

# Palisades Fire



January 7, 2025  
CA-LFD-000738

## Los Angeles City Fire Department After-Action Review Report

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## Executive Summary

This internal After-Action Review Report (AARR) is for Department use only and was prepared by a working group convened by the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) pursuant to Department Bulletin 18-01 which details the policies and procedures for conducting after-action reviews.

The purpose of this review is to assess the Department's preparedness and initial response—or initial attack (IA)—to the historic Palisades wind-driven vegetation fire that began on Tuesday, January 7, 2025, in the Santa Monica Mountains' Palisades Highlands. The ultimate goal of this review is to identify lessons learned from successes and challenges related to the preparedness, incident command and control, resource deployment, tactical action, support functions, and crisis decision-making, with the goal of enhancing the Department's future wildfire response.

To prepare this report, the team conducted nearly 100 interviews with officers, units, and support staff, reviewed resource documentation, analyzed radio communications, photos, videos, gathered eyewitness accounts, and collected other evidence to support and verify the information provided herein. However, this review does not encompass all aspects of the wind-driven vegetation fire or the entire duration of the event. The review is intended solely as an internal department-wide training resource to enhance overall performance. As a result, the team has developed lessons learned and recommendations based on a comparative analysis of policies, procedures, and best practices from the LAFD and other similar-sized agencies responding to vegetation fires. Additionally, larger organizational bodies influencing the LAFD were examined, including the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS), the National Wildland Coordinating Group (NWCG), and Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies (FIRESCOPE). The information in this report may be updated as new details emerge through a broader and more detailed analysis over the coming year, and additional recommendations may be provided to the LAFD Fire Chief at a later date.

Given the incident's size, scope, and complexity, the Office of the Governor of California has also requested an After-Action Review (AAR) and contracted the Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI) to produce an independent AARR with the help of an LAFD liaison officer. The FSRI AARR will analyze all aspects of the response, including the efforts of every agency that responded in the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County who were involved in the preparedness, mitigation, and recovery efforts during the Palisades and Eaton wildfires, but also the nine other wind-driven fires in the region that developed over the next several weeks.

From the first ignition in the Santa Monica Mountains, firefighters were immediately confronted by extreme fire behavior driven by exceptionally strong, hurricane-level offshore winds, steep terrain, and critically dry fuels. Even before the full scope of the fire was recognized as impacting the wildland urban interface, crews were engaged in structure defense, evacuation, and life safety under dynamic, high-risk conditions. The rapidly moving fire front forced incident commanders to make tough, real-time decisions with limited information and changing circumstances. Although suppression tactics did not always succeed in stopping the fire's progression, the firefighters on the ground continually adapted, redeployed, and pressed forward under treacherous conditions to save thousands of lives and thousands of pieces of property.

Responders were faced with the inevitable consequences of a perfect storm: dry vegetation, unrelenting and unusual wind activity, significant ember cast, a landscape packed with combustible vegetation, large vulnerable structures, a diminishing water supply, and a loss of aerial suppression support. These were not typical Santa Ana winds - some areas saw gusts exceeding 100 mph. The National Weather Service recorded wind gusts in the area between 60 mph and 90 mph. Higher elevations in the Los Angeles area experienced even stronger conditions. The local water infrastructure was never designed to support firefighting operations at this scale and intensity, while at the same time experiencing thousands of breaches in residential supply lines due to open pipes. The system is primarily engineered for residential and commercial use, not to sustain the extraordinary water demands of a large, fast-moving vegetation fire combined with the leaking open residential pipes. Firefighters and leaking pipes were flowing water at a rate that exceeded the system's ability to replenish local tanks, which in turn affected both pressure and availability. Strike teams, task forces, crews, aircraft, specialized resources, and volunteers worked beyond the normal operational period without hesitation. Air assets flew in extremely treacherous conditions to support ground troops. Command, General Staff, and all overhead positions kept the response moving forward despite the strain on the Incident Command System (ICS).

Most importantly, lives were saved. Thousands of residents were safely evacuated. 2020 census data indicates that 22,824 persons live in the area determined to be the final incident boundary. Thousands of homes were protected through aggressive structure defense. Per CAL FIRE 12,317 structures that were classified as "threatened," by the end of the incident were successfully saved. Throughout the incident, firefighters risked their own lives to hold the line and defend neighborhoods from fire and weather conditions that showed no mercy. Their extraordinary effort stands not in the absence of forward fire progression, but in their resilience through the challenges, and a relentless firefight to protect the community of Pacific Palisades.

Although this review focuses on the LAFD, local fire service agencies, law enforcement, investigators, and resources drawn from across the country all demonstrated excellence in their support of the LAFD. Their rapid deployment, coordination, and integration into the incident command structure significantly enhanced operational capacity to fight fire. These agencies brought specialized resources, critical expertise, and additional staffing, enabling more effective structure defense, perimeter control, organization, and timely

evacuations. Their professionalism, adaptability, and commitment to interagency cooperation were instrumental in mitigating the devastating impacts of this wind-driven conflagration.

In conclusion, we must acknowledge the citizens of the Palisades community for their remarkable resilience during an unprecedented crisis. Despite the chaos and danger caused by the rapidly spreading, violent wind-driven fire, residents responded swiftly and prepared for immediate evacuation, which helped prevent further tragedy. Their calmness and readiness under pressure played a vital role in supporting firefighters.

## **SCENARIO OVERVIEW**

On January 7, 2025, at approximately 1030 hours, the LAFD responded to an unprecedented, highly-destructive wildfire, becoming California's tenth-deadliest and third-most-destructive vegetation fire, marking the most catastrophic wind-driven vegetation fire in the City of Los Angeles. The blaze, which began in the Santa Monica Mountains below the burn scar of the previous Lachman Fire, ultimately ravaged the areas of Pacific Palisades, Topanga, and Malibu, remaining uncontained until January 31, 2025. This deadly fire, fueled by category 1 hurricane winds, was among a series of 11 wind-driven fires that occurred over the next three weeks, devastating the Southern California region. The Palisades Fire would eventually scorch 23,448 acres, tragically resulting in 12 fatalities (five in the City of Los Angeles) and the loss of 6,837 structures.

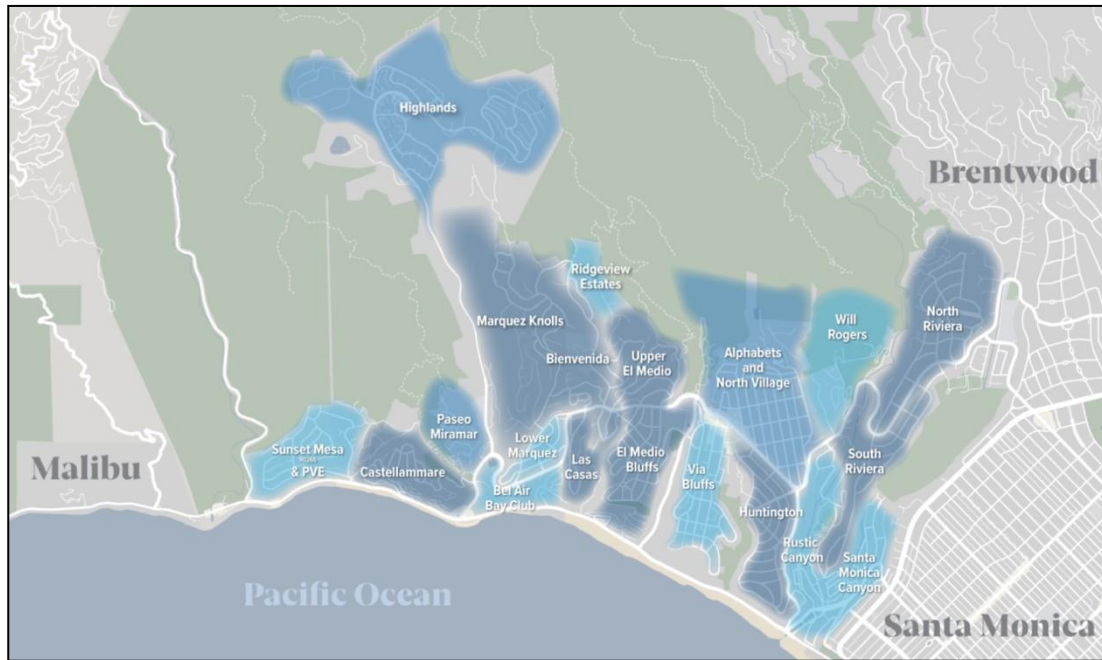
## **Community Profile**

The community of the Pacific Palisades is a picturesque neighborhood located on the western edge of the City of Los Angeles. It is uniquely situated along the rugged terrain of the Santa Monica Mountains, directly abutting the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), where residential development meets open wildland areas to the north and Pacific Ocean to the south.

This community is renowned for its sprawling canyon neighborhoods, winding hillside roads, and close proximity to both the beach and expansive wilderness areas. The landscape includes dense chaparral, steep slopes, narrow canyons, and elevated plateaus. Housing communities vary from large estates perched on ridges to close-knit canyon enclaves hidden within lush vegetation, charming neighborhoods sprawled out at the base of the foothills, to a typology of homes along the coast.

The Palisades is a high-risk fire zone, especially under Santa Ana wind conditions, which can push fire rapidly through dry vegetation. The WUI setting makes fire mitigation, defensible space, and emergency preparedness critical for this community. Fire roads, evacuation routes, and fuel modification zones play an essential role in protecting lives and property in this dynamic environment.

Specific communities of the Palisades are outlined in the map below:



### Architectural Variation

The construction styles in the Pacific Palisades community reflect a comparison of tradition and innovation, where classic wood-frame homes meet modern fire-resistant retrofits, and hillside mansions strike a balance between beauty and structural engineering.

Residential homes are predominantly Type V wood-frame construction, which is common in much of Southern California. These homes often feature stucco exteriors, prized for their fire-resistant properties and Mediterranean appeal. Over the years, stone veneer and decorative brickwork have found their place as accent materials, adding character to facades without significantly changing the underlying combustible framework.

Roofing materials vary, but many homes feature clay or concrete tiles, which are both aesthetically pleasing and offer excellent resistance to embers. However, asphalt composite shingles remain common due to their affordability and Class A fire rating. In older homes or in architecturally unique properties, wood shake roofs still exist, though these are increasingly rare due to fire safety codes.

Where these homes become especially vulnerable is at their perimeter: wooden decks, fences, and balconies, often made of redwood or softwoods, extend outward and frequently connect to dense ornamental landscaping.



As for commercial buildings, the construction profile is more varied. In the village and along Sunset Boulevard, Type III construction, non-combustible masonry or concrete exterior walls paired with wood or light-gauge steel interiors, is common.

Smaller retail buildings and older office spaces often remain Type V wood-frame, while more recently developed facilities, such as schools, medical offices, or grocery stores, adopt concrete tilt-up walls or reinforced masonry block construction, providing improved fire and seismic resilience.

