrystal Group led the County through the action planning process for a handful of recommendations. The County will now follow this process to internally work through plans for the remaining recommendations.

The County anticipates establishing a reporting process for regular check-ins or progress reviews to monitor completion and adjustments. The action planning process is critical because it:

1. Closes the loop between identifying problems and implementing solutions.
2. Provides a roadmap for continuous improvement.
3. Enhances accountability by assigning owners and deadlines.
4. Builds organizational resilience by ensuring lessons learned are institutionalized.

The ultimate outcome is not just a written report but a cycle of improvement that strengthens future performance, readiness, and response capabilities.

Appendix 1: Data Sources

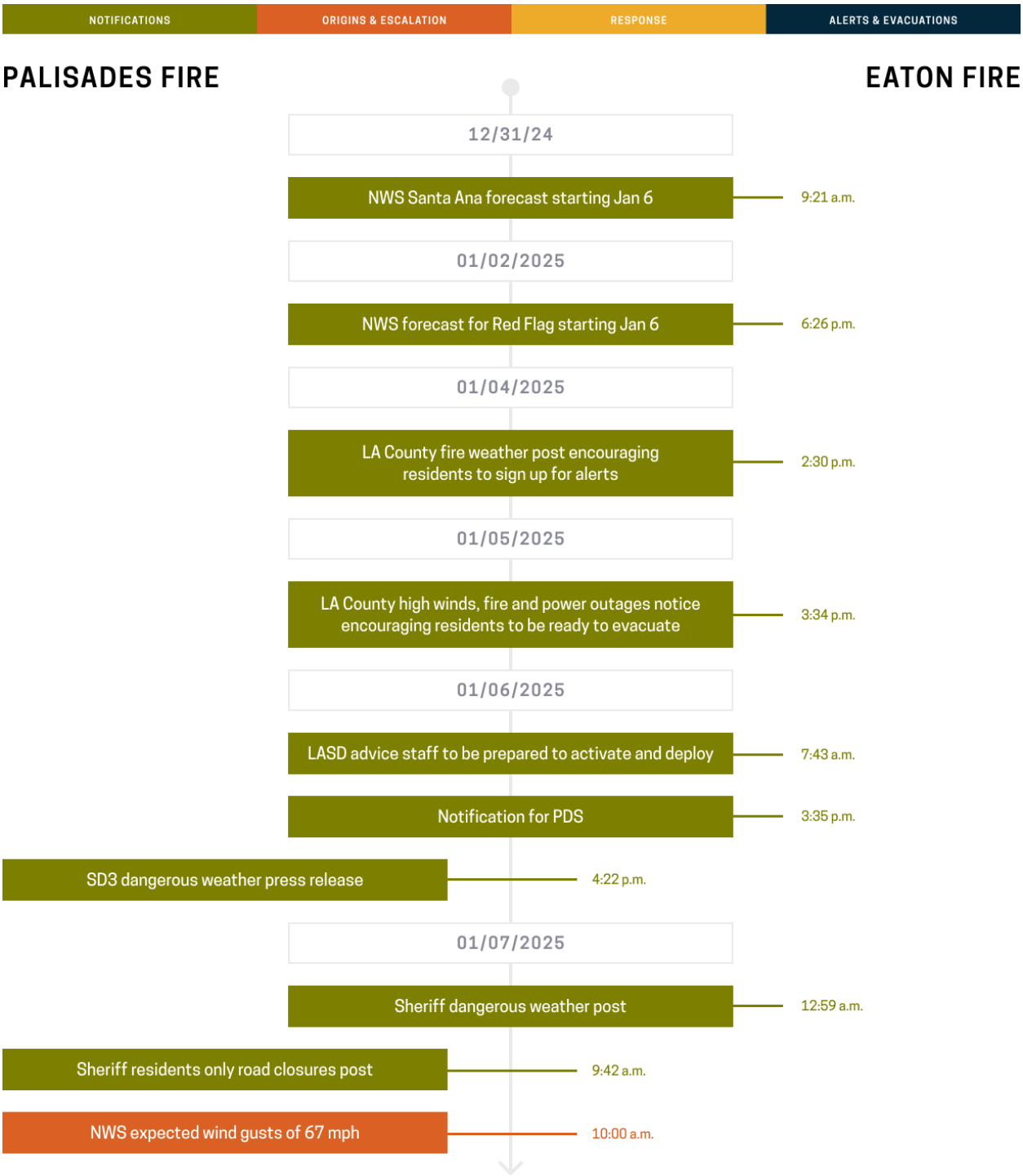
Publicly Available Data Sources	County-Provided Sources
• WatchDuty • PBS WARN • NWS forecasts • Genasys Protect • CAL FIRE • Official communications • NWS weather data • Social media posts and comments • News articles • Community-generated content (photos, blogs, videos, etc.)	• Genasys ALERT • Genasys EVAC • IPAWS logs • LACoFD call logs • LASD call logs • Fire incident timelines • Dispatch logs • FireGuard • Situation reports • Tablet Command • Interviews • DINS logs • Policies • Procedures • Automatic vehicle location data for both Fire and LASD • SCE PSPS event notifications • LACoFD radio traffic • LASD radio traffic • LASD body-worn camera footage

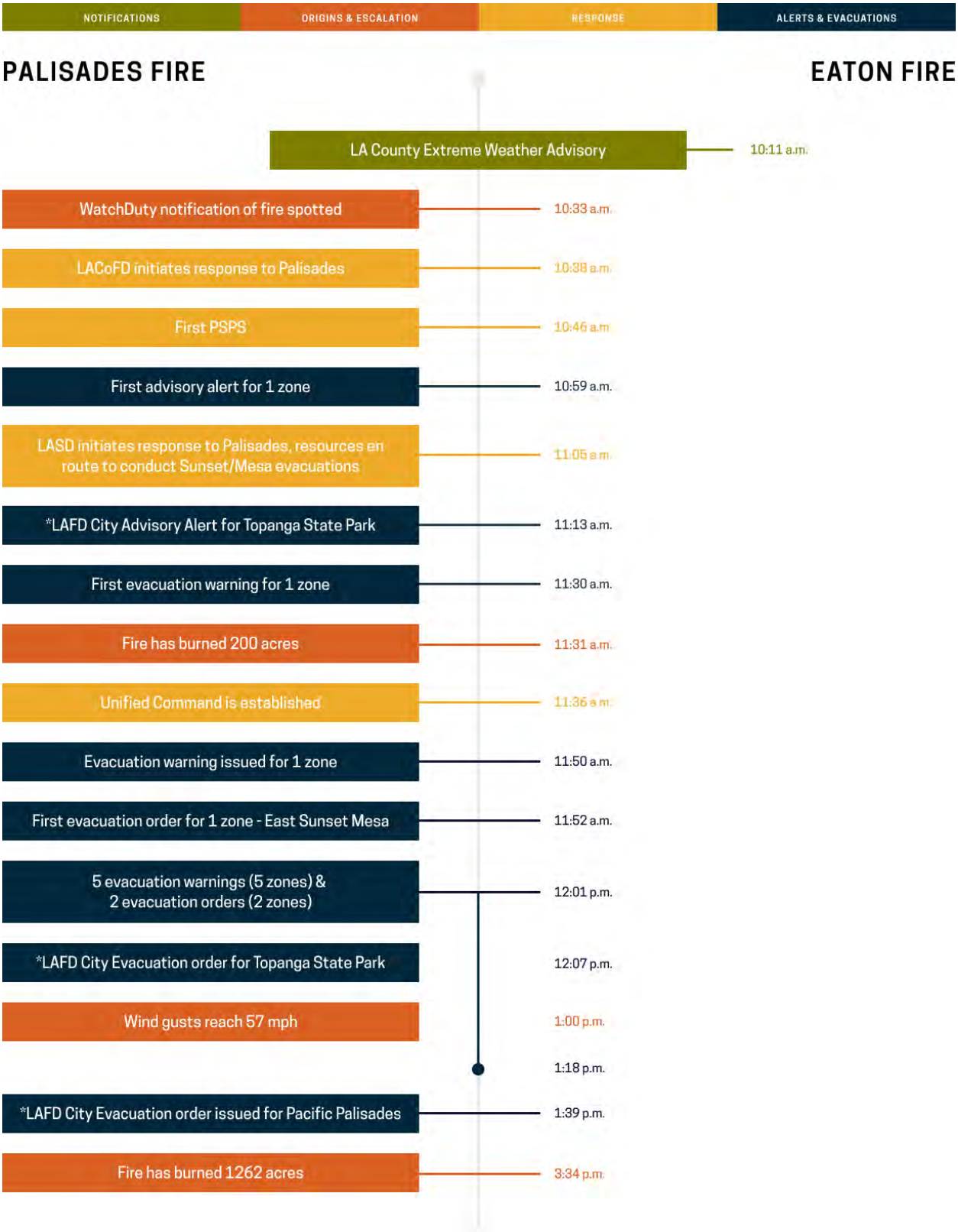
Appendix 2: Stakeholders Interviews

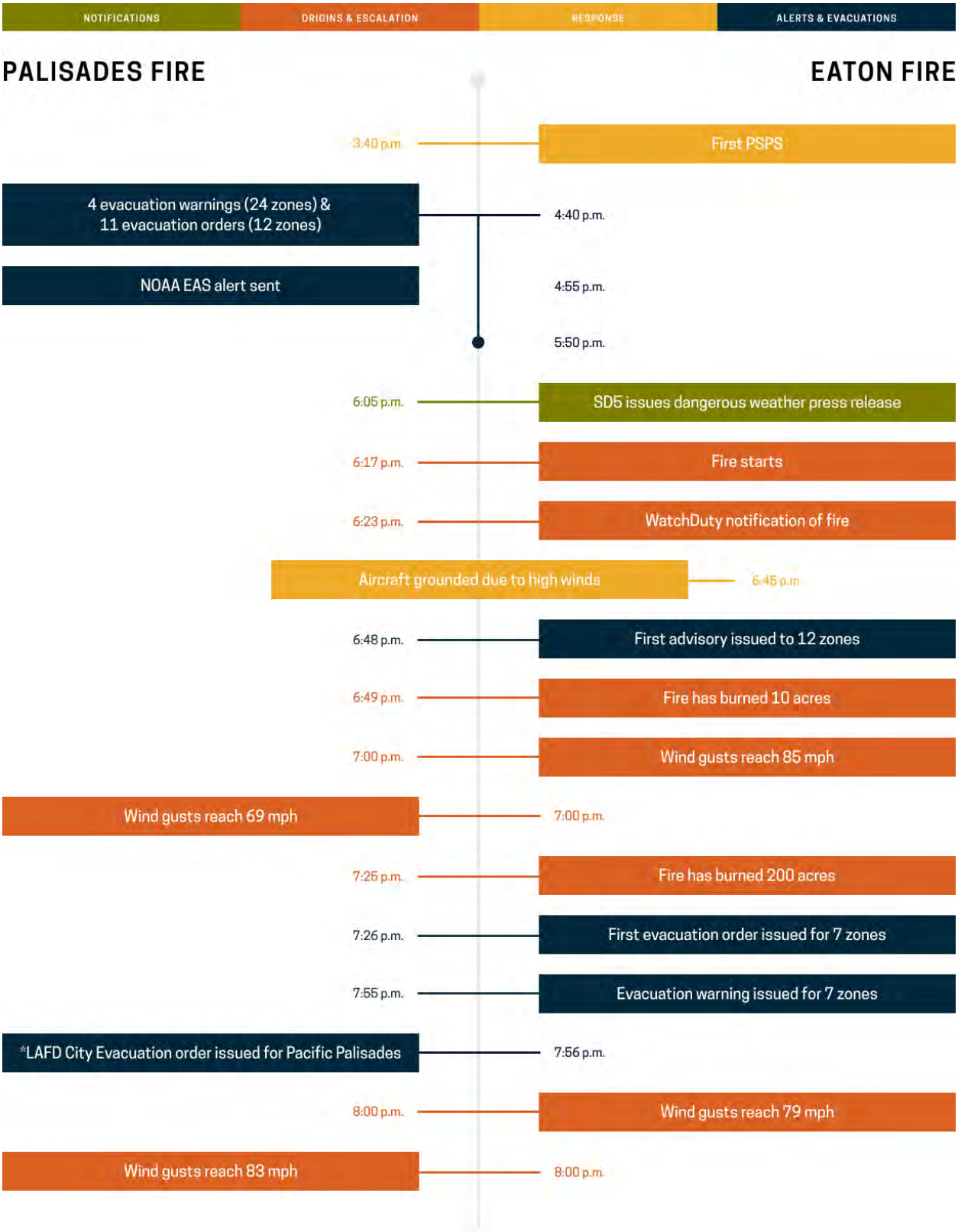
Stakeholders Interviewed	
County Agency/Department Stakeholder	**Third-Party Stakeholders**
• LASD/Sheriff • LACoFD/Fire • Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office's Office of Emergency Management/CEO • Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office of Communications • Supervisorial District 3 Office • Supervisorial District 5 Office	• SD3 community members • SD5 community members • City of Los Angeles Emergency Management Division • U.S. Forest Service, Region 5 Angeles National Forest • KNX News Radio • Digital Glue • NWS Oxnard • Genasys, Inc. • Wildfire Forecast and Threat Intelligence Integration Center, CalOES

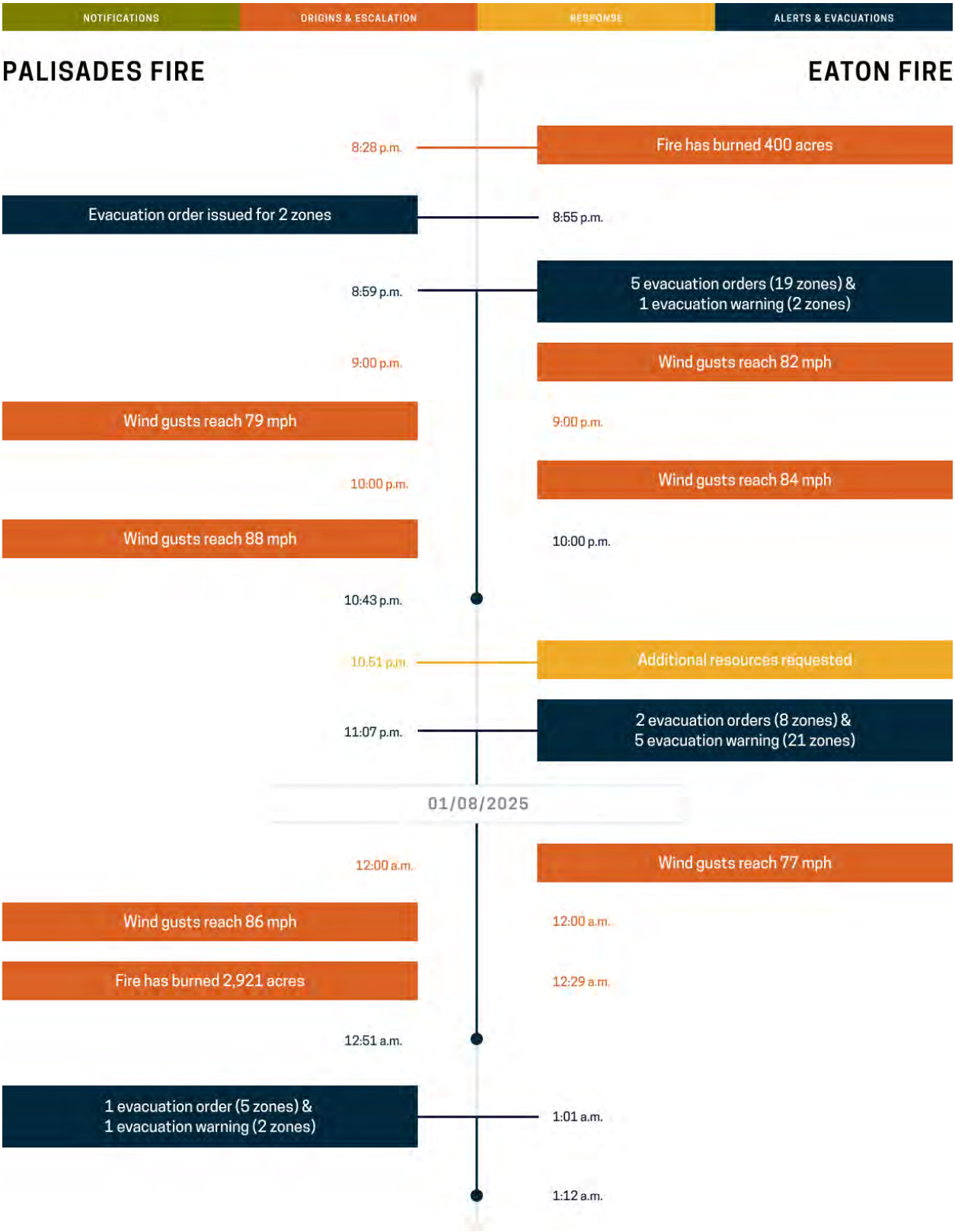
Stakeholders who Declined Interviews
• LAFD • Los Angeles City Police Department • FEMA • Federal Communications Commission • CalOES • JPL • Sierra Madre Fire Department • City of Pasadena Fire Department, OEM, and Police Department

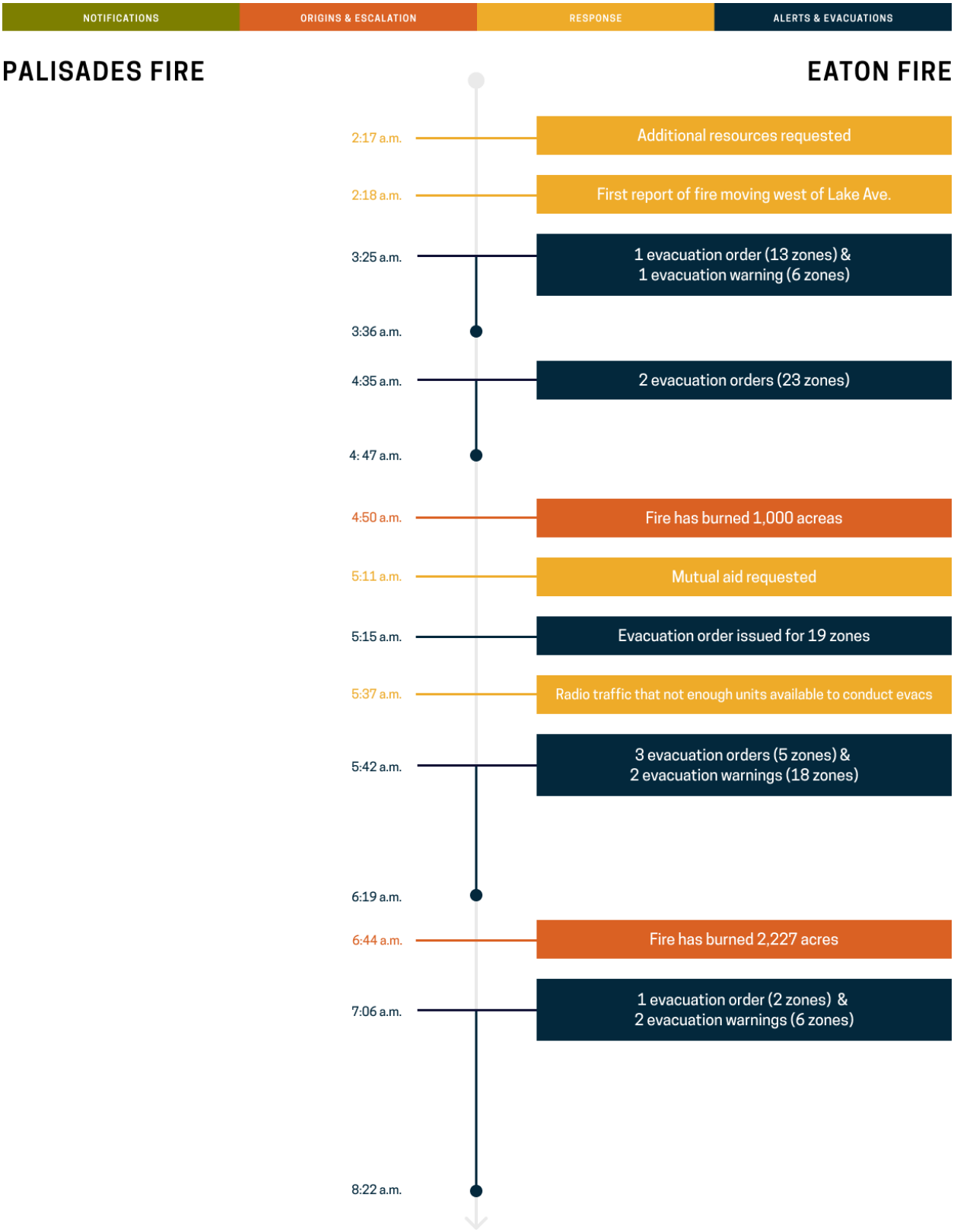
Appendix 3: Timeline Overview




NOTIFICATIONS
ORIGINS & ESCALATION
RESPONSE
ALERTS & EVACUATIONS
PALISADES FIRE
EATON FIRE
LA County Extreme Weather Advisory
10:11 a.m.
WatchDuty notification of fire spotted
10:33 a.m.
LACoFD initiates response to Palisades
10:38 a.m.
First PSPS
10:46 a.m.
First advisory alert for 1 zone
10:59 a.m.
LASD initiates response to Palisades, resources en route to conduct Sunset/Mesa evacuations
11:05 a.m.
*LAFD City Advisory Alert for Topanga State Park
11:13 a.m.
First evacuation warning for 1 zone
11:30 a.m.
Fire has burned 200 acres
11:31 a.m.
Unified Command is established
11:36 a.m.
Evacuation warning issued for 1 zone
11:50 a.m.
First evacuation order for 1 zone - East Sunset Mesa
11:52 a.m.
5 evacuation warnings (5 zones) & 2 evacuation orders (2 zones)
12:01 p.m.
*LAFD City Evacuation order for Topanga State Park
12:07 p.m.
Wind gusts reach 57 mph
1:00 p.m.
1:18 p.m.
*LAFD City Evacuation order issued for Pacific Palisades
1:39 p.m.
Fire has burned 1262 acres
3:34 p.m.


NOTIFICATIONS
ORIGINS & ESCALATION
RESPONSE
ALERTS & EVACUATIONS
PALISADES FIRE
EATON FIRE
3:40 p.m.
First PSPS
4 evacuation warnings (24 zones) &
11 evacuation orders (12 zones)
4:40 p.m.
NOAA EAS alert sent
4:55 p.m.
5:50 p.m.
6:05 p.m.
SD5 issues dangerous weather press release
6:17 p.m.
Fire starts
6:23 p.m.
WatchDuty notification of fire
Aircraft grounded due to high winds
6:45 p.m.
6:48 p.m.
First advisory issued to 12 zones
6:49 p.m.
Fire has burned 10 acres
7:00 p.m.
Wind gusts reach 85 mph
Wind gusts reach 69 mph
7:00 p.m.
7:25 p.m.
Fire has burned 200 acres
7:26 p.m.
First evacuation order issued for 7 zones
7:55 p.m.
Evacuation warning issued for 7 zones
*LAFD City Evacuation order issued for Pacific Palisades
7:56 p.m.
8:00 p.m.
Wind gusts reach 79 mph
Wind gusts reach 83 mph
8:00 p.m.


NOTIFICATIONS
ORIGINS & ESCALATION
RESPONSE
ALERTS & EVACUATIONS
PALISADES FIRE
EATON FIRE
8:28 p.m.
Fire has burned 400 acres
Evacuation order issued for 2 zones
8:55 p.m.
8:59 p.m.
5 evacuation orders (19 zones) &
1 evacuation warning (2 zones)
9:00 p.m.
Wind gusts reach 82 mph
Wind gusts reach 79 mph
9:00 p.m.
10:00 p.m.
Wind gusts reach 84 mph
Wind gusts reach 88 mph
10:00 p.m.
10:43 p.m.
10:51 p.m.
Additional resources requested
11:07 p.m.
2 evacuation orders (8 zones) &
5 evacuation warning (21 zones)
01/08/2025
12:00 a.m.
Wind gusts reach 77 mph
Wind gusts reach 86 mph
12:00 a.m.
Fire has burned 2,921 acres
12:29 a.m.
12:51 a.m.
1 evacuation order (5 zones) &
1 evacuation warning (2 zones)
1:01 a.m.
1:12 a.m.


NOTIFICATIONS
ORIGINS & ESCALATION
RESPONSE
ALERTS & EVACUATIONS
PALISADES FIRE
EATON FIRE
2:17 a.m.
Additional resources requested
2:18 a.m.
First report of fire moving west of Lake Ave.
3:25 a.m.
1 evacuation order (13 zones) &
1 evacuation warning (6 zones)
3:36 a.m.
4:35 a.m.
2 evacuation orders (23 zones)
4: 47 a.m.
4:50 a.m.
Fire has burned 1,000 acreas
5:11 a.m.
Mutual aid requested
5:15 a.m.
Evacuation order issued for 19 zones
5:37 a.m.
Radio traffic that not enough units available to conduct evacs
5:42 a.m.
3 evacuation orders (5 zones) &
2 evacuation warnings (18 zones)
6:19 a.m.
6:44 a.m.
Fire has burned 2,227 acres
7:06 a.m.
1 evacuation order (2 zones) &
2 evacuation warnings (6 zones)
8:22 a.m.

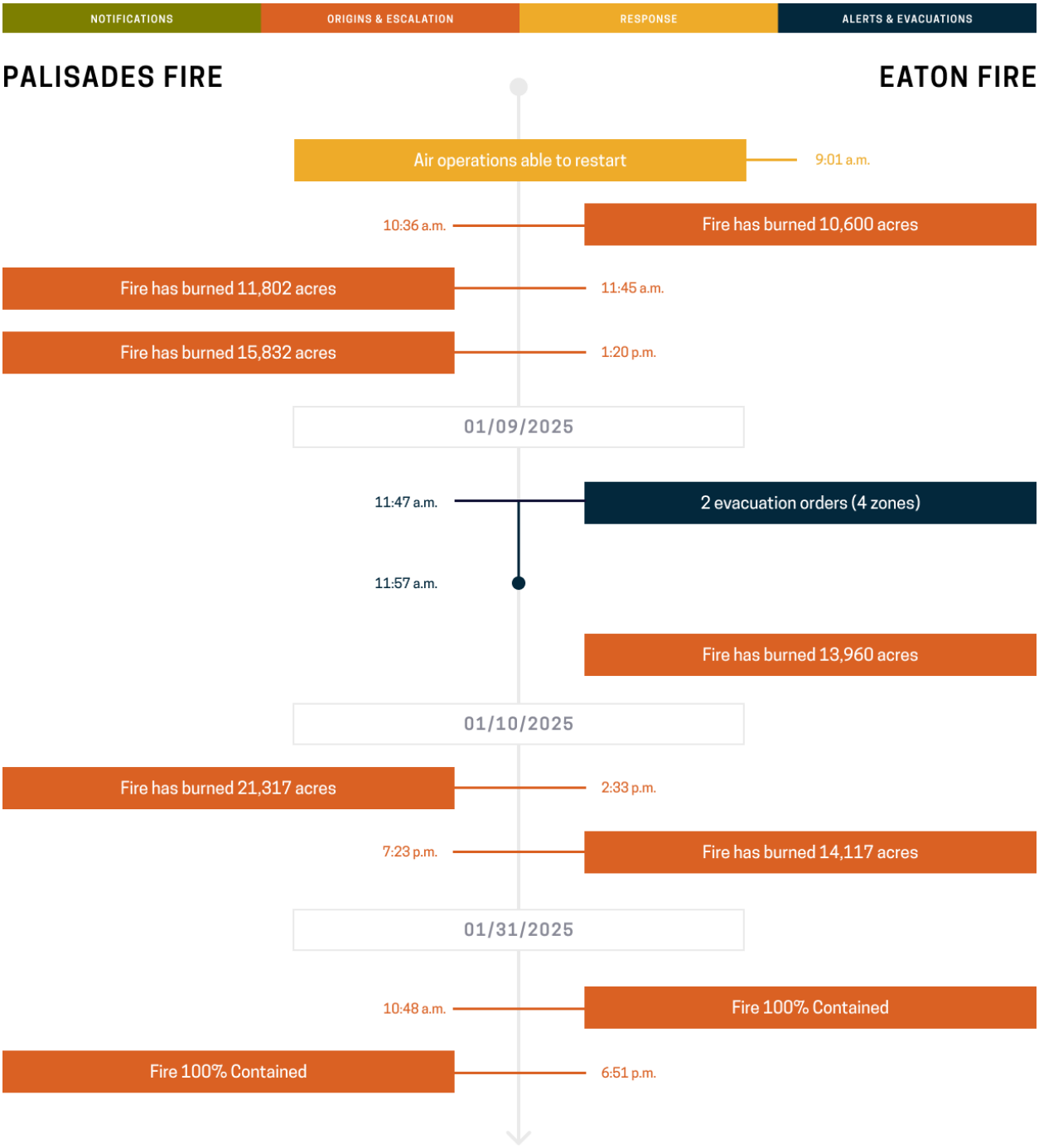
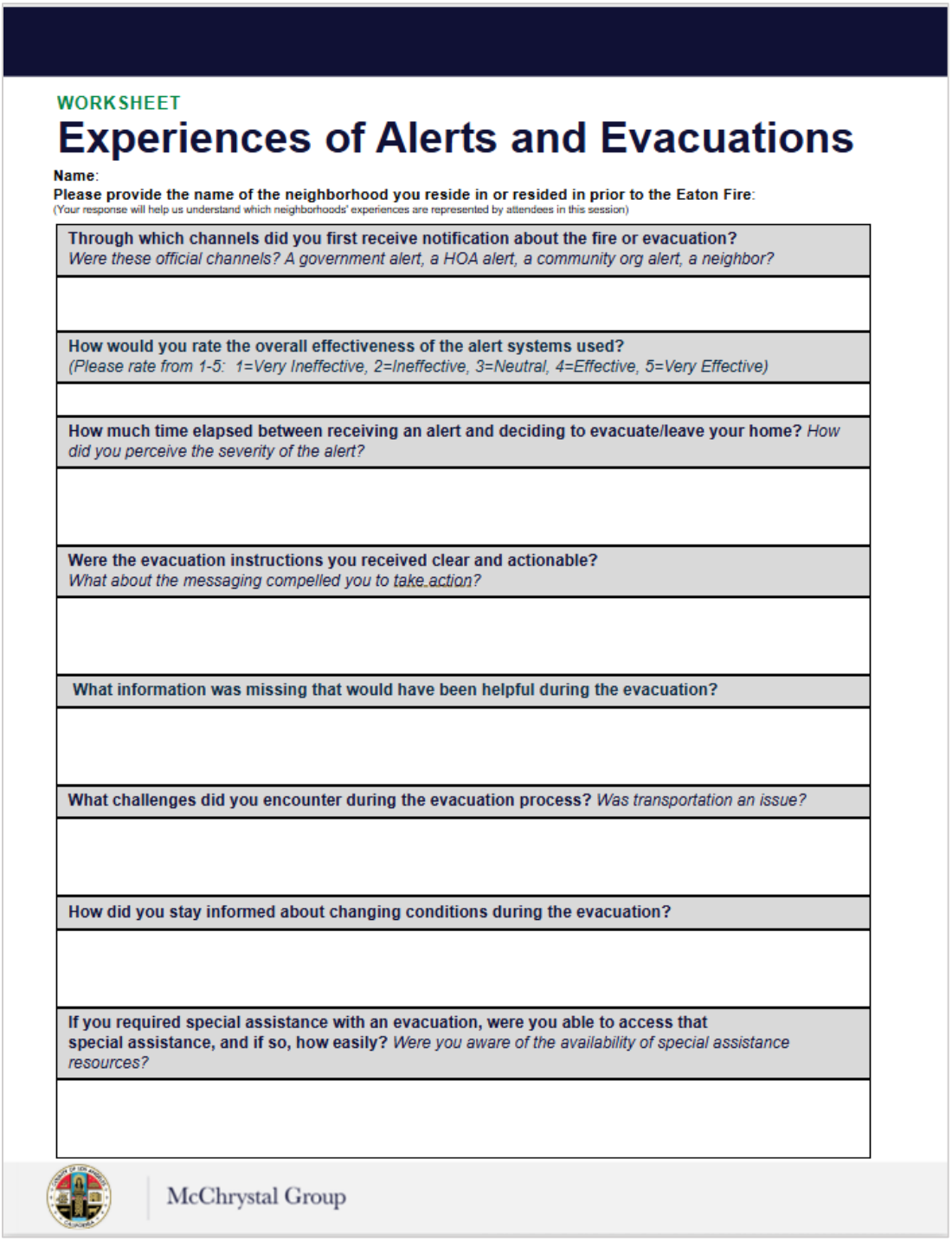