Roof systems on commercial structures tend to be flat or low-pitched, with built-up roofing or membrane layers, and often support HVAC systems, vents, or solar panels; each introducing potential vulnerabilities to wind-driven ember intrusion if not properly screened or maintained.

The building materials used throughout Pacific Palisades had a unique architectural identity, balancing comfort, elegance, and the demands of a wildland-urban interface. While newer construction moved toward fire-hardened materials, many existing homes and businesses still featured legacy construction elements that posed risks during wildfire events.



## Vegetation Composition

The vegetation in the Pacific Palisades area reflects the Southern California Mediterranean climate and is significantly influenced by its location in the Santa Monica Mountains and proximity to the coast. The surrounding hills and canyons feature chaparral species such as toyon, manzanita, chamise, ceanothus, and scrub oak. Lower elevations and south-facing slopes host California sagebrush, black sage, white sage, and buckwheat, which are drought-deciduous shrubs that lose their leaves in the dry season. Due to the cooler and moister microclimate, coastal live oak, valley oak, and California bay laurel thrive alongside an understory of grasses and forbs. Along the creeks and drainages, such as Temescal Creek and Rustic Canyon, sycamores, willows, cottonwoods, and mule fat support wildlife diversity by providing water availability. In the developed areas and private properties, eucalyptus, palm trees (Mexican fan, queen, kentia, and Canary Island date), California oak, California olive, crape myrtles, jacaranda, silk, magnolia, Italian cypress, coastal redwood, fountain grass, and ice plant can be found.



## Fire History

The Pacific Palisades community has not been entirely shielded from wildfires over the years. Vegetation fires have been officially documented in the Santa Monica Mountains since the Forestry Department was established in 1919 to provide fire suppression services for Los Angeles County's unincorporated regions. Many significant fires in the last century have impacted the coastal regions of the Santa Monica Mountains, but only a few have directly affected the Pacific Palisades. The region's distinctive north-south canyon alignment makes it vulnerable to Santa Ana wind conditions; however, its proximity to the coast allows the Santa Monica Mountains to serve as a partial shield. In contrast, nearby areas such as Malibu Canyon and Topanga face more exposure to wind corridors. Additionally, the Palisades enjoys coastal influences, resulting in cooler temperatures and regular marine layers or fog, along with higher humidity that helps slow the spread of fires.



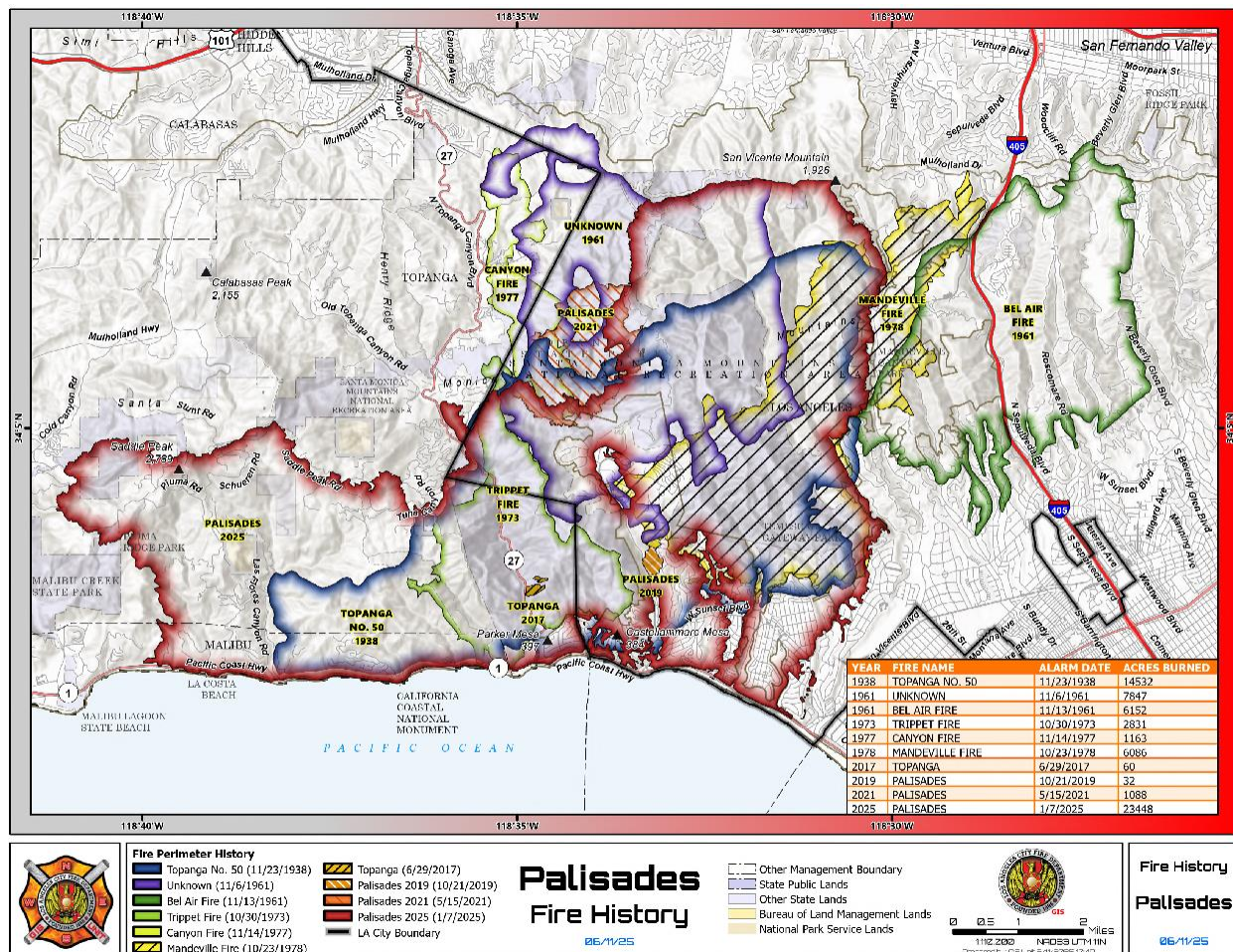
Below are some of the fires impacting the Pacific Palisades area:

Fire Name	Start Date	Acreage	Summary
Topanga No. 50 (1938)	Nov 23, 1938	14,532	One of the earliest major fires, spreading rapidly due to high winds and dry chaparral.
Unknown Fire (1961)	Nov 6, 1961	7,847	Likely associated with the same weather patterns that led to the Bel Air Fire. Impacted northern Palisades.
Bel Air Fire (1961)	Nov 13, 1961	6,152	A devastating urban-interface fire. Burned into Brentwood and near Palisades' eastern boundary.
Trippet Fire (1973)	Oct 30, 1973	2,831	Originated near Topanga Canyon; fire activity extended southeast toward the Palisades' wildland fringe.
Canyon Fire (1977)	Nov 14, 1977	1,163	A late-season fire pushed by winds. Affected Palisades' adjacent canyons.
Mandeville Fire (1978)	Oct 23, 1978	6,086	Started in Mandeville Canyon and extended west. Came dangerously close to Pacific Palisades homes.
Topanga Fire (2017)	Jun 29, 2017	60	A small brush fire controlled quickly near the Palisades boundary.
Palisades Fire (2019)	Oct 21, 2019	32	A wind-driven fire contained near Temescal Ridge. Caused evacuations in nearby neighborhoods.
Palisades Fire (2021)	May 14, 2021	1,088	A remote brush fire in steep terrain; smoke visible from most of Pacific Palisades.
Lachman Fire (2025)	Jan 1, 2025	8	Started near Temescal Ridge Trail before being contained by early morning.
Palisades Fire (2025)	Jan 7, 2025	23,448	The largest fire to directly impact Pacific Palisades Fueled by extreme Santa Ana winds and heavy drought-stressed fuels. Significant losses in structures and natural habitat occurred.

The vegetation fires listed below had a significant impact on the coastal regions of the Santa Monica mountains but did not have a direct impact on the community of Pacific Palisades.

Fire Name	Start Date	Acreage	Summary
Wright Fire (1970)	Sep 25, 1970	28,202	Ravaged Malibu Canyon and Kanan Road areas.
Kanan Fire (1978)	Oct 23, 1978	25,589	Burned aggressively west of Pacific Palisades.
Dayton Canyon Fire (1982)	Oct 9, 1982	43,097	Massive wildfire in the western Santa Monicas; smoke impacted coastal communities.
Piuma Fire (1985)	Oct 14, 1985	5,391	Burned south of Malibu; impacted Malibu Creek watershed.
Old Topanga Fire (1993)	Nov 2, 1993	16,468	Destroyed over 300 homes in Malibu and Calabasas.
Calabasas Fire (1996)	Oct 21, 1996	12,513	Crossed multiple jurisdictional boundaries; steep terrain complicated suppression.
Canyon Fire (2007)	Oct 21, 2007	4,330	Scorched hills near Malibu Canyon; smoke drifted east toward Palisades.
Corral Fire (2007)	Nov 24, 2007	4,652	Burned through Corral Canyon in Malibu, damaging dozens of homes.
Woolsey Fire (2018)	Nov 8, 2018	99,876	The largest and most destructive fire in Santa Monica Mountains history. While it did not reach Pacific Palisades, it devastated communities just to the west.
Franklin Fire (2024)	Dec 9, 2024	4,037	A fast-moving December fire in Malibu Canyon, exacerbated by Santa Ana winds.

See the fire history map below:



## Climate Influences

The fuel moisture and fuel density were the result of a multi-year cascade of wet and dry seasons. According to the Los Angeles County Public Works and California Water Watch, the 2022 wet season registered a total of 28.40 inches of rainfall in the Los Angeles region, followed by 25.19 inches during the year 2023. In stark contrast, prior to the Palisades fire, the last occasion on which the Southern California area experienced precipitation exceeding negligible quantities, defined as sufficient to sustain plant life (0.1 inches), occurred once, on May 5, 2024. Subsequently, the region experienced a period of eight months devoid of any measurable rainfall and was classified as being in moderate drought conditions, according to the National Integrated Drought Information System.

Southern California encountered near-record high temperatures during the summer and fall of 2024, coupled with unprecedentedly low humidity levels across several months.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration officially recognized the summer of 2024 as California's hottest summer in the past 130 years. Southern California, in particular, saw several records approached, if not set, throughout the summer and continuing into the fall as late as November.

As conditions in the tropical Pacific shifted towards La Niña, the dry October transitioned into a dry November and, subsequently, a dry December. Two successive wet seasons characterized by abundant rainfall promoted significant plant growth, which was then succeeded by a hot, dry season with moderate drought conditions, resulting in the accumulation of abundant fuels that subsequently dried out.