Figure 20: Timeline of significant events related to alerts, warnings, notifications, and evacuations for the Eaton and Palisades Fires based on the scope of our review and analysis of information.

Appendix 4: Community Listening Session Questions



WORKSHEET

Experiences of Alerts and Evacuations

Name:

Please provide the name of the neighborhood you reside in or resided in prior to the Eaton Fire:
(Your response will help us understand which neighborhoods' experiences are represented by attendees in this session)

Through which channels did you first receive notification about the fire or evacuation? *Were these official channels? A government alert, a HOA alert, a community org alert, a neighbor?*
How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the alert systems used? *(Please rate from 1-5: 1=Very Ineffective, 2=Ineffective, 3=Neutral, 4=Effective, 5=Very Effective)*
How much time elapsed between receiving an alert and deciding to evacuate/leave your home? *How did you perceive the severity of the alert?*
Were the evacuation instructions you received clear and actionable? *What about the messaging compelled you to take action?*
What information was missing that would have been helpful during the evacuation?
What challenges did you encounter during the evacuation process? *Was transportation an issue?*
How did you stay informed about changing conditions during the evacuation?
If you required special assistance with an evacuation, were you able to access that special assistance, and if so, how easily? *Were you aware of the availability of special assistance resources?*

McChrystal Group

Appendix 5: Themes in Community Feedback

The following themes are derived from information shared by Los Angeles County residents in community listening sessions held in the spring of 2025. These themes span the entirety of all six community listening sessions held by McChrystal Group between April 7 and May 7. Three sessions were held for residents impacted by the Palisades Fire, and three sessions were held for residents impacted by the Eaton Fire. Themes in community feedback are as follows:

1. **Need for Preparedness Warnings from Credible Sources:** Sentiment that no advance warnings were given to encourage people to prepare or pack "go bags" ahead of time.
2. **No Central Source of Truth leading to Evacuation Confusion:** Sentiment that there was no single, credible source providing consistent information and guidance throughout the fire incident. Additional sentiment that residents lacked a trusted channel for accessing critical resources and updates.
3. **Warning Fatigue:** Sentiment that residents experience fatigue from frequent high-speed wind warnings in recent months, which may reduce the perceived urgency of future alerts.
4. **Need for Expert Input on Warnings:** Sentiment that County should engage psychologists to help craft warning messages to reduce warning fatigue and increase effectiveness.
5. **Community Preparedness:** Sentiment that preparedness efforts should be better advertised or potentially made mandatory through homeowner associations (HOAs), local fire departments, or OEM initiatives.
6. **Community Wildfire Prevention Plan:** Sentiment that there is a clear need for a comprehensive and well-communicated wildfire prevention plan. The County must leverage the already existing County's Countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan, a voluntary, community-driven document designed to outline fire protection strategies tailored to the unique needs of unincorporated, at-risk communities. To ensure the plan's effectiveness and relevance, it is essential that its goals, strategies, and resources are clearly communicated to residents**.** This can be achieved by increasing the frequency and

reach of community workshops, which serve as a critical platform for education, engagement, and collaborative planning.[66]

7. **Need for Non-Digital Notification Methods:** Community members emphasized their belief in the importance of employing low-tech alert methods—such as blow horns, loudspeakers on fire and LASD vehicles, and neighborhood sirens—to ensure all residents are reached regardless of connectivity or access to technology.
8. **Need for Sirens:** Resident communicated that they believed sirens to be an essential alert and warning tool, especially in areas where power or cellular service may fail. They can serve as a reliable alert system for all residents, including the most vulnerable.

Community Sentiment on Key Challenge Areas in Alerting and Warning the Community

1. **Ineffective Traffic and Evacuation Management:** Residents shared their perception that the Sheriff's Department was unable to manage traffic or provide clear evacuation directions to residents.
2. **Lack of Resources for Vulnerable Populations:** Residents shared the sentiment that medically and socially vulnerable individuals were disproportionately affected due to limited access to timely information and support.
3. **Power Outages Disrupted Communication:** Residents shared that the loss of electricity prevented many residents from contacting family members and accessing accurate information during the emergency, and in some cases believed this to be the reason they did not receive an alert.

Community Sentiment on Areas to Sustain in Alerting and Warning the Community

1. **Championing Expanded Use of Fire Incident Apps and KNX News Radio:** Residents reported that third-party applications like WatchDuty and PulsePoint were helpful for real-time incident tracking and suggested they be more widely advertised as tools to follow to support emergency preparedness, as they aggregate information from many sources, including Genasys EVAC and other County-run resources.
2. **Encouraging Formation of Community Facebook/WhatsApp Groups:** Residents reported that their self-organized local Facebook and WhatsApp groups were effective in keeping residents informed and sharing real-time resources throughout the incident.

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[66] *Countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan—LA County Planning* Last referenced September 24, 2025.

3. **Leveraging Reach of Community Influencers:** Residents reported relying on local community influencers as a key source of information, such as a local meteorologist with a strong social media presence who played a key role in disseminating information through unofficial channels during the Eaton fire.

Appendix 6: Acronym List

AAR: After-Action Review

A-Rep: Agency Representative

CAD: Computer-Aided Dispatch

CAL FIRE: California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

CEOC: County Emergency Operations Center

CERT: Community Emergency Response Team

DOC: Department Operations Center

EOB: Emergency Operations Bureau

EOC: Emergency Operations Center

FIRESCOPE: Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies

HOA: Homeowner Association

IC: Incident Command

ICP: Incident Command Post

ICS: Incident Command System

IMT: Incident Management Team

JIC: Joint Information Center

LACoFD: Los Angeles County Fire Department

LASD: Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

NWS: National Weather Service

OEM: Office of Emergency Management

PIO: Public Information Officer

PSPS: Public Safety Power Shutoff

SCE: Southern California Edison

SIB: Sheriff Information Bureau

SOP: Standard Operating Procedure

UC: Unified Command

WEA: Wireless Emergency Alerts

Appendix 7: Genasys Population Estimates for Zones

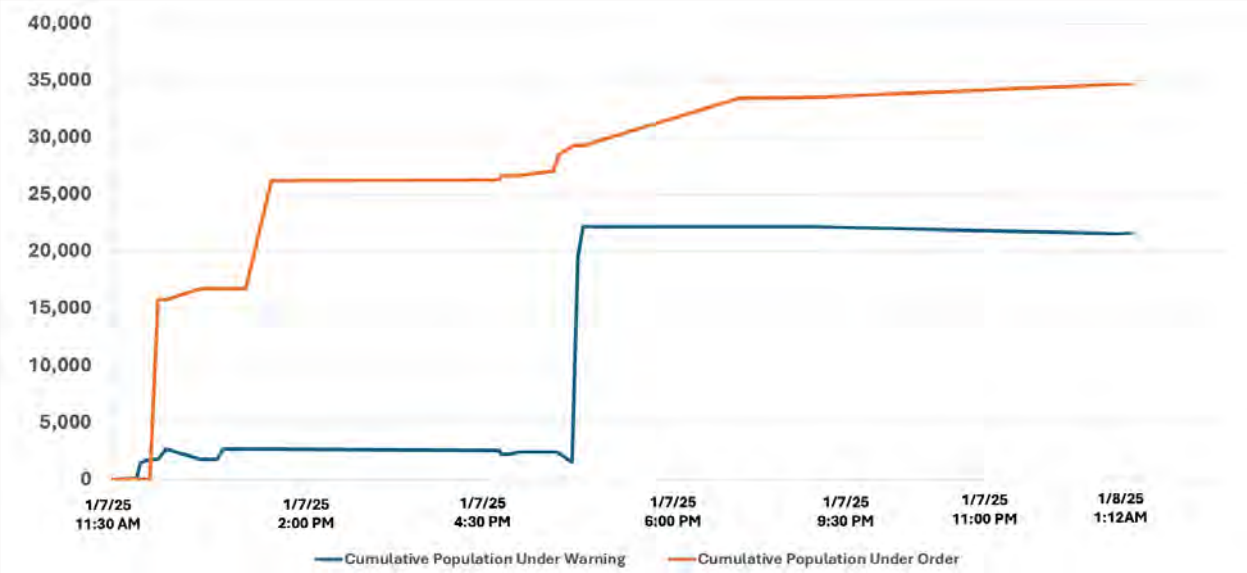


*Figure 21: Cumulative population under evacuation—Palisades Fire (*Includes LAFD city evacuations and warnings)*

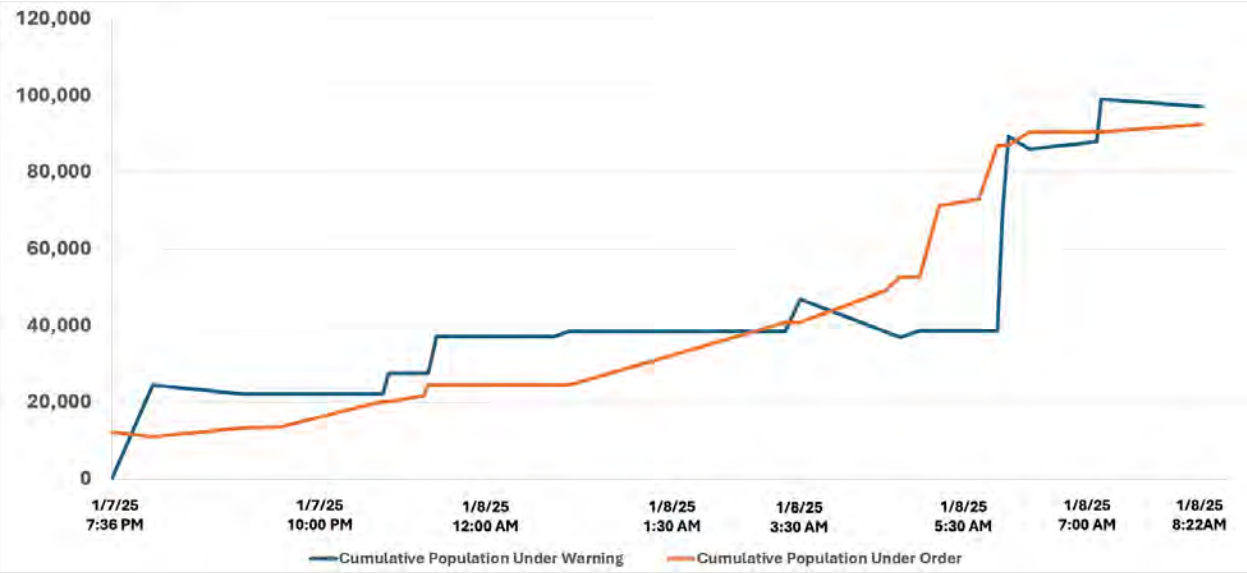


Figure 22: Cumulative population under evacuation—Eaton Fire

Appendix 8: Public Safety Power Shutoff Events

Alert Time	Circuit	Segments	General Location
1/7/25 3:40 PM	KINNELOA	1, 2, 3	Altadena East of Lake Ave and West and South of Altadena Golf Course, North Kinneloa Mesa
1/7/25 3:40 PM	LAMANDA	1	Altadena East of Altadena Golf Course, West of Eaton Canyon
1/7/25 3:41 PM	LAMANDA	2	Altadena East of Altadena Golf Course, West of Eaton Canyon
1/7/25 3:55 PM	BROADCAST	1, 2	Mt. Wilson to Angeles Crest Hwy, through Angeles National Forest West of Mt. Wilson
1/7/25 4:00 PM	OBSERVATORY	1	Mt. Wilson
1/7/25 4:00 PM	TIVO	1	Mt. Wilson
1/7/25 4:00 PM	VIDEO	1, 2, 3	Kinneloa Mesa, Between Kinneloa Mesa and Mt. Wilson
1/7/25 9:46 PM	DOLORES	1	North Lake Ave in Altadena
1/7/25 9:46 PM	GORGE	1, 2, 3	Along North Altadena, along Lake Ave
1/8/25 12:09 AM	LOWELL	1, 2	North Sierra Madre in Little Santa Anita Canyon, south through Sierra Madre along S. Mountain Trail Ave
1/8/25 4:41 AM	BALDWIN	2, 3	Across North Sierra Madre, West Arcadia
1/8/25 5:12 AM	ARBORETUM	1	Arcadia, West Monrovia
1/9/25 6:14 PM	ARBORETUM	1	Arcadia, West Monrovia
1/11/25 9:51 PM	JARVIS	5	Glen Canyon East of Mt. Wilson
1/11/25 11:13 PM	HASKELL	3	La Cañada Flintridge
1/12/25 2:45 AM	HASKELL	4	La Cañada Flintridge
1/12/25 3:03 AM	CRESCENTA	1, 2, 3	La Crescenta