Another seasonal climatic phenomenon typical of Southern California is the katabatic winds known as the Santa Anas. These winds, generated by a pressure gradient flowing from the Great Basin to the Pacific Ocean, descend from the Sierra Nevada mountains toward the Southern California coastline. As the winds flow downhill, the air becomes compressed, resulting in further warming and drying. Ultimately, they are funneled through narrow mountain canyons, leading to an increase in speed. These winds commonly reach velocities of 40 mph and, as offshore flow, are typically warm, dry, and strong. The highest measured wind speeds during the Palisades fire were recorded at 86 mph.

From the years 2022 to 2024, there was a notable deviation from the conventional climate patterns typically observed in coastal Southern California, which consist of moderate summers followed by cool, wet winters. This divergence facilitated the creation of perilous conditions that contributed to the destructive nature of the Palisades incident. When combined with unseasonably warm temperatures and an unusually strong Santa Ana condition, the stage was set for a catastrophic outcome.



## SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

### **Weather Influence**

On January 2, 2025, the National Interagency Fire Center issued a warning for "above normal significant fire potential" in Southern California. Subsequently, the Storm Prediction Center (SPC) forecasted critical fire weather for January 7 and 8, labeling January 7 as "extremely critical."

On January 3, the National Weather Service (NWS) issued a Red Flag Warning for Los Angeles and Ventura counties, describing the weather event as a "particularly dangerous situation" due to anticipated strong winds and low humidity. (Note: The term "particularly dangerous situation" (PDS) has been in use nationwide since the 1980s to highlight the risks posed by thunderstorms, tornadoes, and flash floods. In 2020, its definition expanded to include the southern California region. This broadening aimed to communicate the significant dangers associated with additional weather advisories such as winter storms, high winds, and fire conditions.)

On January 4, the NWS issued a fire weather watch for Southern California, including the Pacific Palisades and Malibu, in preparation for Santa Ana winds expected from January 7 to the 9. These conditions were likely to increase the wildfire risk due to strong winds, low humidity, and dry vegetation. The NWS forecasted wind gusts of up to 90 mph in mountainous areas and between 60 and 70 mph in coastal and valley regions. Residents were advised to stay informed by monitoring local news and official NWS communications regarding the changing weather and necessary safety measures. On the same day, SPC's fire weather forecast indicated a critical fire weather period beginning January 7, with a 70% chance of simultaneous strong winds, low relative humidity, and warm temperatures, along with dry vegetation that could facilitate rapid fire spread.

On January 5, NWS issued a Fire Weather Watch for Southern California, including the Pacific Palisades and Malibu areas. Santa Ana winds were forecasted to begin on January 7 and continue through January 9. These conditions were expected to heighten the risk of wildfires due to strong winds, low humidity, and dry vegetation.

On January 6, NWS issued a Red Flag Warning and High Wind Warning for Southern California, including the Pacific Palisades and Malibu areas. These warnings were prompted by the anticipation of a significant windstorm, with forecasts predicting north to northeast winds of 30 to 45 mph and gusts of up to 80 mph from January 7 to January 9. A warning was issued by the Emergency Management Department (EMD) to over 140,000 citizens through text and email, stating, "EXTREME FIRE DANGER and DANGEROUS WIND."

By January 7, wind gusts were anticipated to reach up to 60 mph, with some locations possibly experiencing gusts up to 100 mph, indicating a rare once-in-a-decade wind event. The NWS described the impending wind conditions as "life-threatening and



destructive," urging residents to remain vigilant through local news and official NWS updates for information on weather and necessary precautions. As a result of these forecasts, Red Flag Warnings and High Wind Warnings were issued for the area, including Malibu and the Pacific Palisades. Residents were again advised to keep abreast of local news and official NWS communications for updates on weather and necessary safety precautions. (Note: For the dates of January 4 through January 9, relative humidity averaged and remained at or below 5% for these listed areas.)

### **Pre-Deployment, Augmentation, and Staffing**

On Monday, January 6, 2025, at approximately 1500 hours, the Deputy Department Commander of the LAFD conducted a fire weather tactics conference call to discuss resource pre-deployment, augmentation, and pre-positioning for the following day. The Fire Weather Pre-Deployment and Augmentation Decision Matrix, specific fire weather information from an agency representative, and the LAFD predicted fire weather forecast for January 7, 2025, as shown below, guided the meeting:

LAFD Fire Weather Forecast	
High Temperature	70
Low RH	12
Wind Direction	NE
Wind Speed	32
Fireline Intensity	6,464
Ignition Component	83
Flame Length	26.8
Burning Index	268
Rating	Extreme
1-hour Fuel Moisture	2.7
10-hour Fuel (Observed)	5.0
Red Flag	Yes

As a result of the meeting, the following verbiage from the official notice was communicated to the membership at 1645 hours on January 6, 2025:

As a result of the predicted weather conditions continuing through Friday, January 10, 2025, the LAFD is hiring additional staffing and pre-deploying resources. The following resources will be augmented and pre-deployed by 0800 hours on Tuesday, January 7, 2025 as directed below:

Pre-Deployed Resources: (\*designates leader)

- Task Force 1010 (\*E38, E64, E85) report to Fire Station 82, in place by 0800 hours
- Task Force 1012 (\*E1, E3, E20) report to Fire Station 77, in place by 0800 hours
- Task Force 1014 (\*E26, E15, E43 - E94 backfill) report to Fire Station 84, in place by 0800 hours

Augmented Staffing:

- ST1880C report to Fire Station 87, in place by 0800 hours
- Battalion Command Teams: 705 (FS82), 706 (FS77), 717 (FS84)
- 200 Series Engines: E250, E274, E278, E292, E296
- Brush Patrols: 8, 19, 44, 74, 109
- Water Tenders: 77 and 88
- Air Operations: HLCO Officer, Extra Pilot, 3 Helitac members
- Metro Fire: 2 Dispatchers (1 for IROC only), 1 Floor Captain

Additional Resources:

- CERT Teams 59 and 83
- Wildfire camera monitoring

Red Flag Parking:

- Red flag parking restrictions will be in effect for 24 hours starting January 7, 2025 at 0800 hours and continuing until January 10, 2025 at 0800 hours.

Training:

- All training is canceled.

Additional:

- Station Commanders shall ensure that MRE's and water are on apparatus. Company Commanders are directed to notify Metro Fire Communications once resource staffing is in place.

The Metropolitan Fire Communications (MFC) Division Section filled out the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) Wildland Fire Mobilization Score Sheet to identify resources eligible for reimbursement related to pre-positioning for January 7, 2025. However, an inaccuracy in the fuel moisture percentage and the relative humidity on the (Cal OES) worksheet resulted in only one-third of the deployable and reimbursable resources being utilized. The following resources were pre-deployed:

- (1) Cal OES Type III Strike Team ([1] STEN, STEN-T and [5] Type III Engines)
- (1) Type II Water Tender
- (1) Type II Helicopter with crew (Pilot and Helitac)
- (1) Dispatcher

On Tuesday, January 7, 2025, at 0800 hours, of the planned augmented staffing and pre-deployed resources, three of the five identified 200 series engine companies were voluntarily staffed. After monitoring the latest weather outlook and experiencing the weather in downtown Los Angeles, the Department determined the need for one additional Strike Team to the current pre-deployment plan to Fire Station 7 and one pre-deployed Task Force to Fire Station 47. These resources went above and beyond the standard LAFD pre-deployment matrix.

On January 7, 2025, the coded-assign hire process was not activated due to there being no available staffing codes, leaving additional vacancies throughout the Department. As a result, voluntary scheduled overtime was to be the means of staffing any augmented resources. There was a total of eleven additional vacancies throughout the Department. On the morning of January 7, 2025, a total of 540 members were eligible for recall.



Other members of the platoon who were to be recalled were already working overtime, were off duty with compensatory time off, trade, or utilization of sick time, or on leave. The term “limited recall” is a legacy term meant to indicate a phase of recall. The LAFD has four phases of recall. The term limited recall is used to indicate phase two or phase three recall.

The resources available to be staffed on January 7, 2025, in accordance with the previous decision matrix, included the following, in addition to what was attempted to be staffed:

- (2) Assistant Command Teams
- (3) additional Battalion Command Teams
- (4) additional Ready Reserve Engines
- (40) additional 200 Series Engines
- (1) additional Type III Engine
- (7) additional Brush Patrols

A total of 225 members would have been required to either voluntarily staff or be recalled to staff the available resources. In the past, these resources would have already been augmented on a Red Flag day, triggering a limited recall if there was insufficient volunteerism to work overtime. However, due to a change in the fire weather matrix in 2017, the decision to staff these available resources was changed from a category of “shall staff” to “consider staffing” due to financial constraints and Departmental staffing shortages. Since then, the decision has been left to the EOPS Chief Deputy, in consultation with the DDC, taking into consideration the following factors:

- Brush Burning Index
- Recent precipitation
- Nighttime recovery
- Predicted wind event
- Temperature or BI increases due to continuous wind event
- Regional fire activity
- Southern California Geographical Area Coordination Center outlook
- Similar agency response
- Department and contract aircraft availability
- Potential for other all-hazard incidents due to heat, significant dates, holidays or staffing issues

LAFD maintains a fleet of reserve apparatus (trucks, engines, and ambulances) to be placed into relief for front-line apparatus that are in need of repair. Because of this, the LAFD is always able to keep every resource assigned to every fire station available for continuous service. On January 7, 2025, LAFD Supply and Maintenance Division (S&M) reported a total of 40 engines were currently in the S&M repair yard. These engines were unavailable due to mechanical issues. One of the mechanically unavailable engines was a Ready Reserve Engine, which was equipped with the necessary tools and equipment to be capable of being staffed. The reserve fleet of engines has significantly diminished over the past decade due to a decline in civilian mechanic staffing, an

increase in mechanical issues related to the degradation of heavy apparatus caused by call volume, costs associated with apparatus, the build time of apparatus, and delays in service parts at S&M.

## **Sunset Fire**

On the morning of Tuesday January 7, at approximately 1000 hours, the DDC conducted a fire weather operations briefing to discuss resource pre-deployment, augmentation, and pre-positioning of apparatus with all the chief officers and agency representatives of the resources pre-deployed and augmented. At approximately 1011 hours, the meeting was interrupted due to a structure fire assignment dispatch to 1407 Queens Way in Hollywood, CA, in Fire Station 41's first-in district.

The LA County Fire Department (LAC) also initiated a first alarm structure fire assignment due to the fire's proximity to the LAC/LAFD border. Observing smoke from the area, the first-in engine company requested a brush assignment while enroute, but it was not immediately filled out. Engine 41 arrived on scene and reported a four-story hillside home with smoke visible from the rear. A few moments later, the officer updated the size-up, identifying a vegetation fire behind the address. The location was corrected to 8481 W. Sunset, where approximately one acre of vegetation was burning downhill onto Sunset, threatening structures. Eventually, all water-dropping helicopters, in conjunction with a brush assignment and two pre-deployed task forces, were dispatched to provide assistance.

The fire was mostly wind-driven and then found itself in a small bowl with ember casts threatening homes at least two blocks away. Resources were initially assigned to contain the fire and provide for structure defense. The incident commander organized the response into Division Alpha, Division Zulu, and Structure Defense Groups. An additional 20 of the closest companies were requested to support the efforts.