Figure 23: PSPS events for the Eaton Fire area

Alert Time	Circuit	Segments	Location
1/7/25 10:46 AM	CUTHBERT	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	Central Malibu West through Point Dume
1/7/25 10:46 AM	GALAHAD	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	Western Malibu East to Zuma Beach
1/7/25 11:22 AM	MAGUIRE	4	Western Malibu from PCH north along Decker Road
1/7/25 12:20 PM	MERLIN	3	Malibu Vista West to Pepperdine, Corral Canyon
1/7/25 12:51 PM	PLATEAU	4, 5, 6	Saddle Peak Northwest to Malibu Canyon
1/7/25 12:52 PM	HORNTOAD	4, 5	Saddle Peak North to Calabasas Hills
1/7/25 2:46 PM	NICHOLAS	5, 7	Saddle Peak South to Big Rock
1/7/25 3:27 PM	SERRA	1, 2, 3, 4	Malibu North to Malibu Creek State Park along Malibu Canyon Road
1/7/25 10:59 PM	LINDERO	1, 2	Agora North of Ventura Fwy
1/7/25 11:02 PM	KANAN	1, 2	Agora North of Ventura Fwy
1/7/25 11:02 PM	TRIUNFO	1, 2	Malibu Creek State Park North to Saratoga Hills
1/8/25 12:02 AM	PLATEAU	1, 2	Saddle Peak Northwest to Malibu Canyon
1/8/25 1:22 AM	HORIZON	1, 2, 3, 4	Hidden Hills / Calabasas
1/8/25 1:46 AM	SIENNA	1, 2	Calabasas
1/8/25 3:41 AM	RHODA	1, 2	Liberty Canyon
1/8/25 4:08 AM	PARADISE	1	Mulholland Drive West of Topanga Canyon Blvd
1/8/25 4:09 AM	MILO	1	Calabasas
1/8/25 6:21 AM	VICASA	1, 3, 4	Mulholland Heights
1/8/25 10:23 AM	LA MANCHA	1, 2, 3, 4	Westlake Vista
1/9/25 5:25 PM	KANAN	1, 2	Agora North of Ventura Fwy
1/10/25 12:14 AM	PLATEAU	7	Saddle Peak Northwest to Malibu Canyon
1/10/25 1:34 AM	MULHOLLAND	4	Triunfo Canyon
1/11/25 12:15 PM	MULHOLLAND	4	Triunfo Canyon
1/12/25 4:37 AM	MERLIN	1, 2	Malibu Vista West to Pepperdine, Corral Canyon
1/12/25 5:21 AM	CUTHBERT	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	Central Malibu West through Point Dume
1/12/25 5:21 AM	GALAHAD	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	Western Malibu East to Zuma Beach

Figure 24: PSPS events for the Palisades Fire area

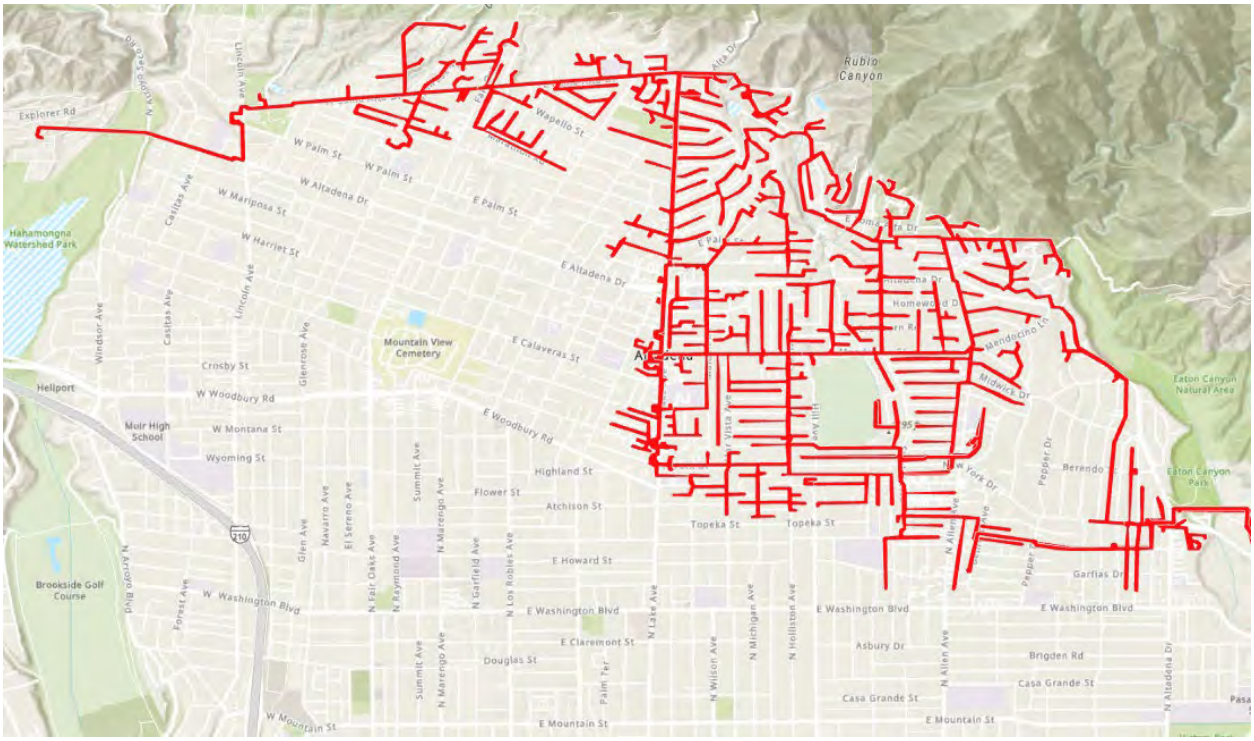


Figure 25: PSPS de-energized circuits in Altadena

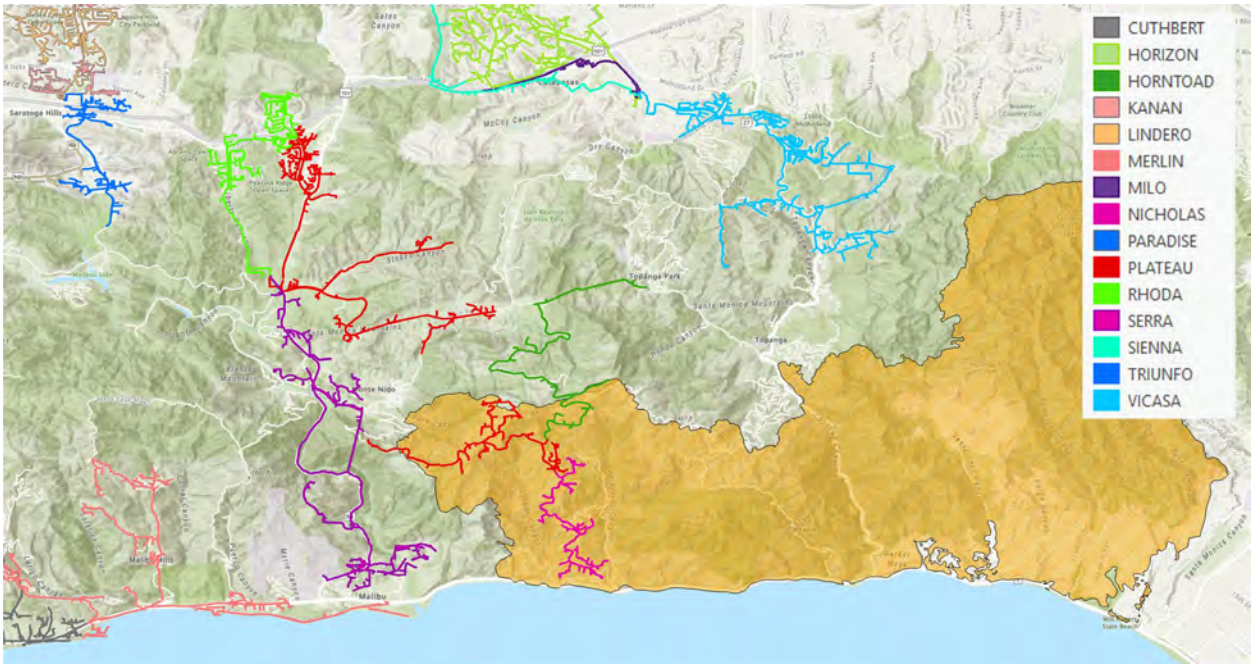


Figure 26: PSPS de-energized circuits in the Palisades Fire area, with an overlay of the Palisades Fire perimeter

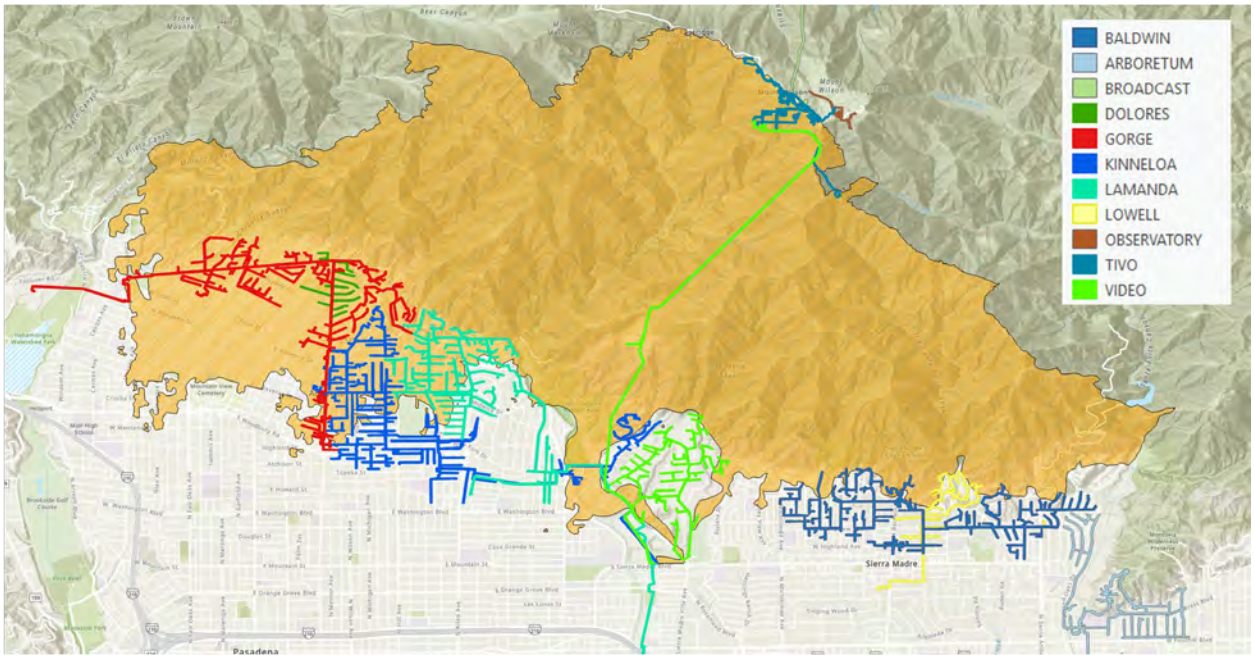


Figure 27: PSPS de-energized circuits in the Eaton Fire area, with an overlay of the Eaton Fire perimeter