Resources effectively stopped the forward progression of the fire in a short amount of time. In total, 28 fire companies, all water-dropping helicopters, two dozer units, and multiple overhead command staff responded to the incident.

## **Lachman Fire**

Prior to the Palisades Fire, another vegetation fire occurred in the same location, identified as the Lachman Fire. This preceding fire transpired approximately six days earlier, at approximately 0017 hours on January 1, 2025. The fire was fueled by light winds from the south-southwest and was topography-driven, just east of the upper Palisades. It originated near the Skull Rock Trail in Temescal Canyon and rapidly expanded to over three to four acres in dense brush, threatening Via La Costa.

Aerial support from the LAFD and LAC experienced delays due to adverse weather conditions. LAC eventually dispatched one helicopter and four camp crews. Meanwhile, firefighters from LAFD resources hiked on foot to remote areas of Skull Rock Canyon to contain the fire. LAC hand crews concentrated on constructing hand lines with the

assistance of LAFD resources, with hose lines.

A total of 15 firefighting companies were requested beyond the initial brush response. Although there was a radio request for resources for residents to evacuate, there were no formal evacuations requested, and residents were able to shelter in place.

By approximately 0338 hours, forward progress was stopped, with the hose lines effectively containing the fire by approximately 0451 hours. Resources remained on patrol status for an additional 12 hours until the last company cleared at 1641 hours on January 1, 2025. The cause and origin of the Lachman fire is still under investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) National Response Team in coordination with the LAFD Arson Counter-Terrorism Section.



Sentinel 2 satellite imagery of the Lachman burn scar courtesy of Nearmap :

### **Palisades – The First Thirty Minutes**

Just a few minutes into the firefight at the Sunset incident at approximately 1029 hours, the first 911 call was received from a citizen for the Palisades Fire, stating there was a huge fire behind the hill from their address, coming towards them. An additional call was received at Fire Station 23 by the Captain on duty, stating the Lachman Fire started up again. At approximately 1030 hours, the San Diego's Alert California artificial intelligence cameras recorded smoke showing from the Pacific Palisades just west of Temescal Ridge Trail in the vicinity above Skull Rock.



At approximately 1031 hours, a vegetation fire response in fire station 23's first-in district was dispatched by MFC to 1190 Piedra Morada Dr. to include the following resources:

- Battalion 9 (BC9)
- Battalion 4 (BC4)
- Light Force 69 (LF69)
- Light Force 63 (LF63)
- Engine 23 (E23)
- Engine 69 (E69)
- Engine 19 (E19)
- Engine 59 (E59)
- Engine 292 (E292)
- Paramedic Rescue Ambulance 23 (RA23)
- EMS 9 (EM9)
- LAC Copter 11

The vegetation response listed above was dispatched, which would be categorized as a normal vegetation assignment with a brush burning index (BI) lower than 162, requiring only seven fire companies. The BI on January 7, 2025, was 268 and was identified as a Red Flag condition requiring a total of 27 fire companies and additional support personnel on an initial vegetation response to include the following resources:

- (1) Assistant Chief
  - (3 ) Battalion Chiefs
  - (1) Light Force
  - (6) Engines
  - (1) EMS Captain
  - (1) ALS Rescue Ambulance
  - (4) Type I Strike Teams
- Additional Support
- (1) Dozer Strike Team
  - (3) LAFD Helicopters
  - (1) LAC Helicopter
  - (1) Command Helicopter (HLCO)
  - (5) Brush Patrols
  - (1) Brush Patrol Strike Team
  - (2) Water Tenders

All available LAFD aircraft were already dispatched to the Sunset incident; however, HLCO diverted one helicopter while enroute based on visualizing the column of smoke at the Palisades. Eventually, all LAFD aircraft diverted to the Palisades incident after completing an initial water drop and receiving approval to clear the Sunset incident with the IC. RA23 staffed Brush Patrol 23 and Paramedic Rescue Ambulance 69 (RA69) requested to be added to the response.

At approximately 1032 hours, a Type III Charlie Strike Team (1880C) responding to the

Sunset incident observed smoke in the vicinity of the Palisades and observed the vegetation fire on the remote AI cameras. Subsequently, they requested to be redirected from the Sunset incident and attached to the Palisades incident, and MFC confirmed.

Just minutes into the response, while enroute, LF69 communicated to MFC they had a significant loom-up, requested all water-dropping helicopters, ten additional engine companies, and reported a 30-40 mph wind. Seconds later, BC9 confirmed the size-up with MFC and requested 20 additional engine companies. MFC confirmed with the BC9 that the request was for a total of 20 engine companies, and BC9 confirmed. Heavy Equipment 1, Dozer 45 (DZ45), and Dozer 42 (DZ42) were also responding to the Sunset incident and were diverted by MFC to the Palisades incident.



Perspective of the eastern flank of the fire recorded by a passerby at approximately 1032 hours

The initial dispatch was transmitted via the administrative channel (T-7), and a commonly used divisional tactical or staging channel (T-1) was assigned as the incident tactical channel. The previous Sunset Fire was already utilizing T-1 for their staging area tactical channel. When BC9 recognized the conflicting usage of the channel and instructed the companies using T-1 to clear the channel, not realizing it was a part of the Sunset communication plan. Additional confusion persisted between the two incidents, and the singular tactical channel was used for both incidents for several minutes.

At approximately 1036 hours, BC9 asked MFC to identify the agencies that were being assigned and requested a VHF communication plan. Recognizing T-1 was typically used as a staging channel and other resources were using the same channel from the Sunset incident, LF69 requested a different tactical channel from MFC. Subsequently, MFC assigned a separate tactical channel and recommended the use of a separate staging channel; however, resources checking in were confused, which caused some resources to continue to check in on T-1, some on T-2, and even some tactical communication continued on T-1. In addition, the administrative channel T-7 was

changed to T-5, which is typically designated for vegetation fires at the onset of a vegetation fire. MFC eventually assigned T-15 for tactical communications and worked to obtain a common VHF communication plan from LA (LAC Dispatch).

E23 communicated with BC9 on T-1 and provided an update on their location, stating they were on Palisades Drive, past the incident address, and heading up toward where the fire was at that time. E69 joined LF69 as they headed north on Palisades Drive BC9 requested E23 to let them know if they had any immediate impact to structures, and asked what they needed. BC9 informed them they ordered 20 engine companies, but air assets were limited due to the fire in Hollywood. E68 and CM42 were added to the incident. The Helicopter Coordinator (HLCO) reached out to MFC and let them know all aircraft were being redirected to the incident in Battalion 9. HLCO also redirected the fuel tender and identified Santa Ynez Reservoir as the Palisades Helispot. MFC asked HLCO for the aircraft identifiers that were responding. HLCO responded that Fire 4 was HLCO, Fire 2, 3, and 1 would be the water droppers. HLCO also requested the communications plan and incident name, and MFC replied that they were working on the information.



Perspective from LF69 heading east on Palisades Dr. towards Chastaine Pkwy. at 1041 hours

At approximately 1041 hours, LAC dispatched a full alarm vegetation assignment, including aerial assets consisting of three Type I helicopters, Quebec 1 and 2, and Helitanker 55.

At approximately 1042 hours, CM52 transitioned command of the Sunset incident back to the local administrative battalion commander and requested to be attached to the Palisades incident. BC717 was also added to the incident along with five additional engine companies and a Dozer Strike Team. BC717 would be the second battalion chief to arrive at the Palisades incident.



E23 reported to BC9 that they were driving up to the location of the Lachman Fire. LF69 recommended placing additional resources below them. E69 and RA69 split off from LF69, recognizing that the homes at the end of Piedra Morada Drive, near the Lachman Fire road, would be most at risk and were prepared to prep and defend those homes.

At approximately 1043 hours, one of the first water drops was placed on the western flank of the fire. Multiple communications on the divisional tactical channel were intermittent due to the terrain interference, and BC9 suggested a human repeater, if resources could not continue to communicate. LF69 reported to BC9 that a fire was rapidly progressing and advancing towards Charmel Road (known as Charmel Lane), communicating that the size of the fire was approximately 10 acres, encompassing medium to heavy brush, with wind speeds reaching 40 mph directed toward the ocean. BC9 acknowledged and assured that resources would be deployed to Charmel Lane and requested LF69 to conduct door-to-door evacuations.

E19 would eventually join LF69, RA69, E23, and BP23 on Charmel Lane. BC9 announced that the staging area would be located at the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Palisades Drive. LF63 inquired with BC9 regarding the request and their ability to support structure defense on Charmel Ln. BC9 acknowledged and assigned them to the first Structure Defense Group.

At approximately 1044 hours, MFC communicated to BC9 that the fire would be named the Palisades Fire and identified the following VHF Communication plan:

- Command – LAC V-1
- Primary Tactical – VFIRE 22
- Secondary Tactical – VFIRE 23
- Air-to-Ground LFD A/G
- Air-to-Air – LFD Victor 130.7000

BC9 acknowledged and reiterated the size-up to MFC, requested LAPD and DOT for traffic control and evacuation, identified the ICP at Fire Station 23, and announced the staging location at Palisades Drive and Sunset Boulevard. BC9 communicated to all resources working from the divisional tactical channel to move to the VHF communication plan.

However, resources continued to utilize both communication plans, causing additional confusion at the incident.

The following resources above the first alarm were acknowledged as responding or dispatched by MFC:

- (2) Assistant Chiefs (self-dispatched)
- (1) Battalion Chief
- (5) of the closest Type I Engines (bypassing other available Light Forces)
- (1) Type I Strike Team (self-dispatched enroute to Sunset incident)
- (1) Dozer Strike Team (redirected to Palisades enroute to Sunset incident)

At approximately 1045 hours, the EOC was activated at a level 2 activation.

At approximately 1046 hours, Task Force 1014 (E26, E15, and E43) requested to be added to the incident. BC9 requested fixed-wing aircraft due to the structures being threatened. MFC communicated to BC9 that the Super Soopers CL-14 aircraft (Quebec 1 and 2), all LAFD aircraft (rotorcraft), and all LAC aircraft were attached and enroute to the incident; however, fixed wing aircraft were not ordered. HLCO gave an additional size-up to MFC on the 800 MHz administrative channel after multiple attempts to raise the Incident Commander (IC) on the VHF command channel, describing the fire and stated, "2 acres, 100% in alignment with the wind, starting on a ridgetop, pushing towards the Palisades, has the potential for 200+ acres in the next 20 minutes with an impact time threatening structures in 20 minutes."

At approximately 1048 hours, CM52 requested that the XLA strike team, which was prepositioned in the region, be attached. Task Force 1014 again asked to be added, and MFC attached them to the incident.