Appendix 9: Damaged Structures

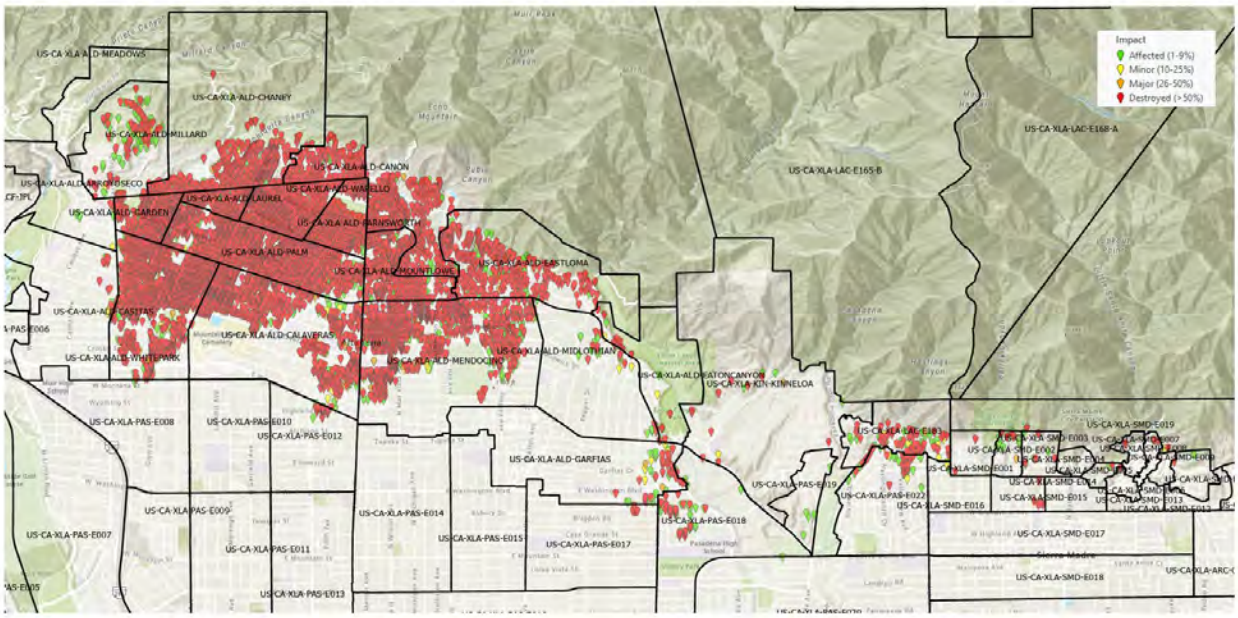


Figure 28: CAL FIRE DINS—Eaton Fire area damaged structures

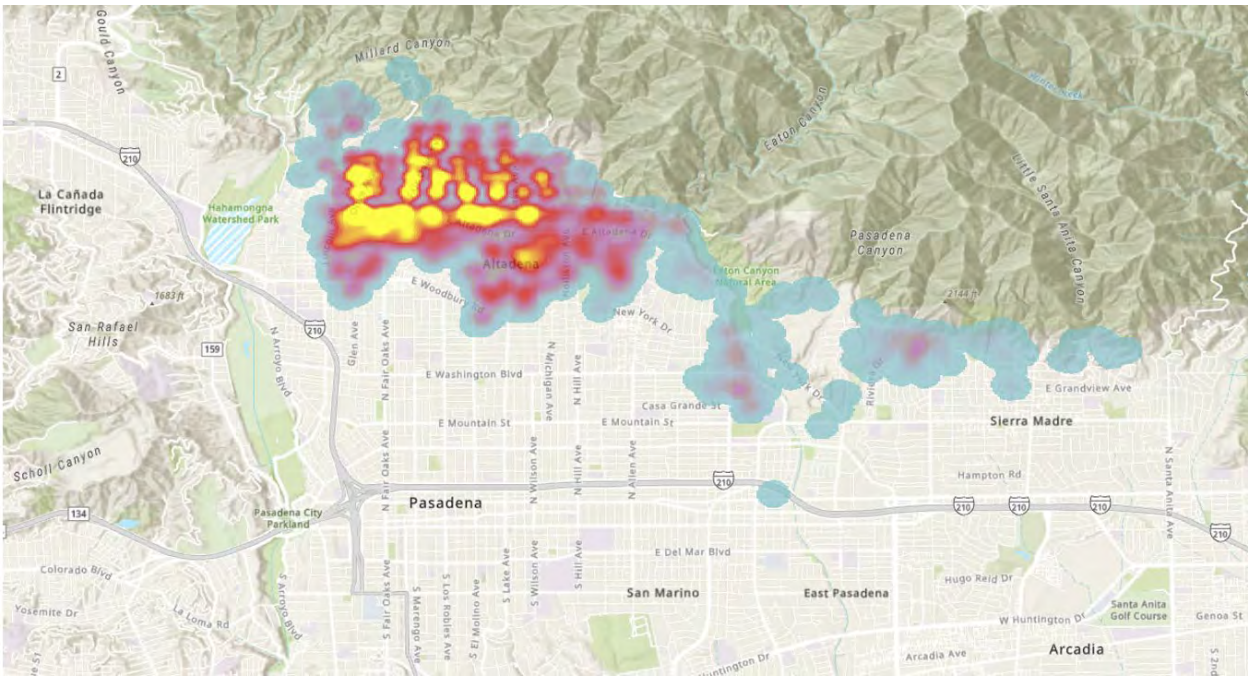


Figure 29: CAL FIRE DINS—Eaton Fire area damaged structures density

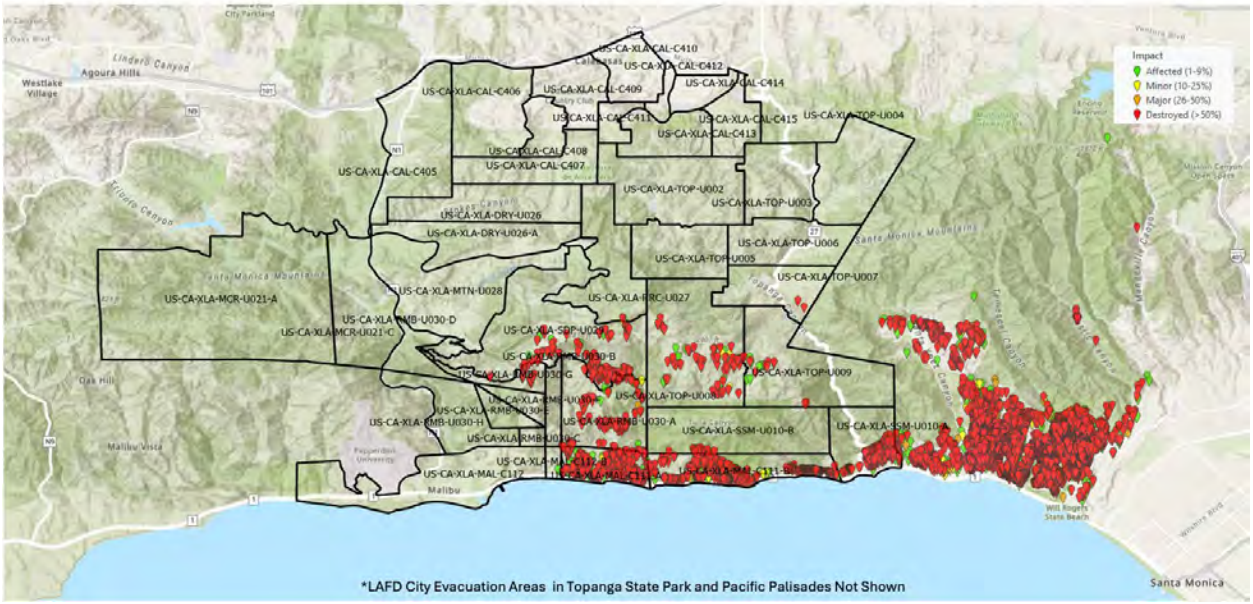


Figure 30: CAL FIRE DINS—Palisades Fire area damaged structures

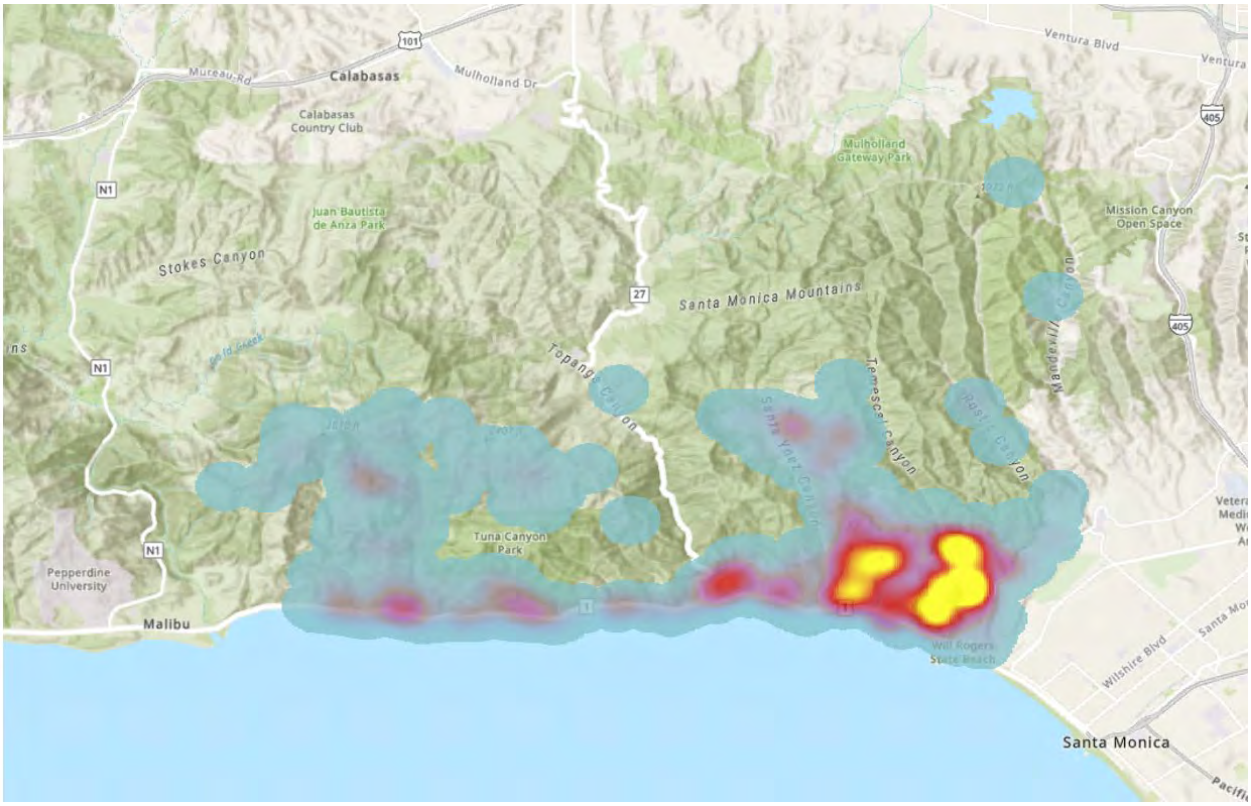


Figure 31: CAL FIRE DINS—Palisades Fire area damaged structures density

Appendix 10: Evacuation Warnings and Orders

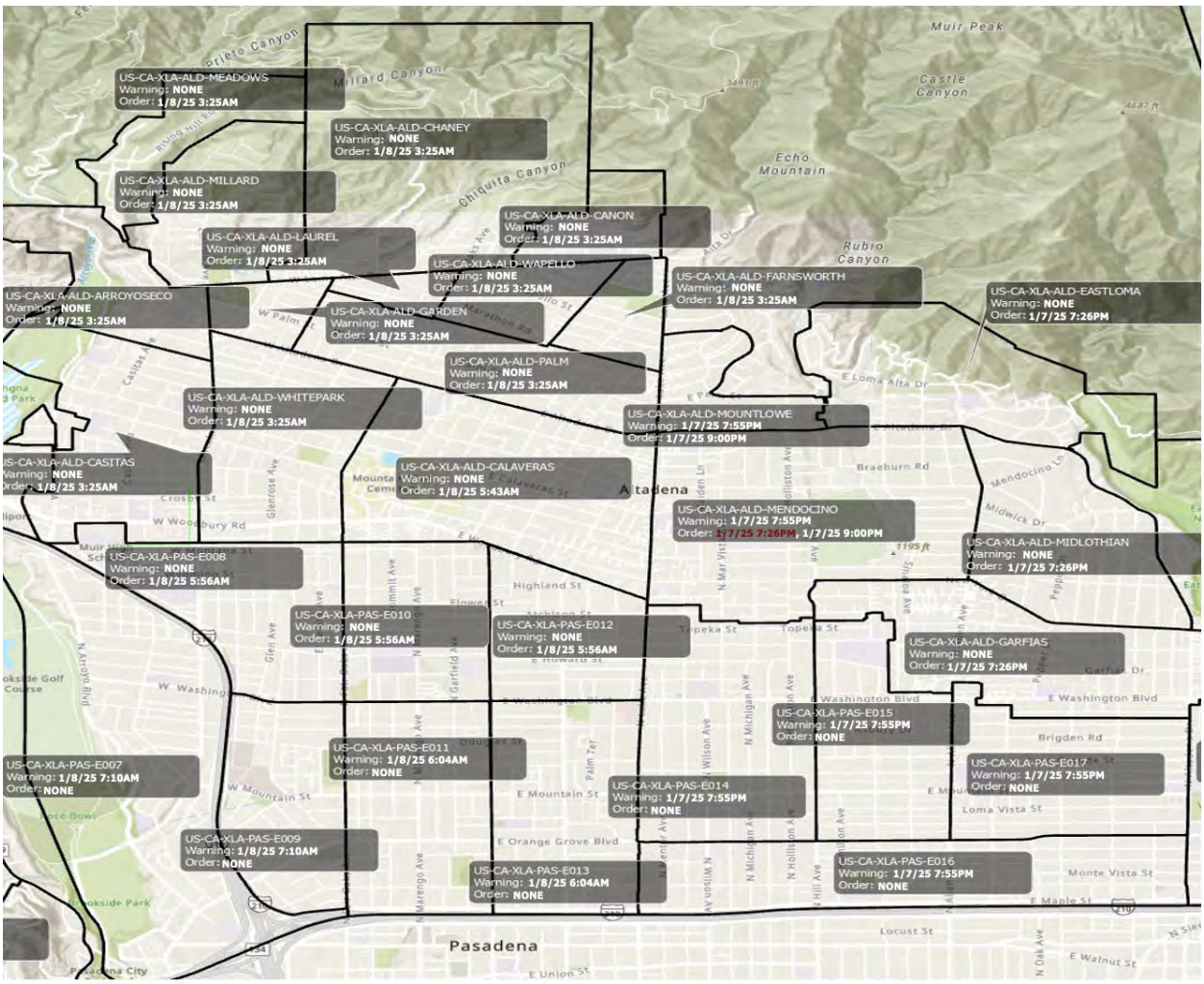


Figure 32: Altadena Genasys zone evacuation warning and order times

Alert Time	Alert Type	Genasys Zones	General Location
1/7/25 6:49 PM	Advisory	ALD-EASTLOMA, ALD-EATONCANYON, ALD-GARFIAS, ALD-MENDOCINO, ALD-MIDLOTHIAN, KIN-KINNELOA, PAS-E014, PAS-E015, PAS-E016, PAS-E017, PAS-E018, PAS-E019	Pasadena/Eaton Canyon, North of I-210, South of Eaton Canyon, Altadena East of Lake Ave
1/7/25 7:26 PM	Order	PAS-E019, ALD-EASTLOMA, ALD-EATONCANYON, ALD-GARFIAS, ALD-MENDOCINO, ALD-MIDLOTHIAN, KIN-KINNELOA	Kinneloa Mesa, Eaton Canyon, East of Lake Ave, North of Washington Blvd
1/7/25 7:55 PM	Warning	ALD-MENDOCINO, ALD-MOUNTLOWE, PAS-E014, PAS-E015, PAS-E016, PAS-E017, PAS-E018	East of Lake Ave, Mendocino, Pasadena Zones North of I-210
1/7/25 9:00 PM	Order	ALD-MENDOCINO, ALD-MOUNTLOWE	Altadena/Mendocino, East of Lake Ave
1/7/25 9:26 PM	Order	SMD-E007, SMD-E008	North Sierra Madre
1/7/25 9:34 PM	Order	LAC-E183	East of Kinneloa Mesa
1/7/25 10:27 PM	Order	SMD-E004, SMD-E005, SMD-E006, SMD-E007, SMD-E008, SMD-E009, SMD-E010, SMD-E011, SMD-E012, SMD-E013, SMD-E014, SMD-E017, SMD-E019	Sierra Madre North of W. Sierra Madre Blvd
1/7/25 10:39 PM	Order	PAS-E022	West Sierra Madre
1/7/25 10:43 PM	Warning	PAS-E018, PAS-E020	South of Kinneloa Mesa
1/7/25 11:08 PM	Order	SMD-E001, SMD-E002, SMD-E003, SMD-E015, SMD-E016	Sierra Madre between Michillinda and Lima, North of W. Grand View Ave
1/7/25 11:11 PM	Order	ARC-001, ARC-002, ARC-004	Arcadia East of Sierra Madre
1/7/25 11:17 PM	Warning	SMD-E018, MRV-101, ARC-003, ARC-005	South Sierra Madre, Arcadia, West Monrovia
1/8/25 12:41 AM	Warning	SMD-E018, MRV-101, ARC-003, ARC-005	South Sierra Madre, Arcadia, West Monrovia
1/8/25 12:51 AM	Warning	MRV-102, MRV-201, MRV-202, MRV-203, MRV-204	North Monrovia

1/8/25 3:25 AM	Order	ALD-ARROYOSECO, ALD-CANON, ALD-CASITAS, ALD-CHANEY, ALD-FARNSWORTH, ALD-GARDEN, ALD-LAUREL, ALD-MEADOWS, ALD-MILLARD, ALD-PALM, ALD-WAPELLO, ALD-WHITEPARK, LCF-JPL	Altadena West of Lake Ave extending to include the JPL, including all of North Altadena, and South to W. Woodbury Road, excluding CALAVERAS zones
1/8/25 3:36 AM	Warning	LCF-BERKSHIRE, LCF-COMMONWEALTH, LCF-CROWN, LCF-FOOTHILLEAST, LCF-INVERNESS, LCF-STARLIGHT	East of La Cañada Flintridge and West of JPL
1/8/25 4:36 AM	Order	LCF-BERKSHIRE, LCF-COMMONWEALTH, LCF-CROWN, LCF-FOOTHILLEAST, LCF-INVERNESS, LCF-STARLIGHT	East of La Cañada Flintridge and West of JPL
1/8/25 4:47 AM	Order	MRV-101, MRV-102, MRV-201, MRV-202, MRV-203, MRV-204, MRV-301, MRV-302, MRV-303, MRV-304, MRV-305, MRV-307, MRV-401, MRV-402, MRV-403, MRV-404, MRV-405	All of North Monrovia
1/8/25 5:01 AM	Warning	BRA-001, BRA-002, BRA-003, BRA-004, DUA-001, DUA-002	Bradbury and Duarte Wilderness Preserve
1/8/25 5:15 AM	Order	GLN-E018, GLN-E027, GLN-E028, GLN-E029, GLN-E030, GLN-E039, GLN-E040, GLN-E041, LCF-ALTACANYADA, LCF-CASTLE, LCF-CIVICCENTER, LCF-CREST, LCF-DESCANSO, LCF-FOOTHILLWEST, LCF-HAMPSTEAD, LCF-HILLARD, LCF-MEMORIAL, LCF-PARADISE, PAS-E006	La Cañada Flintridge, Northeast of Glendale
1/8/25 5:43 AM	Order	ALD-CALAVERAS	CALAVERAS zone, From Altadena Dr to Woodbury Rd, Fair Oaks Ave to West Lake Ave
1/8/25 5:56 AM	Order	PAS-E008, PAS-E010, PAS-E012	North Pasadena, West of Lake Ave
1/8/25 6:00 AM	Warning	GLN-E001, GLN-E002, GLN-E003, GLN-E004, GLN-E006, GLN-E013, GLN-E017, GLN-E026, GLN-E038, CRV-ALABAMA, CRV-COMMUNITY, CRV-PINECONE, CRV-HENRIETTA, CRV-BRIGGSTERRACE, CRV-TEASLEY, CRV-MOUNTAIN	West of Glendale Freeway, Montrose, and La Crescenta

1/8/25 6:04 AM	Warning	PAS-E011, PAS-E013	North Pasadena from I-210 to Washington Blvd, West of Lake Ave
1/8/25 6:19 AM	Order	SMD-E018	Sierra Madre between Sierra Madre Blvd and Orange Grove Ave
1/8/25 7:07 AM	Warning	GLN-E043, GLN-E044	Scholl Canyon
1/8/25 7:10 AM	Warning	PAS-E004, PAS-E005, PAS-E007, PAS-E009	Rose Bowl
1/8/25 8:22 AM	Order	GLN-E043, GLN-E044	Scholl Canyon
1/9/25 11:47 AM	Order	LAC-E167	Mt. Wilson
1/9/25 11:57 AM	Order	LAC-E167, LAC-E165-B, LAC-E168-A	Mt. Wilson

Figure 33: Eaton Fire alerts—Genasys zone evacuation warnings and orders

Alert Time	Alert Type	Genasys Zones	General Description of Location
1/7/25 10:59 AM	Advisory	TOP-U003	Topanga Canyon Zone 3 - Northwest of Topanga Oaks
1/7/25 11:13 AM	Advisory	*LAFD City Alert	Topanga State Park
1/7/25 11:30 AM	Warning	SSM-U010-B	West Sunset Mesa
1/7/25 11:50 AM	Warning	TOP-U007	Topanga Canyon Zone 7 - West of Topanga State Park
1/7/25 11:53 AM	Order	SSM-U010-A	East Sunset Mesa
1/7/25 12:01 PM	Warning	TOP-U009	Topanga Canyon Zone 9, Southwest of Topanga State Park
1/7/25 12:07 PM	Order	*LAFD City Alert	Topanga State Park
1/7/25 12:14 PM	Warning	MAL-C111-B	Malibu East of Las Flores
1/7/25 12:42 PM	Order	MAL-C111-B	Malibu East of Las Flores
1/7/25 12:55 PM	Order	SSM-U010-B	Malibu East of Las Flores - Tuna Canyon Park
1/7/25 12:59 PM	Warning	MAL-C111-A	Malibu West of Las Flores
1/7/25 1:00 PM	Warning	RMB-U030-A	North Malibu West of Las Flores
1/7/25 1:18 PM	Warning	TOP-U008	Topanga Canyon Zone 8
1/7/25 1:39 PM	Order	*LAFD City Alert	Pacific Palisades
1/7/25 4:42 PM	Order	TOP-U007	Topanga Canyon Zone 7 - West of Topanga State Park
1/7/25 4:44 PM	Order	TOP-U009	Topanga Canyon Zone 9, Southwest of Topanga State Park
1/7/25 4:50 PM	Order	TOP-U009	Topanga Canyon Zone 9, Southwest of Topanga State Park
1/7/25 4:59 PM	Warning	TOP-U005	Topanga Canyon Zone 5 - West of Topanga
1/7/25 5:26 PM	Order	TOP-U006	Topanga Canyon Zone 6 - North of Topanga
1/7/25 5:27 PM	Order	TOP-U004	Topanga Canyon Zone 4 - Northwest of Topanga State Park

1/7/25 5:29 PM	Order	TOP-U003	Topanga Canyon Zone 3 - Northwest of Topanga Oaks
1/7/25 5:30 PM	Order	TOP-U002	Topanga Canyon Zone 2 - Topanga Park and areas North
1/7/25 5:41 PM	Order	MAL-C111-A, RMB-U030-A	Malibu West of Las Flores
1/7/25 5:46 PM	Warning	CAL-C405, CAL-C406, CAL-C407, CAL-C408, CAL-C409, CAL-C410, CAL-C411, CAL-C412, CAL-C413, CAL-C414, CAL-C415, DRY-U026, MTN-U028, RMB-U030-B, RRC-U027, SDP-U029, RMB-U030-C, RMB-U030-E, RMB-U030-F, RMB-U030-G, RMB-U030-H	North Malibu to US101, between N1 and Las Flores Canyon, stretching Northeast to cover Calabasas
1/7/25 5:50 PM	Warning	MAL-C112	Malibu
1/7/25 7:56 PM	Order	*LAFD City Alert	Pacific Palisades
1/7/25 8:55 PM	Order	MAL-C112-B, RMB-U030-B	Carbon Canyon North of PCH
1/8/25 1:01 AM	Order	DRY-U026-A, MTN-U028, RMB-U030-D, RRC-U027, SDP-U029	Monte Nido
1/8/25 1:12 AM	Warning	MCR-U021-A, MCR-U021-C	Malibu Creek State Park

Figure 34: Palisades Fire alerts—Genasys zone evacuation warnings and orders.

Appendix 11: 911 LAC Fire Dispatch Calls

Figure 35: 911 LAC Fire Dispatch calls for structure fires by time interval—Palisades Fire

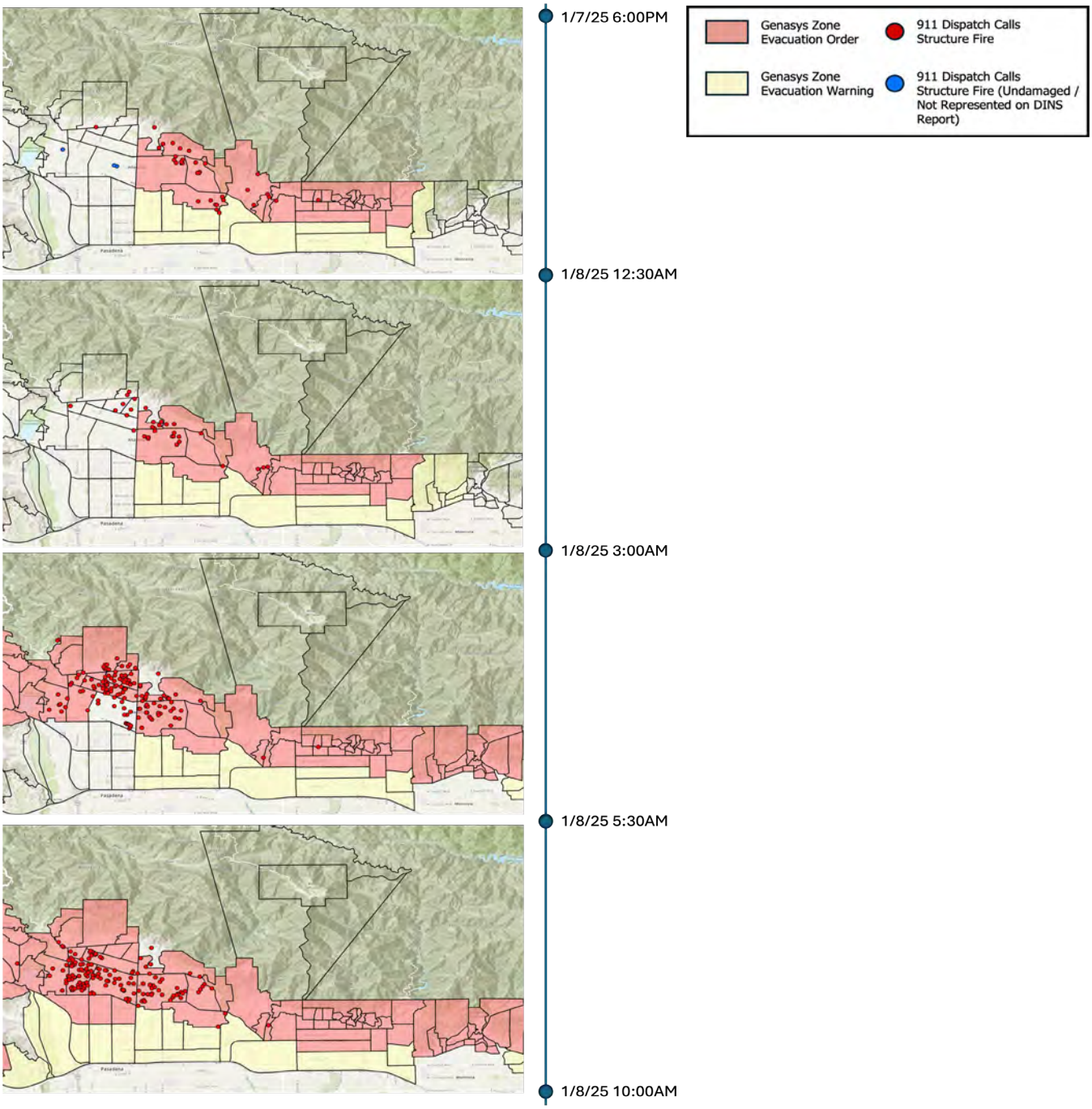


Figure 36: 911 LAC Fire Dispatch calls for structure fires by time interval—Eaton Fire