At approximately 1050 hours, LF69, E23, and E19 were all located on Chastaine Parkway East and were eventually designated as Structure Defense Group 1. LF69 communicated 30 acres of medium to heavy brush burning toward the ocean and requested all resources to continue through. As they traversed into the backyards of the homes, looking east at the fire, they could see they were on the western flank and the fire was moving south with a wide fire front at a rapid rate of spread. Although the homes were not immediately threatened on Chastaine Pkwy., they knew eventually the fire would make a topography run back up the hill and threaten the community. They chose to anchor and hold, prepping and defending the homes.

At approximately 1050 hours, MFC communicated to Palisades IC that they had attached two Type III airtankers to the incident. LF37 was assigned to the Santa Ynez Helispot. E19 arrived on scene, and CM51 requested to be attached to the incident.

At approximately 1055 hours, the Department Operations Center (DOC) was activated at a level 1. Some members began responding to the DOC, and others were requested to assist the Fire Chief and executive staff. Some of the unfilled positions were in the Command and General Staff. EM9 was assigned as the Staging Area Manager (STAM), and T-2 was assigned to the Palisades incident for staging. A few resources started to arrive on scene, including E19, LAC E70, LAC BP70, E292, and eventually E59. The location of the staging area was placed in the direct path of the evacuation route from Palisades Highlands to the north and the Marquez Knolls community to the east of Palisades Drive, which would ultimately hinder vehicles from evacuating and resources from responding to provide structure defense.



Perspective looking southeast from an airship at 1056 hours

### **Palisades – The Second Thirty Minutes**

At approximately 1058 hours, HLCO and the IC discussed the orientation of the fire. HLCO recommended that the east flank be designated Alpha and the west flank be designated Zulu, and communicated that the fire was burning equally on each flank towards the ocean within the City of Los Angeles jurisdiction, with the potential to extend into LA County.



Perspective from the end of the cul-de-sac at Piedra Morada Drive, looking east at 1102 hours





At 1103 hours, the fire had already moved southward toward the community of Marquez Knolls, marking the southeast edge of the blaze. LF63 arrived in the area and assessed the homes on Bienveneda Avenue to the east. Anticipating that the fire would affect the homes sooner on Floresta Place and Via Floresta, they responded to those areas and immediately began defending structures. The incident commander assigned LF63 as Structure Defense Group 1. They requested two additional task forces, three more engines, and recommended that additional resources respond to Bienveneda, as the eastern flank was heading in that direction.

At approximately 1103 hours, MFC notified Palisades IC that they had Air Tactics 6 as the frequency for air attack and fixed-wing aircraft coming into the incident.

At approximately 1108 hours, the IC assigned 1880C to Division Alpha. The Strike Team Leader was responding with a trainee. The two overhead members played a dual role, one managing the Type III Strike Team and the other being assigned to Division Alpha and then eventually Zulu. LAC Camp Crew 8-2, 8-3, and 8-4 with Sup 8 were assigned to Division Alpha to anchor the fire. Three LAC engine companies arrived at the staging location and requested an assignment, but received no reply.



Perspective from the backyard of the homes on Chastain Pkwy looking east at the western flank at 1108 hours

At approximately 1110 hours, the IC requested all resources to check in with EM9 (STAM) in staging, face-to-face. While enroute, CM22 communicated to MFC that the ICP was going to be located at the Gladstones parking lot, and they would attempt to collocate with LAC.

At approximately 1112 hours, the STAM assembled a second task force, which included the LAC engines. LAC Copters 11 and 18 were both on scene, dropping water. A “Be Aware” alert was issued by EMD via Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA), NotifyLA, and Nixle, stating that a wildfire had broken out in the Palisades and that residents should get set for possible evacuation.

As the western flank approached the Lachman fire road, the fire started to move more southwesterly and spread downhill towards Palisades Drive, the eastern flank of the fire had already reached the cul-de-sac just to the east of Bienvenida Avenue.



Aerial photography looking northwest at 1112 hours

E292, E37, E71, and E59 assembled as TF1041. After approximately 20 minutes with no assignment, they responded to 600 Palisades Drive upon reports that fire was threatening the 75-unit Sea Ridge condominium complex, conducting fire suppression efforts, defending structures, and evacuating residents.

At approximately 1114 hours, S/T1000K (Dozer Strike Team) was on scene with dozers and assigned to Division Alpha and Zulu for Perimeter Control. They had accessed the Santa Monica Mountains from the north off of Reseda Boulevard and traveled the trail south to the heel of the fire. Quebec 1 and 2 arrived on scene immediately thereafter and started to drop water. LAFD Battalion 4 was assigned to take over Structure Defense Group 1 with LF63 and E94. The IC assigned LF69 to Structure Defense Group 2 with E23, RA23, E19, and RA69. LF69 reported they were 300 yards from the flaming front and fire was flanking within 120 feet of the homes on Chastaine.





Quebec 1 and 2 arriving on scene at approximately 1114 hours

LAC recommended that the IC move the ICP to Gladstone's parking lot due to a better view and communications. 1880C interrupted the conversation and communicated that there was a new ICP being set up at Will Rogers parking lot with meals, a trailer, and equipment, and LAC agreed to meet up; however, multiple agencies had already started arriving at Gladstone's ICP. E69 was assigned Structure Defense Group 3 with E69, RA69, LF37, E67, and LAC E65. E69 recommended that resources be assigned to Lachman Lane as the next priority.

At approximately 1120 hours, CM51 arrived on scene at Fire Station 23 and provided an updated size-up to MFC, reporting a wind-driven fire of approximately 30 acres, with two structure defense groups established. CM51 asked MFC to issue a Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) alert for a shake and shout, and communicated that they were not evacuating at the moment. Additionally, CM51 stated they were going to move the ICP from Fire Station 23. The STAM requested additional resources to manage staging.

At approximately 1121 hours, TF1014 (E15, E43, E26) arrived on scene in staging. Due to the STAM being overwhelmed with resources, TF1014 took initiative and responded to the community of Palisades Highlands, joined Structure Defense Group 2, and engaged in structure defense. The IC advised MFC that the fire was approximately 200 acres.

The staging location had been significantly impacted by the spontaneous evacuation of the Palisades Highlands community along Palisades Drive from the north, and the Marquez Knolls community from the east on Sunset Boulevard, as residents attempted to travel southward on Sunset toward PCH. Although no closures were in effect on PCH, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) was engaged in assisting with the evacuation of vehicles from Palisades Drive and Sunset Boulevard. This effort was temporarily impeded when the fire front began spotting at the intersection, prompting LAPD to instruct motorists to abandon their vehicles, which resulted in gridlock and chaos.



At approximately 1122 hours, the fire started spotting between the homes on Lachman Lane and Charmel Lane.



Perspective looking north to the rear of the homes on Charmel Ln. above Lachman Ln. at 1122 hours

Approximately 1123 hours: The following resources from LAFD were assigned to the incident:

- (1) Deputy Chief
- (2) Assistant Chiefs
- (5) Battalion chiefs
- (32) Type I Engines
- (5) Type III Engines
- (1) Dozer Strike Team
- (1) HLCO
- (3) Type II Helicopters
- (1) EMS Captain
- (2) Paramedic Rescues
- (1) Safety Officer Support Staff

Of those resources, fifteen LAFD Type I engines and 5 Type III engines were on scene. Additionally, multiple LAC mutual aid ground and air resources were also on-scene.

At approximately 1124 hours, MFC reported to Palisades IC that there were multiple calls for spot fires on Enchantment Way in the Marquez Knolls community with occupants evacuating. At the same time, the western flank of the fire was impacting the staging location and spotting on the west side of Palisades Drive.



Perspective from the Gladstones Restaurant parking lot on Pacific Coast Highway at 1124 hours

At approximately 1125 hours, the IC requested MFC to issue evacuation for the entire Palisades area. MFC attempted to clarify if the request was an evacuation order or a warning and the IC asked MFC to standby. TF1012 requested to be added to the incident after being made available from the Sunset incident.

By this time, the vegetation fire had transitioned from the wildland to the urban interface, with structures beginning to ignite in the Marquez Knolls, Bienveneda, Lower Marquez, and Paseo de Miramar communities.

While resources from LAFD and LAC were on the scene and engaging in structure defense efforts, the only communities able to be protected in the first hour of the initial dispatch were Palisades Highlands, located off Chastaine Parkway and Piedra Morada Drive, Upper Marquez Knolls at Via Floresta and Floresta Place, and the Sea Ridge Condominium Complex on Palisades Drive.

At approximately 1127 hours, Battalion 4 was assigned to Structure Defense Group 1.

At approximately 1128 hours, TF1012 hours was added to the Palisades incident.

## Palisades – The Third Thirty Minutes

At approximately 1132 hours, CM42 relayed to MFC that they would be the IC and needed an evacuation order all the way down to PCH. MFC acknowledged.

At approximately 1135 hours, E98, E17, and E5 formed up as TF1044 and provided structure defense in the area of Lachman Ln., Charmel Ln., Tellum Dr., and Enchanted Wy. Later in the evening, they were formed into a Strike Team with BC4, augmented by E94 and E263.

Resources remained obstructed by the continuous flow of vehicles occupying the north and south lanes of Palisades Dr., hindering their ability to support other companies engaged in structure defense. The fire posed an immediate threat to residences within the Paseo Miramar community, with long-range spotting igniting fires on the east-facing slopes of Palisades Drive.



Perspective from Engine 59 attempting to drive north on Palisades Drive at 1137 hours

At approximately 1144 hours, the advancing fire front had extended south-southwest toward the Lower Marquez community. The eastern flank had advanced into Temescal Canyon along the ridge of Temescal Canyon Trail and was burning downhill behind residences on Shadow Mountain Drive, Via Anita, and Via Cresta, merely minutes from the community of Upper El Medio. Meanwhile, the western flank had moved significantly westward into Topanga State Park toward East Topanga Fire Road in Santa Ynez Canyon.





Perspective from the cul-de-sac on El Medio Avenue looking southwest at 1144 hours

At approximately 1152 hours, the IC notified MFC that the priority for LAPD was to shut down Palisades Drive to the “Highlands”. The ICP was being set up at Gladstone’s Restaurant. A new Victor frequency was provided by MFC. The western flank had spotted over the community of Paseo Miramar and down in the draw behind Castellammare. Firefighters engaged in suppressing homes that were already on fire and attempting to defend the ones not in alignment as the fire front barreled through the coastal community.



Perspective from the cul-de-sac on Catalonia Avenue at 1159 hours

At approximately 1200 hours, the ICP was established and was being managed out of Gladstone's Restaurant at 17300 Pacific Coast Highway. LAFD was unified with LAC and LAPD. The Evacuation Branch was fortified with additional LAFD and LAPD members including the Evacuation Branch Director of the LAFD Field Incident Management Team (FIMT).