Appendix 12: Fire Front Progression

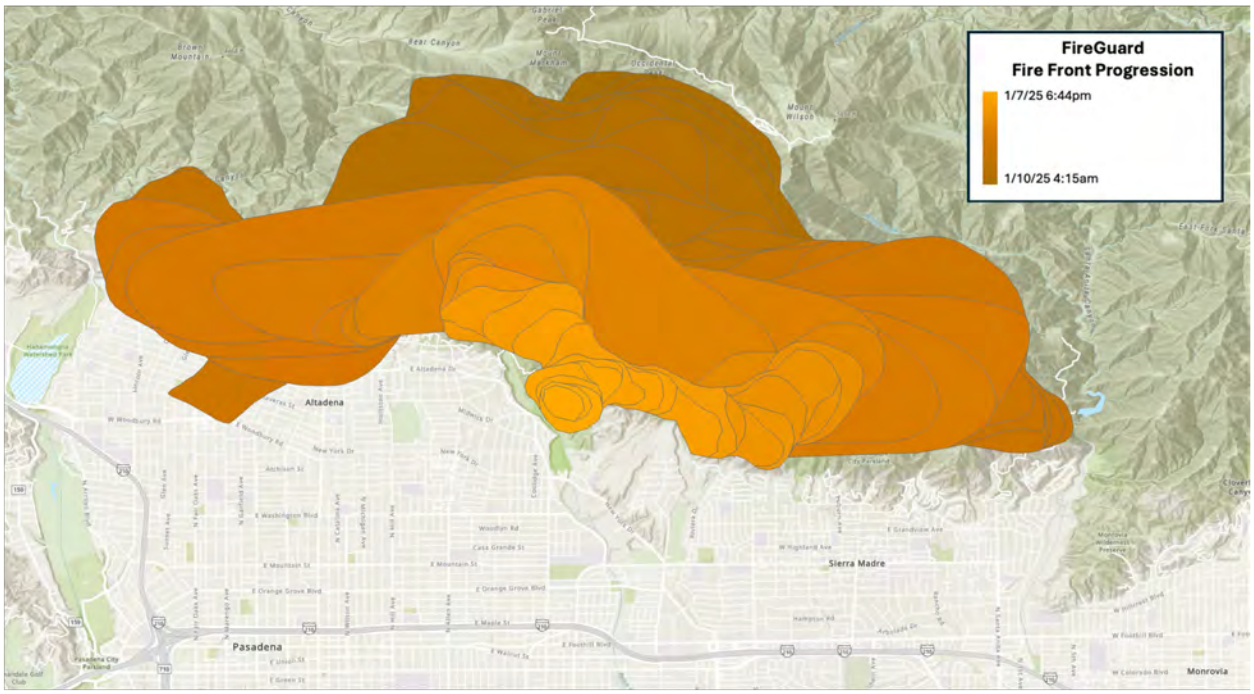


Figure 38: FireGuard fire front progression—Eaton Fire

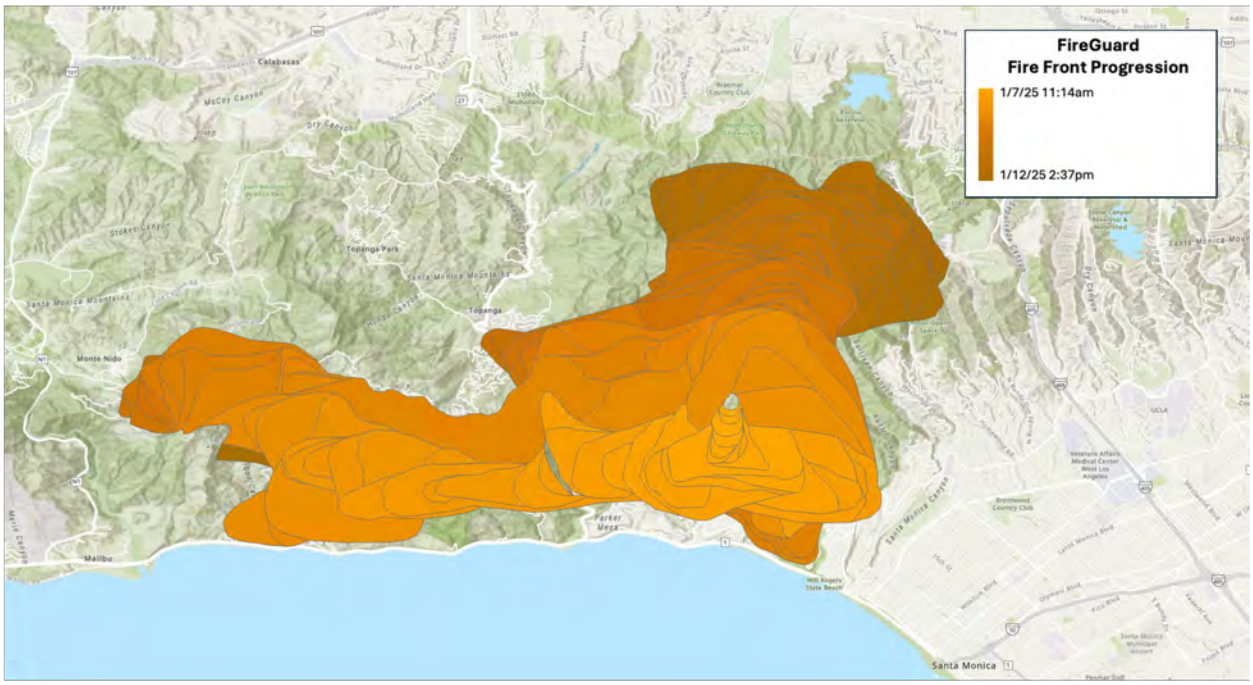
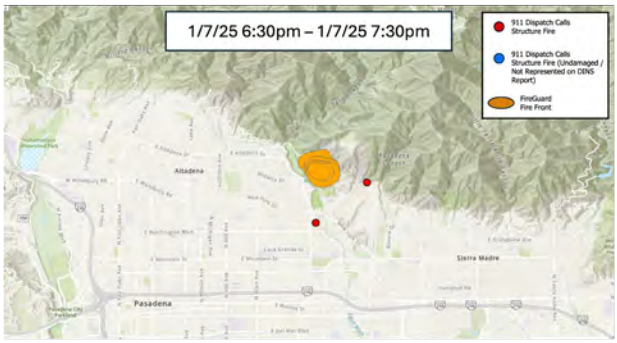
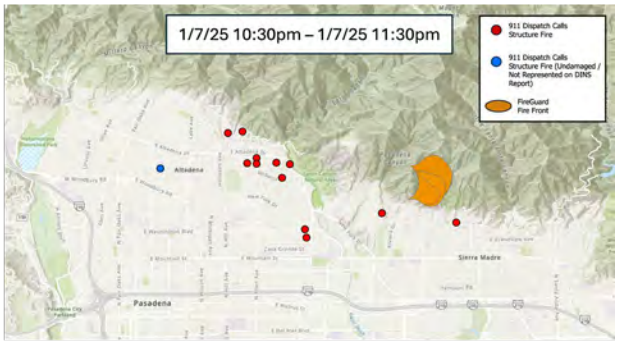
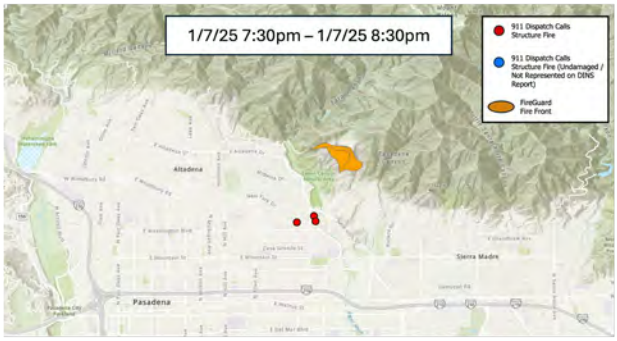


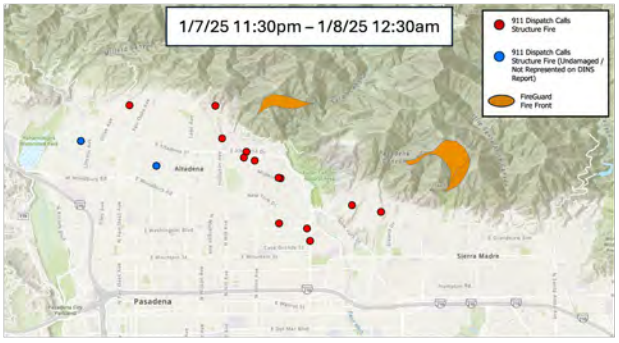
Figure 37: FireGuard fire front progression—Palisades Fire

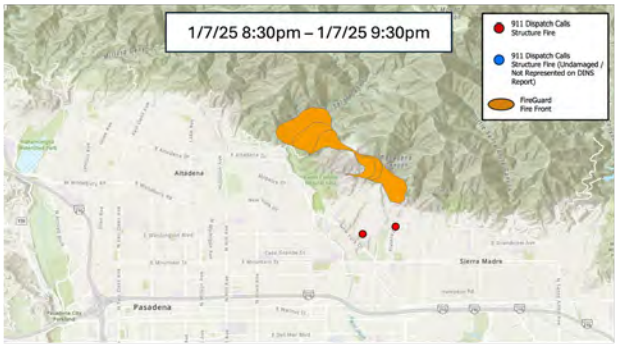
FireGuard Front Progression and 911 LAC Fire Dispatch—Eaton Fire

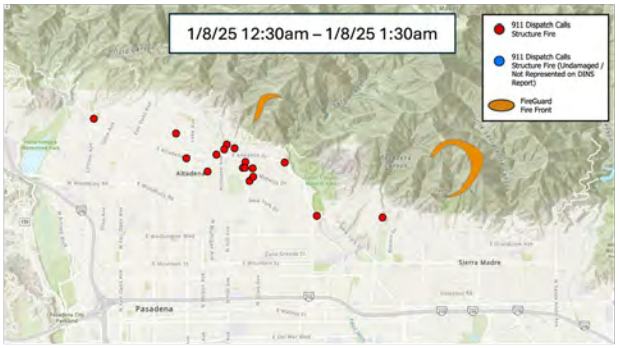


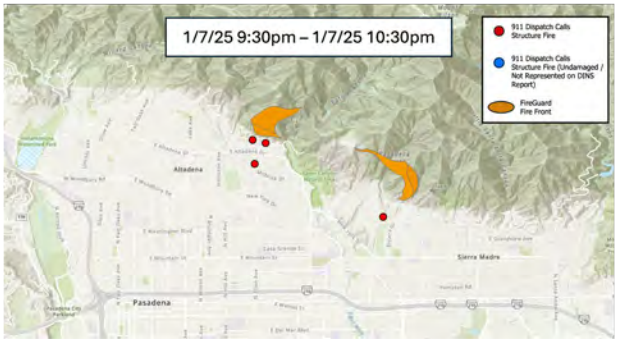


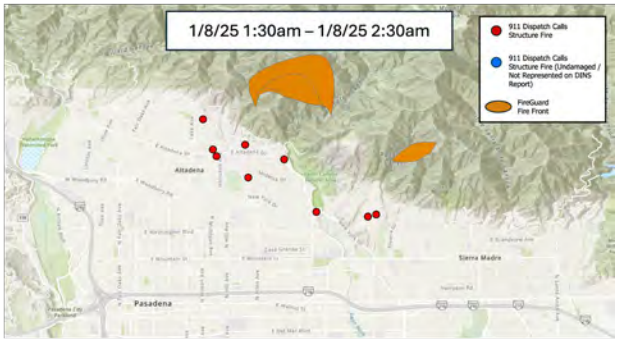












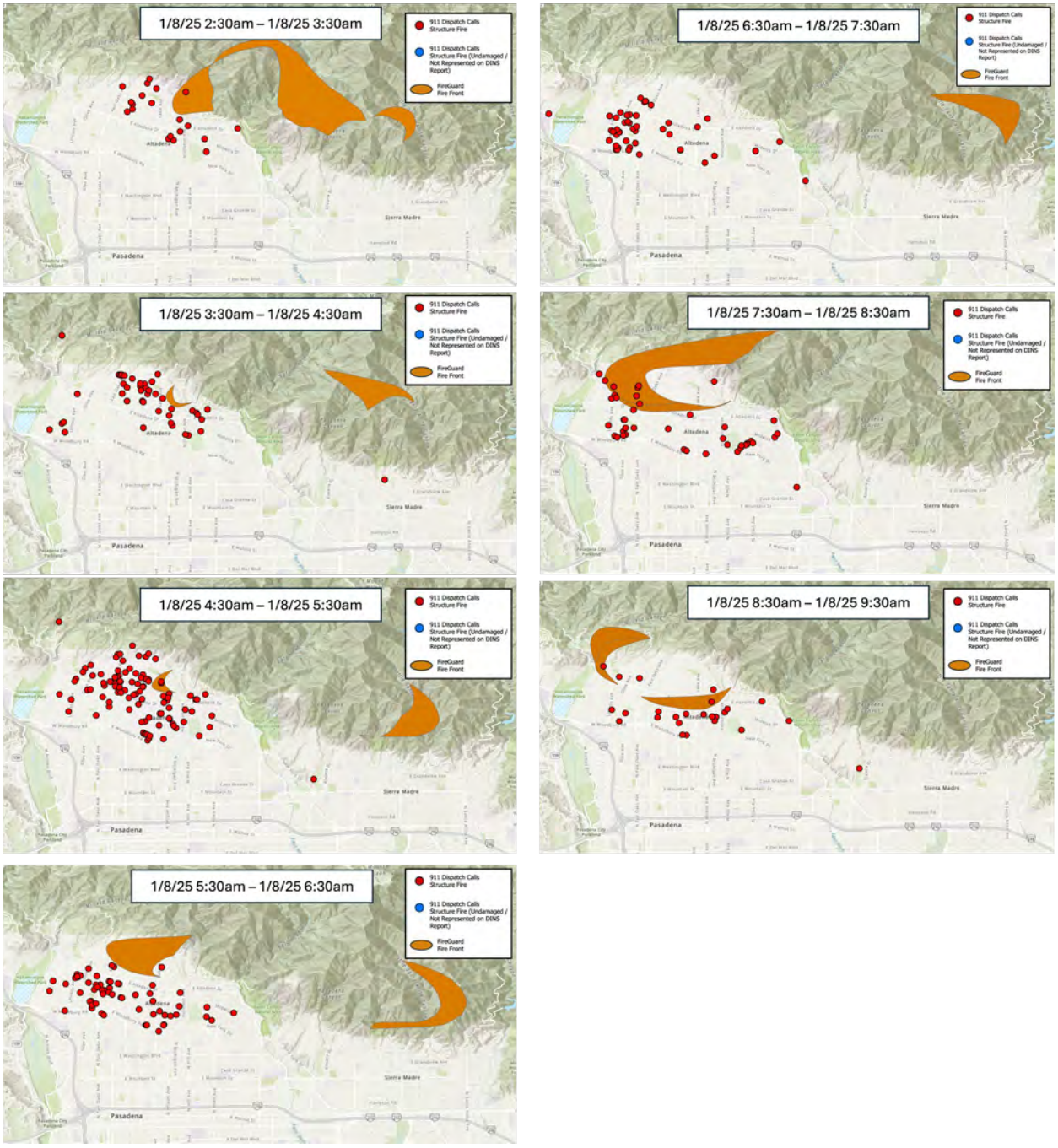
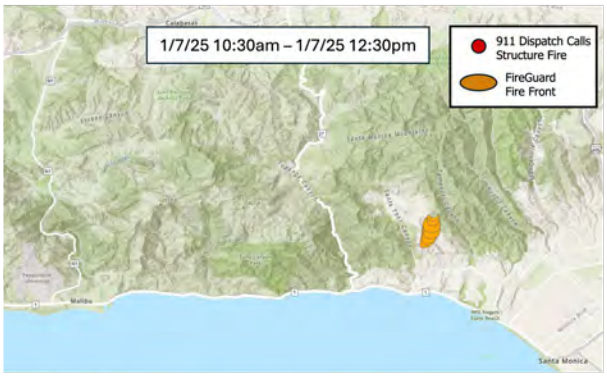
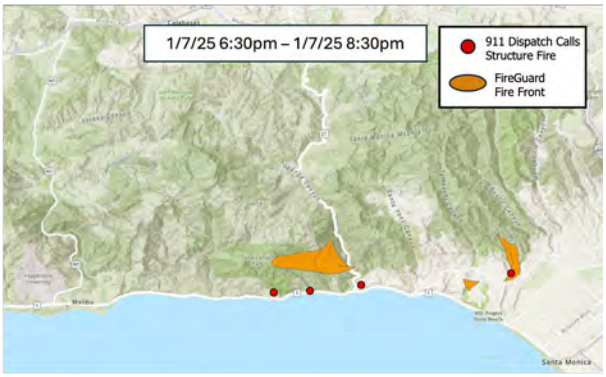
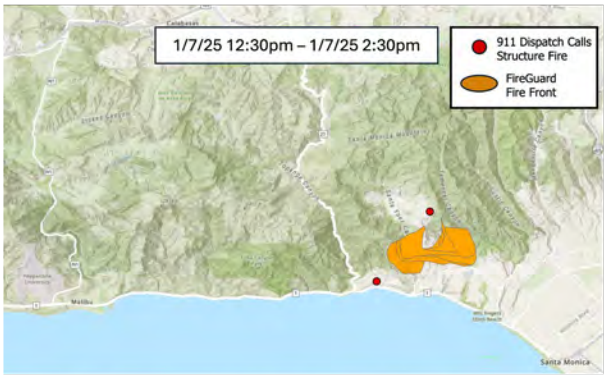


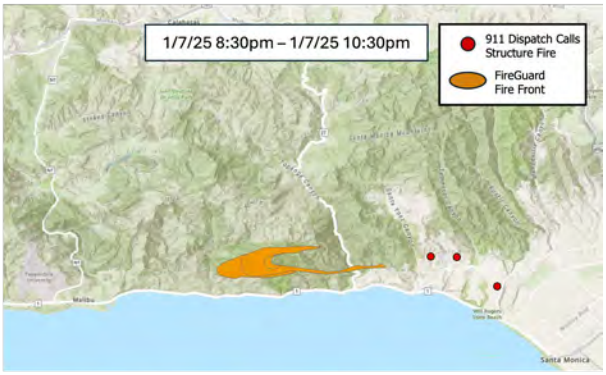
Figure 39: FireGuard fire front progression and 911 LAC Fire dispatch calls about structure fires, as time intervals—Eaton Fire