### **Palisades – Summary of Remaining Hours of Initial Attack**

By midday, the fire continued to be managed organizationally as Division Alpha and Division Zulu, with the support of multiple Structural Defense Groups 1 through 5. Additional resources from the region began to arrive, as a result of the earlier agreement among emergency operations bureau commanders, agency administrators, and fire chiefs. 10 of the 20 engine companies that had been ordered arrived at the staging area. Fixed-wing aircraft began to arrive on scene at this time and throughout the afternoon, including the following aircraft:

- US Forest Service AA52 Air-Attack
- CAL Fire B-78 Lead Plane
- CAL Fire T-78 S-2 Fixed Wing (Type III)
- CAL Fire T-88 S-2 Fixed Wing (Type III)
- US Forest Service T-122 (LAT)
- US Forest Service RJ85 (LAT)
- US Forest Service T01 (LAT)
- US Forest Service T701 (LAT)

The fixed-wing tankers and supervisors worked to deliver nearly 35,000 gallons of retardant and departed the incident at approximately 1700 hours due to their restrictions of daytime hours.

The first evacuation orders were issued by EMD at 1207 hours, identifying the evacuation zone from the northeast at Merrimac Road, westward to Canyon Boulevard, and southward to Pacific Coast Highway (PCH). The Westwood Recreation Center was designated as an evacuation center. All other residents were instructed to shelter in place. All evacuation orders were coordinated out of the ICP with the LAFD FIMT Evacuation Branch Director and were disseminated through Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), NotifyLA, Nixle, and various social media platforms. The evacuation zones would be expanded eight more times. Each of the evacuation notices were supplemented with “Shelter in Place” advisories for adjoining areas near the evacuation zones.

By 1300 hours, the ICP at Gladstones was affected by smoke and ash. Personnel were required to wear eye protection and N95 masks. As additional resources arrived, the staging area was moved to Will Rogers State Beach after the initial location at Sunset Blvd. and Palisades Dr. was overrun by fire. A decision was made to relocate the ICP to Will Rogers



Perspective of the Gladstone's ICP and Evacuation Branch becoming overtaken by smoke at 1312 hours

At 1310 hours, members from the LAFD FIMT started to arrive at the ICP and have discussions about transitioning the incident the following morning. The Unified Incident Command (UC) placed a significant resource request for the balance of the IA, extended attack, and the following operational period.



The following resources were ordered by UC under the California Fire Assistance Agreement (CFAA) and Master Mutual Aid (MMA) agreement:

- (20) Type I Alpha Strike Teams
- (10) Type III Charlie Strike Teams
- (5) Type II Gulf Strike Teams
- Type I IMT

At approximately 1327 hours, the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) was approved, and over the next hour, the following additional resource requests were made for immediate need:

- (30) Type I Alpha Strike Teams
- (20) Type III Charlie Strike Teams
- (10) Type I Gulf Strike Teams
- (8) Type I Lima Strike Teams
- (10) Tactical Water Tenders
- (2) Type I Fixed Wing Aircraft

As more chief officers arrived, the Operations Section Chief (OSC) began to reorganize the incident into Branches with additional Divisions.

An off-duty battalion chief requested aerial reconnaissance from the Fire Integrated Real-Time Intelligence System Program (FIRIS) Intel 24 airship based out of Chino Airport. Due to sustained winds out of Chino, the aircraft was unable to take off. A second request was made for Intel 12 out of Sacramento at McClellan Airfield, and the first flight over the Palisades fire occurred with Intel 12 at approximately 1411 hours, recording 771 acres as shown on the map below:



Several move-up companies were dispatched into the Palisades footprint to cover fire station districts or respond to additional 911 calls related to the fire. However, MFC was unaware of the fire's full extent and that the incident was managing the districts within its scope. As more resources arrived, they quickly engaged in structural defense to support nearby companies. Some companies did not attempt to recontact MFC and remained attached to the move-up response while assisting in firefighting for several hours. Others tried to contact MFC and the incident command but were unsuccessful. Some move-up companies remained unaccounted for over the course of several hours, and some were later asked to return to the City for coverage issues.

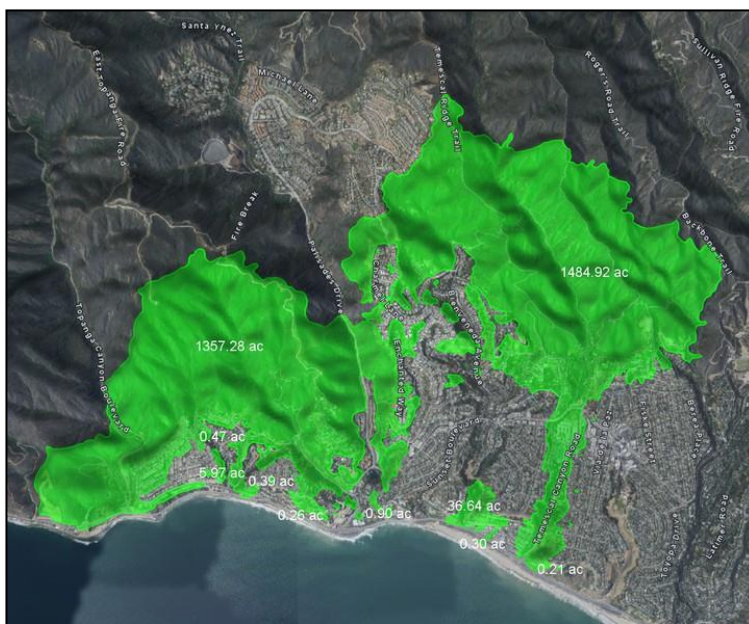
Several minor first responder injuries occurred within the first 24 hours, but only one firefighter emergency was requested over the radio. The OSC tried to identify the injured member and conduct an accountability report, but the effort was inconclusive. Many firefighter injuries occurred over the duration of the incident, but most remained undetermined and were handled independently due to the dynamic nature of the incident, which made it difficult to adhere to the established procedures.

As the arriving companies tried to reach their assignments, the staging area was heavily gridlocked. Vehicles were on fire, and apparatus could not move north on Palisades Drive. At approximately 1415 hours, a decision was made to use a LAC bulldozer to begin clearing vehicles, enabling resources to support the structure defense mission in Palisades Highlands.



Multiple calls for trapped patients, hikers needing rescue, and fires in the backyard of several addresses began to overwhelm the OSC. FIMT members started to arrive and sought to understand their roles within the ICS structure. The incident organization would change again over the next few hours leading to confusion among some resources operating under the current organization.

At approximately 1517 hours, the fire was reported to be 1261 acres, and by approximately 1817 hours, it had grown to 2,920 acres, according to Intel 12. The ICP was again relocated to Will Rogers State Beach. This command post location would also eventually be in the fire's path, requiring resources to defend and assist with extinguishing fires in the proximity.



At approximately 1818 hours, the Eaton Fire ignited in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. The wildfire rapidly expanded from rural areas into the urban interface, similar to the Palisades Fire, engulfing over 14,000 acres, resulting in 19 fatalities and damaging more than 9,000 structures. In the initial hours, resources enroute to the Palisades Fire were redirected to address the Eaton Fire. Over the following days, both fires competed for similar resources, with some assets initially assigned to the Palisades Fire being diverted to the Eaton Fire within the first 12 hours.

At approximately 1905 hours, there were 911 calls reporting individuals trapped in an elevator at a condominium complex located at 15515 West Sunset Boulevard. MFC dispatched units without realizing that this address was also encompassed within the fire's affected area. Upon arrival, companies learned that the fire from the Palisades incident had already extended southeastward to a six-story apartment building via the roof. As a result, the response escalated to a structure fire, prompting the request for additional resources. Firefighters engaged in an offensive effort to save the large building, even as nearby structures around the apartment complex were fully engulfed. Resources helped evacuate residents swiftly. Incident commanders called for additional

companies and set up their own command structure. Initially, the Palisades command was unaware of the incident until later in the firefight. The firefighting efforts later shifted to a defensive mode using ladder pipes and large-diameter handlines to try to extinguish the fire across the large apartment complex. Eventually, incident commanders from both the Palisades and Sunset incidents coordinated efforts: some resources stayed to assist with Palisades, while others returned to their districts. Resources that stayed were organized into task forces for the Palisades fire, but some of those companies lacked clear instructions and were never provided with the incident's communication plan.

At approximately 1915 hours, an Official Notice was posted to the Department's Information Portal, notifying the members of the Department that there was a Phase 2 "Limited Recall" that required all off-duty members to report to work.

At approximately 1945 hours, a decision was made to ground all aircraft. LAFD HLCO assessed that communications from pilots regarding the unpredictable strong wind gusts posed a considerable risk. At that point, the fire was estimated to be over 3,000 acres, and over the following 24 hours, it expanded to more than 17,000 acres.

Off-duty firefighters started reporting to work, hearing the news of the recall and filling the available positions on apparatus. The main challenge was that there were few apparatuses to fill, since most 200 series engines were already deployed to the incident, and the engine companies at the shops were mechanically unavailable and without tools or equipment. Chief Officer command vehicles, truck companies, brush patrols, and the remaining 200 series engines were mostly staffed. Back in the City, remaining firefighters utilized pick-up trucks and filled the beds with hose, equipment, and fittings to continue responding.

At approximately 2200 hours, a request was made to address the assisted living center at 17310 Vereda de la Montura. The facility housed 24 staff members and 40 patients, 14 of whom were non-ambulatory. After considering sheltering them in place, the conditions were severe enough that it was decided both patients and staff needed to be evacuated. EM9 requested 12 ambulances to assist the non-ambulatory patients, while staff and the ambulatory patients were transported primarily by vans to a sister facility. By dawn multiple structures around the facility had burned to the ground. All 64 lives were saved.

Without aerial support and with a failing water supply, nightfall marked the onset of the most destructive WUI fire in Los Angeles history. As the fire had established itself in residential areas, it was exacerbated by structure-to-structure and ornamental vegetation-to-structure ignition, along with downrange ember casts finding their way to every possible source of ignition, creating chaos, and pushing firefighters to their limits. Nearly every community across the Palisades was ablaze. With over 100 resources from the LAFD, including 17 Chief Officers, and unified and cooperating agencies from across the region and state, firefighters faced a defining battle.



## SUCSESSES

1. Regional partners were proactively contacted by Department executive leadership prior to the fire to arrange resource assistance, which allowed partner agencies to promptly deploy resources when called upon.
2. Established relationships with Area A partners ahead of the fire allowed agencies to actively collaborate in Unified Command to support coordination, resource deployment, and a cohesive strategy during the early firefight.
3. Many of the officers efficiently briefed their crews ahead of the wind event, allowing the members to be prepared with tools, equipment, and supplies for a significant vegetation fire for multiple operational periods.
4. There was an early request from the IC to order a VHF Communications Plan to provide outside agencies and aircraft the ability to interoperate within a multi-agency response.
5. There was an attempt to order resources while enroute to the incident, including engines, rotorcraft, and fixed-wing.
6. Multiple civilians were rescued from a hiking trail by the initial resources on scene.
7. Several civilians were evacuated from their residences with their essential belongings or advised to shelter in place. At the same time, resources defended their homes or rescued them from the advancing fire front during the IA.
8. During a time when multiple homes were on fire, crews successfully retrieved salvageable belongings from homes. They wrapped items such as art, documents, computers, photos, sports memorabilia, antique furniture, and even vehicles in salvage covers and positioned them in safe locations to prevent further damage.
9. The use of siphon ejectors to pull water from pools as an auxiliary source when hydrants ran dry proved to be successful for most companies.
10. MFC effectively communicated the need for multiple residents requiring special assistance to evacuate to the command post, and resources were able to address the requests.
11. A proactive field-led initiative successfully integrated LAFD and LAPD evacuation operations in the absence of formal interagency guidance or pre-established evacuation procedures.
12. Members possessing wildland experience and a comprehensive understanding of the WUI environment were able to modify their tactics to protect properties by

either anchoring and holding or prepping and defending homes, and remaining until the fire front had passed.

13. Companies that used the concept TIER, saved multiple lives and homes during the first 24 hours of the fire without direction.
14. The Evacuation Branch facilitated the evacuation of over 30,000 residents during the incident, including vulnerable groups such as the elderly, convalescent individuals, and school communities.
15. Actively conducting a search inside homes for people who did not evacuate was critical. At least one elderly person was sleeping under a bundle of clothes to keep warm, and a firefighter found them and was able to get them to safety.
16. When the fire front approached Fire Station 23, a LAC dozer positioned itself between the fire and the station, using a blade cut to help separate the flames before the fire could reach the station.
17. Multiple apartment buildings were saved due to interior fire attack efforts and companies remaining in place until the fire front had completely passed.
18. The crews and leadership demonstrated resilience characterized by a no-fail attitude, enduring in excess of 36 hours of continuous work, exceeding typical work-rest ratio amidst severe fire conditions, relentless winds, and a perilous environment.
19. Companies that worked as part of task forces or strike teams without chief officers naturally selected a leader and worked together for the good of the incident to maintain company continuity with similar objectives.
20. Companies that adapted their strategies when numerous homes began to ignite and the wind became unpredictable were able to take a stand to protect other homes that were misaligned with the fire.
21. When the ICP was threatened with fire, resources successfully engaged in firefighting and saved the area from burning.
22. Unified agencies worked well together due to established relationships. Most companies were able to integrate with cooperating agencies because their strategies, tactics, and tasks were aligned in the region.
23. The Evacuation Branch facilitated the evacuation of over 30,000 residents during the incident, including vulnerable groups such as the elderly, convalescent individuals, and school communities.
24. Areas where brush patrols or engines were utilized for tactical patrols following suppression efforts successfully prevented the re-ignition of remaining fires in

adjacent vegetation, ornamental plants, fences, and patios, thereby ultimately saving additional homes.

25. Multiple Chief Officers recognized there was a TFR in place due to the President of the United States being in Los Angeles and worked through the Federal Bureau of Investigation to remove the TFR to allow firefighting aircraft to engage.
26. The TFR delayed the initial response to the Hollywood Hills fire. However, because aircraft were already in the air, the response from the Hollywood area to Palisades was quicker than if it had come from Van Nuys Airport.
27. During the first 24 hours, there were only minor injuries reported while working in extremely hazardous conditions.
28. There was minimal damage to apparatus due to crews working together to practice crew resource management while navigating downed power lines, large uprooted trees, and even vault covers displaced while dealing with relentless ember casts and winds.
29. When the homes behind Fire Station 69 could not be saved, the crew requested additional resources to defend the station, recognizing that it must remain operational to serve the residents of Pacific Palisades in the aftermath of the incident.
30. Crew 3 engaged in structural firefighting and saved multiple homes applying WUI tactics.
31. When the communications plan did not work, resources resorted to an 800 MHz tactical channel or human relays, which allowed them to communicate away from the saturated communication plan.
32. Officers who were able to identify areas within the division that had greater radio performance resiliency and consistently leveraged these locations to communicate within the division when radio messages were incomprehensible.
33. Resources developed rehabilitation rotations among their task forces and strike teams in order to continue to operate for multiple operational periods.
34. Some companies used self-contained breathing apparatus in the open areas in order to lower the exposure to products of combustion, such as products associated with failed lithium ion battery cells.
35. The Emergency Air unit (EA1) from the Rescue Maintenance Unit operated to supply water, electrolyte enhanced beverages, and snacks to personnel working in the neighborhoods.
36. Maintaining communication, lookouts, crew resource management, and

safety protocols, despite worsening conditions, allowed officers to maintain safety and reduce injuries.

37. Some members who possessed intimate knowledge of the area were able to provide valuable insight on directions, communities, access, and egress while conditions were deteriorating.
38. A rapid response by air assets in the initial attack included one HLCO, and (3) water-dropping helicopters from LAFD. Additionally, (1) LAC Type I helicopter responded. Water drops were executed within 10 minutes of initial dispatch.
39. MFC took it upon themselves to order additional mutual aid and contract aircraft. Fixed-wing aircraft were ordered and were dropping retardant by around 1230 hours.
40. The effectiveness of water drops in steep, inaccessible terrain provided critical support where ground crews could not reach or were not present.
41. The utilization of Type I rotorcraft proved effective in areas experiencing intense fire activity.
42. The deployment of Type II aircraft demonstrated efficacy, especially when combined with crew support, reconnaissance activities, and the implementation of control lines.
43. Use of fixed-wing retardant dropping tankers, although often challenged by terrain and fire behavior, helped secure ridges and were impactful for structure defense operations.
44. Effective early and consistent aerial supervision by local government HLCO created a defined Fire Traffic Area (FTA) and provided airspace deconfliction while operating multiple aircraft types. Eventually, this was supported and augmented by multiple CAL FIRE aerial supervision platforms, including night operations.
45. The LAFD FIMT AOBD communicated promptly with the CAL FIRE AOBD, establishing the initial TFR, designating helibase locations, identifying available assets in the region, coordinating communication plans, and mapping out routes and patterns within the FTA.
46. The ability to fly night operations and provide night HLCO proved to be a critical component. Twenty-six night aircraft were available; the majority were local agency aircraft.
47. Multiple LAFD HLCO and night HLCO assisted with pilot work-rest ratios.
48. Night Air Operation briefings were held prior to every night operation. CAL FIRE



was new to flying at night and appreciated the experience of the local agency.

49. ICS220 for night operations was developed, with a future recommendation to add to the Incident Action Plan (IAP).
50. There was effective communication of objectives between aircraft and divisions and branches throughout all phases of the incident. This included validating objectives, prioritizing them, ordering aircraft, and providing critical situational awareness.
51. All pilots and aircrew were called back (voluntarily) without delay. Emergency Operations approved the hiring of Helitac without any restrictions. Air Operations utilized every member from both Air Operations and Fire Station 90 to ensure efficient crew rotations.
52. After providing escorts, private water tenders supported by the EOC and DOC assisted with providing additional water to engines performing a water shuttle.
53. Chief officers who provided leaders' intent to their crews, and removed themselves from the task level to develop tactical-level decisions about the area of responsibility, were mostly successful.
54. Crews that defined management action points were crucial for efficient and effective management in changing conditions to allow strategic adjustments of resources.
55. Chief officers who used technology to assist in correcting the incident organization provided real-time information and allowed the incident to become more manageable and achieve an acceptable level of span of control.
56. When the application MCAD was available, it provided real-time tracking of resources, allowing other companies to integrate with each other and leaders to attempt to gain accountability.
57. Chief officers who utilized the technological capabilities of other agencies (Tablet Command) to identify the actual position of resources made for more effective resource reconciliation and personnel accountability at the Division Supervisor level.
58. Resources that documented their actions using technology were able to provide specific briefings to the crews and leadership, taking their place in the next operational period.
59. Chief officers who encountered resources assigned to separate incidents within the fire footprint was able to deconflict competing priorities with officers and the OSC through face-to-face, radio, and cellular communication.

60. Due to the ongoing maintenance of fire roads during the off-season, accessibility to the heel of the fire was improved, resulting in a more expedient response.
61. The training efforts invested in the heavy equipment program over the past few years have demonstrated success in enabling heavy equipment operators to work independently.
62. Constructing a contingency dozer line well outside the communicated control line proved advantageous for fire control and ultimately became the established fire perimeter.
63. The pre-positioning of the Type III Strike Team enabled its members to adopt the appropriate mindset and attitude for deployment to the nearest vegetation fire.
64. Companies that used Thermo-Gel achieved greater success in defending structures, particularly when homes were on fire in close proximity to unaffected homes.
65. The support personnel from Fire Station 90 were tasked with delivering seamless logistical operations for Air Operations to ensure consistent functionality throughout multiple operational periods.
66. The hard work, adaptability, and dedication of all Fire Station 90 members made the management of the incident appear seamless.
67. The members of the LAFD FIMT exhibited a proactive approach in addressing the incident needs, demonstrating a servant leadership attitude that supported all aspects of the incident, despite having been instructed that they would not transition as the team responsible for managing the incident.
68. The installation of a repeater on the summit of the Palisades water tank provided an opportunity for enhanced communication capabilities.
69. The use of the ICS 213 to transmit requests for overhead, equipment, and supplies proved to be most beneficial for streamlining orders.
70. Early initiation of the ICS-209, FMAG, to gain approval for resource prioritization and funding was successful in obtaining support for the CAL FIRE Team and resources obtained throughout the incident.
71. Will Rogers Base Camp was set up within an hour due to the collaborative efforts of the Critical Incident Planning and Training Section, which included resource deployment, logistical supply provision, command post vehicle transport, and personnel allocation.
72. Elements of the Logistics section such as Food Unit Leader were successfully

implemented prior to the FIMT receiving the transition of command. 500 meals were ordered early into the incident in anticipation of a multiple operational period incident.

73. DOC Logistics ordered and provided the necessary arrangements for a 24-hour deployment throughout the activation, including sleep trailers, food, facilities, and communication equipment.
74. When the application MCAD was available, it provided real-time tracking of resources, allowing other companies to integrate with each other and leaders to attempt to gain accountability.
75. Communications equipment requested through ICS-213 forms were ultimately procured and deployed, supporting overall communications effectiveness for every resource assigned to the Palisades Incident.
76. The LAFD FIMT produced an IAP for January 8, 2025 to transition with the CAL FIRE IMT.
77. Successfully securing additional resources from VNC, OCFA, TOR, and CAL FIRE based on requests before having to formally request resources from IROC.
78. The transition of the LAFD FIMT to CAL FIRE Type I IMT to manage the escalating incident on the second day of the fire was executed well. The team demonstrated professionalism and organization and provided clear guidance throughout the process.
79. Several members of the DOC and EOC, whose teams were not deployed, nonetheless responded and contributed to critical tasks throughout the duration of the event.
80. In just a few hours of the LAFD FIMT's arrival to the incident, the Planning Section was able to gain situational awareness, reconcile resources, obtain incident organization, produce maps, obtain forecasted weather, and start planning for the next operational period.
81. The DOC successfully implemented real-time tracking of apparatus and crews, whether they were partially or fully staffed. This system monitored unfilled positions on apparatus and available resources, enabling efficient personnel redistribution across the city to ensure maximum coverage.
82. Recognizing the size, scope, and complexity of the incident, the EOC was activated to Level 1 at 1045 hours, and the DOC was activated at 1055 hours.
83. The Department provided ongoing support for IROC members to be hired or detailed as necessary to facilitate ordering during the incident, which increased collaboration and mentorship with LAC, Region 1 for ordering.