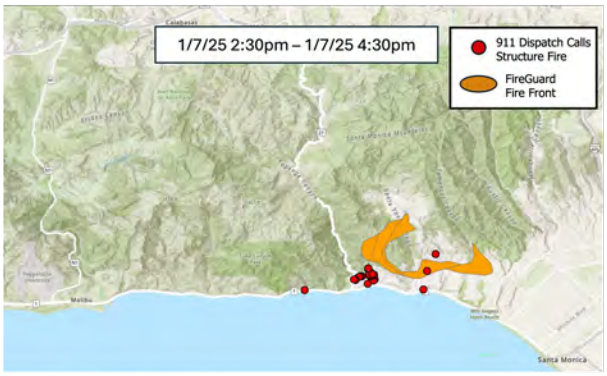
FireGuard Front Progression and 911 Dispatch Calls—Palisades Fire

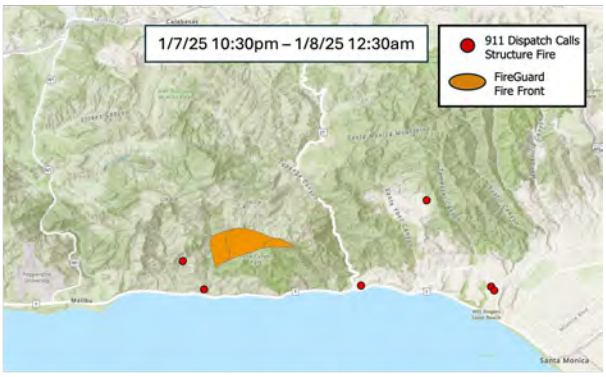


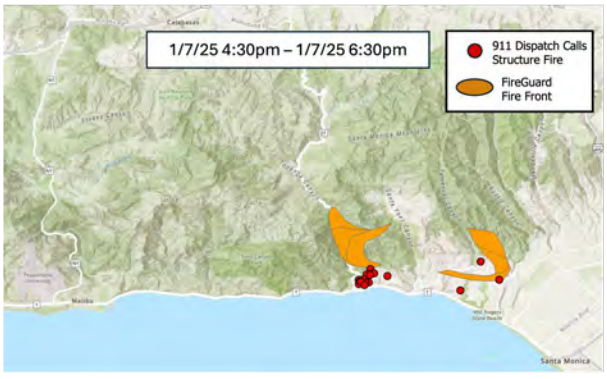


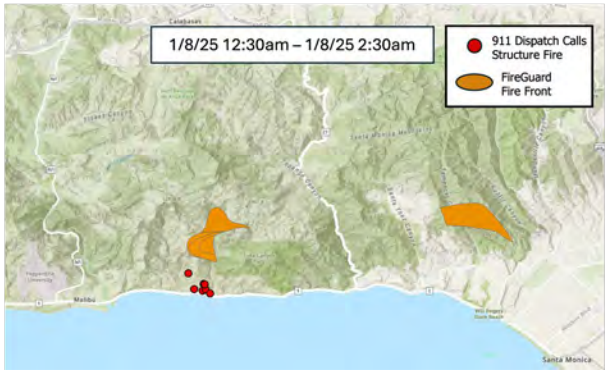












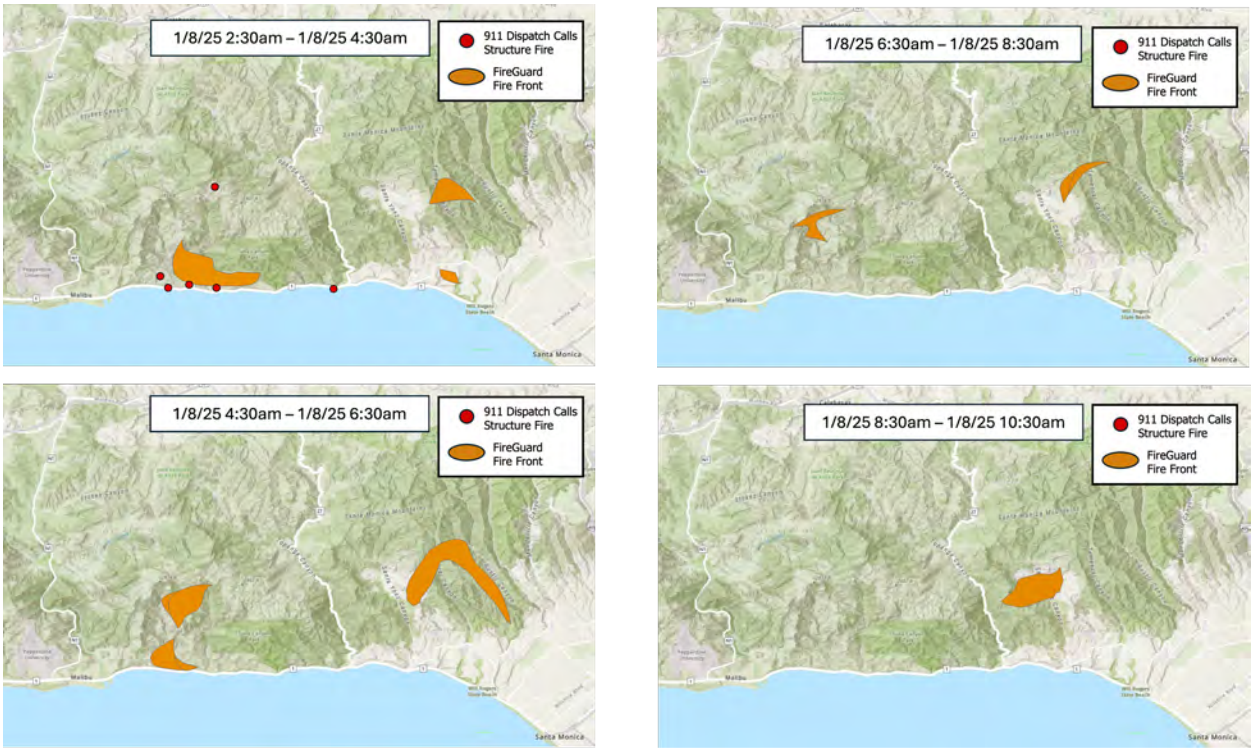


Figure 40: FireGuard fire front progression and 911 LAC Fire dispatch calls about structure fires, as time intervals—Palisades Fire

Appendix 13: McChrystal Group Team

Shawn Tyrie, Partner and Government President

Shawn Tyrie is a Partner at McChrystal Group. He leads engagements with clients across the federal, defense contracting, and commercial sectors.

These engagements are unified by their focus on building high-performing, resilient teams—and the leaders who lead them. He provides mission-focused technology experience with 20 years of management and leadership experience in the national security, intelligence community, and Department of Defense sectors focused on program management and implementation, strategy development, and systems engineering built on the context of intelligence community mission experience. This includes helping customers develop strategic vision, foster innovation, transform organizational workflows through the application of information technology (IT), and execute implementation plans over long-time horizons.

Erin Sutton, Partner

Erin Sutton is a Partner working with public sector clients. Before joining McChrystal Group, Erin was the Chief Deputy State Coordinator for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. She oversaw all daily operations of the agency and provided overall support to the State Coordinator during emergencies. Erin has worked in the field of emergency management and public health for the last 20 years. She served as the Director of the City of Virginia Beach OEM and has extensive experience managing large-scale disasters in Virginia.

She received her BS degree in biology from Radford University and her MS in microbiology and immunology from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. She is a certified Emergency Manager, Master Exercise Practitioner, and has her Project Management Professional certification.

Shandi Treloar, Principal *(Project Lead)*

Shandi Treloar is a Principal with McChrystal Group, supporting the emergency management business within the Government Practice group. Prior to McChrystal Group, she was the Vice President and Preparedness Lead for Emergency Management (EM) Partners. In this role, Shandi built the preparedness practice area from scratch, increasing the firm's revenue by over $6 million. Shandi was also responsible for the firm's first non-FEMA federal contract with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, supporting their emergency management program.

Prior to EM Partners, Shandi had her own emergency management consulting firm, EM Strategies, LLC. As the Principal, her goal was to empower clients and partners to build stronger emergency management programs, from recovery processes and debris management planning to strategic comprehensive program development.

Chloe Hite, Senior Associate *(Project Manager)*

Chloe Hite is an Associate at McChrystal Group, with experience on a range of products for a diverse set of clients across the healthcare, pharmaceutical, technology, and energy sectors. She has led and contributed on a variety of engagements, including leadership development at scale across a workforce of 80,000, strategy alignment at a Fortune 500, and aligning narrative development following a rapid business transformation at a Fortune 5 company.

Prior to joining McChrystal Group, Chloe worked as a Project and Program Manager in international development consulting, managing projects in a range of impact areas including disaster relief and risk preparedness, food security and nutrition, global health, emerging market supply chain logistics, local economic development, blended finance, and leadership and governance, with a focus on gender equity and inclusion. She holds a BA in Anthropology and Economics from Boston University and an MA in International Economics and Development from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Shruti Holey, Analyst *(Project Administrator)*

Prior to joining McChrystal Group, Shruti completed her master's in public health at Yale, with a concentration in healthcare management. During her time there, she held various internship positions at Yale New Haven Health; the Hospital for Special Surgery, New York; and 500 Women Scientists, and was a consultant with the Connecticut Hospice, where she worked on creating workplace cohesion and implementing leadership training. She was a fellow at the Yale Institute of Global Health and at Yale Law School's Solomon Centre for Health Law and Policy, where she worked on research on health equity, women's health, and global health.

She completed her bachelor's in dental surgery from Dr D.Y. Patil Dental College and Hospital, Pune, India. She practiced as a general dentist and founded a nonprofit that worked toward creating health equity through healthcare awareness programs in underprivileged communities.

Ryan Aminzadeh, Partner *(Analytics Lead)*

Ryan Aminzadeh is a Partner and the Chief Data and Analytics Officer at McChrystal Group. In this role, Ryan is responsible for researching, developing, and deploying McChrystal Group's broad portfolio of analytic and diagnostic capabilities. These include diagnostic surveys, network analysis, and AI and natural language processing (NLP)-based analytics technologies oriented around people, teams, and organizations. Ryan is also responsible for technical operations, including data engineering; data model development and maintenance; and other bespoke data scraping, synthesis, storage, processing, and visualization applications.

Before joining McChrystal Group, Ryan co-founded and served as the Chief Technology Officer of HelioScout, developing recruiting and talent analytics and insights software. This included bespoke data acquisition, augmentation, and search and retrieval software, customized NLP algorithms, predictive statistical modeling software, user interface design/development, and IT infrastructure/architecture.

Stephanie Beltz, Senior Learning Designer

Stephanie Beltz is a Senior Learning Designer within McChrystal Group Academy, where she leverages the latest insights from organizational, social, and behavioral research to design, develop, and implement leadership solutions for our clients.

Prior to joining McChrystal Group, Stephanie was most recently a Senior Talent Management Consultant at Jackson National Life, where she designed and facilitated leadership training across the organization, coached managers and executives around leadership competencies, and developed organizational initiatives related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and employee well-being. In the preceding ten years, she was a psychology professor at three institutions of higher education and a psychotherapist at two behavioral health organizations.

Stephanie received her BA in Psychology from Ohio University and her MA in Psychology in Education from Columbia University. She also has a PhD in Organizational Leadership from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Victor Bilgen, Partner

Victor Bilgen is a Partner at McChrystal Group, where he is the Head of Team Science, leading a group of statisticians and data scientists specializing in custom and tailored research analyzing numerous leadership behaviors, networked communication pathways, and organizational processes.

An expert in research design, Victor led the development of McChrystal Group's analytical methodology used to baseline organizations on our Team of Teams model. As a thought leader in network analysis and data analytics, Victor regularly presents at industry conferences, including the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Conference and Connected Commons.

Since joining McChrystal Group in 2012, Victor and his team have analyzed hundreds of organizations and hundreds of thousands of individual respondents.

Victor received a BSc in Communication and Sociology and an MSc in Marketing Communication from the University of Connecticut. In his spare time, Victor is an accomplished musician and loves cooking and trying new foods.

Edessa Bautista, Associate

Edessa Bautista is a Program Manager at McChrystal Group, where she manages and coordinates the logistics of multiple learning and development projects to ensure all team members are adequately prepared and aligned to execute the program. Additionally, she supports learning designers in shaping and customizing learning content and materials. She is currently supporting several learning programs with clients from the biopharmaceutical industry, state and federal government organizations, and a Fortune 100 multinational accounting and professional services firm.

Prior to joining McChrystal Group, Edessa was a math educator, then transitioned to be an education and program consultant working with districts, charter schools, and school leaders in the state of California as their partner in strategic talent acquisition, management, and development. In addition, she implemented a high touch advising framework for aspiring California educators to ensure completion of the credentialing program, employment, and tenure in their respective fellowships.

Taryn Brymn, Senior Advisor

Taryn Brymn has spent the last decade building peer networking communities for leading global C-suite executives and board directors, helping them reimagine solutions to perennial business challenges. Most recently, she led executive programs at Future Forum, a research consortium led by Slack in partnership with Boston Consulting Group, Management Leadership for Tomorrow, and MillerKnoll. Using Future Forum's quarterly desk worker research, Taryn turned data into dialogue centered on new ways of working and managing teams.

Prior to Slack, Taryn was Director of Programs at G100 Network (part of the World 50 Group), where she shaped membership programs for leaders of Fortune 500 companies. Earlier in her career, Taryn held roles in nonprofit grant execution and management. Most recently, her work supported the revitalization of cultural institutions in New York City at the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone.

Ken Pimlott, Fire Subject Matter Expert

Ken Pimlott is the former Director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (also known as CAL FIRE). He led the agency from 2010 to 2018, overseeing wildfire response, prevention programs, and forest management across California. With over 30 years of firefighting experience, Ken played a crucial role in managing some of the state's most devastating wildfires.

John Sokich, Meteorological Subject Matter Expert

John Sokich formerly served as the Director of National Weather Service Congressional Affairs at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association National Weather Service. He has extensive experience in meteorology, bringing years of expertise in weather forecasting, policy, and communication, and now operates as an independent contractor advising on these issues.

Rob Giordano, Law Enforcement Subject Matter Expert

Rob Giordano joins McChrystal Group from CAS Safety Consulting. Rob previously served as the Sonoma County Sheriff. During his tenure, he led the evacuation strategy for the 2017 Sonoma Complex fires (Tubbs, Nuns, and Pocket Fires). His leadership and contributions during the 2017 fires were recognized by Congress, California's State Legislature, and several local groups. Rob retired as the Sonoma County Sheriff after serving 29 years in law enforcement and started a law enforcement consulting practice.

Clint Shubel, Law Enforcement Subject Matter Expert

Clint Shubel also joins the McChrystal Group from CAS Safety Consulting. During his tenure as Assistant Sonoma County Sheriff, Clint served as the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office DOC IC during the 2017 Sonoma Complex fires. His additional expertise is in fire prevention, emergency action plans, and general health and safety responsibilities related to the construction industry.