## PRIMARY CHALLENGES

1. The LAFD balanced fiscal responsibility with proper preparation for predicted weather and fire behavior by following the LAFD predeployment matrix. LAFD command staff determined not to hold over off going LAFD members to fill every available seat. The fire conditions and initial ferocity of fire behavior overwhelmed the immediately available resources in the Palisades area. A recall of all members to fill every available seat was implemented after the start of the Palisades incident.
2. The initial response dispatched to the Palisades incident lacked the appropriate resources for the weather conditions typically associated with Red Flag conditions that the Department would normally respond with. Requesting engines specifically rather than the closest available resources delays the response time of arriving to the incident.
3. During the initial attack, most firefighters worked for over 36 hours without rehabilitation. Most did not get relief or rest for more than 48 hours, putting them at risk for long-term exposure to smoke inhalation and carbon monoxide. Most members lacked adequate respiratory protection, which made it difficult for them to work in that environment for such an extended period. The numerous electric vehicles ablaze resulted in prolonged exposure to gases and products of combustion related to failed lithium-ion battery cells. Physical exhaustion caused performance and safety concerns. The combination of fatigue, exhaustion, and sleep deprivation severely hindered their ability to make safe decisions.
4. The primary ICP at Fire Station 23, the secondary ICP at Gladstones, and the tertiary ICP at Will Rogers State Beach were all eventually directly threatened by the fire front. During the initial attack, Fire Station 23 served as a spontaneous evacuation center for a local school, leading to confusion and distractions for the incident command staff trying to manage the fire. The ICP was unable to expand appropriately for the size, scope, and complexity of the fire at the first two locations. Frequent relocations of the ICP resulted in an unorganized transition, hindering operational continuity, effective resource deployment, and compromising firefighter accountability and safety. The tertiary ICP was set up in the parking lot at Will Rogers State Beach, in the direct path of the fire. Flame lengths estimated at 15-20 feet covered the entire cliffside just north of Pacific Coast Highway, which resulted in smoke filling the command post and embers blown by high-speed winds through the ICP footprint. Work was made unnecessarily difficult due to respiratory and ocular irritation, as well as significant sustained rocking of the trailer.
5. There was a delay in communicating evacuation orders, warnings, and shelter-in-place notifications to the public. As a result, spontaneous evacuations occurred without structured traffic control, causing citizens to block strategic routes to the fire.



6. The staging location was positioned directly in the path of the evacuation route for residents of Highland Palisades and lower elevation communities. Without clear direction in the early stages of the incident regarding evacuation, residents acted spontaneously and attempted to drive south and west. As the fire front advanced, it obstructed resources from reaching their assignments, prompting law enforcement to instruct residents to abandon their vehicles and evacuate on foot. Within just 30 minutes of the initial dispatch, the fire front consumed the staging area. Resources awaiting assignments quickly deployed handlines and shifted to firefighting efforts to assist individuals attempting to evacuate in their cars along Palisades Drive and Sunset Boulevard. As firefighters realized that structures adjacent to the staging location were now immediately threatened, they deployed to defend them. In an attempt to escape the deteriorating conditions, civilian vehicles drove over firefighters' hose lines and nearly collided with them. As vehicles piled up on Palisades Drive due to the resources attempting to respond to the staging location, residents were instructed by LAPD to abandon their vehicles. A log jam of vehicles prevented resources from arriving at staging or reaching their assignments for structure defense. A decision was made for a LAC bulldozer to clear the abandoned vehicles from the road, allowing firefighters to access the communities and continue with structure defense.
7. When initial task forces and strike teams deployed to their area of responsibility, most did not communicate their needs for resources, delaying the necessary support to effectively provide structure defense. Several resources initially contributed significantly to saving numerous homes during the early stages of the incident. However, these resources were either reassigned or withdrawn from their areas of responsibility, ultimately returning to the homes that were subsequently burned due to a deficiency in tactical patrol. There was a lack of Type-6 apparatus to perform tactical patrols, freeing up Type-I engines for reallocation to structure defense missions.
8. Chief Officers had the flexibility to patrol the area to secure a cellular signal and gather intel from the Division Supervisor about fire location and predicted direction, monitor fire progress through the technological applications, and obtain intel on adjoining forces and their tactical frequencies to maintain situational status; however, some of them never relayed that intel or knew that doing so was an available option.
9. Due to the inability to secure the origin of the fire, the fire gradually spread, creating topographical runs towards the north. Ultimately, the fire burned around the Palisades Highlands community, threatening homes by the evening. The inability to secure the fire's point of origin allowed the spread to continue unchecked to the north and to the east, with lateral spread across thousands of acres.
10. The organization of the incident was not clearly defined until several hours into the incident, when branches and additional divisions were created. After the organization's restructuring, the existing resources and overhead were unaware

of the changes being implemented and were unclear about the new organizational structure and to whom they were reporting. Some overhead personnel were going around the incident organization leadership and redirecting resources that already had assignments. Accountability for specialized resources like UR88 and HR3 was left to individual company commanders, leading to informal assignments and a lack of accountability. Initially, there was no medical unit or medical group established to address injuries or burns among civilians or firefighters.

11. The OSC was not relieved by the FIMT for more than 18 hours. No single person can manage such a complex incident for an extended period; this hampers the ability to make safe and effective decisions. Ultimately, the OSC functioned mainly as a radio operator, handling the many requests from MFC instead of actively managing the incident from a strategic and tactical level.
12. The Department lacked an effective recall process. As the incident unfolded, the Department's ability to notify off-duty personnel of a recall was not carried out properly. This led to delays in the Department's capacity to quickly allocate necessary resources and maintain accurate accountability of field personnel staffing.
13. MFC did not adhere to the ICS-205 Communications plan and continued to contact assigned LAFD resources directly, bypassing the designated Palisades Communications. MFC does not have the capability to transmit or receive communications on VHF frequencies. The initial communications plan for the incident did not meet the size, scope, and complexity of the incident organization that was required to effectively communicate among resources. It was necessary to communicate the need for an updated situational awareness and an organizational reset to ensure all field resources had a better understanding of the size and scope of an incident. An LAFD repeater was set up as a backup system, but was not utilized by any resources on the Palisades incident.
14. The LAFD's maximum commitment plan was not effectively utilized during the IA, resulting in unused resources that could have been deployed to respond to the Palisades incident, instead remaining in their local first-in districts when the incident required additional resources. As the incident escalated, battalions lacked adequate coverage in the City because MFC did not request regional and state resources to backfill LAFD fire stations.
15. During the critical first hours of the incident, the Community Liaison Office (CLO) offered limited guidance or support to the PSOs regarding the ongoing media requests on the sensitive issues related to the incident. All PIOs from the CLO's office focused on the operational aspects of the incident and were unable to address the issues facing the PSOs. The CLO is currently understaffed, and the only way to handle media inquiries is to redirect them to the "LAFD Request" email address. However, there were no staff members available in the office to

process these requests. As a result, the media kept contacting the PSO because they were not getting responses.

16. A broadcast through media outlets, requesting the assistance of firefighters, resulted in the flooding of the DOC telephone line, rendering it inoperable. Additionally, it prompted hundreds of calls to the PSO from individuals volunteering to offer assistance from across the country. This issue persisted throughout the entire incident. A media ticker disseminated a contact number for LAFD personnel to obtain incident information and reports of recalls. Consequently, this led to thousands of calls—sometimes up to 100 calls in the queue—overwhelming staff. The outcome was prolonged wait times for LAFD members and continuous calls over 24 to 48 hours, with an average of one call every 30 to 60 seconds throughout the night.
17. The DOC was unable to obtain an accurate assessment of resource commitments to the incident. Multiple attempts to gather information from the command post resulted in conflicting data. Stations with resources assigned to the incident lacked situational awareness regarding the status of members and apparatus.
18. Members lacked understanding of their roles in the EOC/DOC and were unwilling to assist others when their own responsibilities had lulls. This caused conflicts during activation when members were assigned tasks outside their usual responsibilities. VEOCI Incident Management Software is not used in the LAFD DOC. Since 2023, multiple funding requests have been submitted to integrate this software. Other City departments' DOCs use the software, creating a shared portal. Delays occur because requests are duplicated between the DOC and the EOC. During the initial phase of the DOC activation, there was a delay of the DOC assuming the responsibilities as delineated in Book 93. Information gaps regarding resource deployment and availability, uncertainties concerning the DOC's role in coordinating briefings and disseminating information among Bureaus, as well as reduced staffing experience and availability were all attributed to deficiencies within the DOC.
19. There was insufficient logistical support at FS 90 to accommodate up to 57 members daily during the incident (beds, kitchen space, etc.).

## SECONDARY CHALLENGES

1. The accelerated rate of fire spread within the WUI outpaced the deployment of resources and incident organization. Over an extended period, numerous contributory factors exacerbated operational challenges, including unpredictable hurricane-force winds, long-range spotting, structure-to-structure ignition, the grounding of aircraft due to sustained winds, and the depletion of a water supply in higher-elevation communities.
2. The alignment of north and south ridges of the Santa Monica Mountains,

combined with the extremely steep terrain, heavy fuels, northeast wind, and limited access, made it difficult to contain the wind-driven fire and prevent it from spreading into the interface of homes.

3. Over time, the volume of water in the hydrants decreased, which ultimately resulted in a loss of water in the elevated areas above Sunset Boulevard around 2000 hours. Many homeowners continued to operate their automatic sprinklers to wet the vegetation in hopes of safeguarding their properties. Homes that had been completely destroyed had open domestic water supplies with free-flowing water. Firefighters tried to turn off the water to several homes to conserve water. Multiple divisions requested water tenders, both from the city and private sources. There was a delay in asking for EMD's support as the ICP looked for tactical water tenders through the IROC system. City water tenders were accessible through EMD and were eventually assigned to the incident. Once assigned to a division, they asked for escorts, which were not available, effectively delaying the enhancement of an additional water supply. Engineers were needed to shuttle water from further locations, further delaying suppression efforts.
4. Some fire resources from LAFD and LAC were already committed to an existing vegetation fire in the Hollywood Hills when the Palisades fire started, limiting the availability of pre-deployed and augmented resources.
5. The initial IC could not find a law enforcement representative at the command post for an extended period who had the necessary operational expertise to oversee the Evacuation Branch and make essential evacuation decisions. Initial LAPD representatives were not well-versed in evacuation planning, maps, roles and responsibilities, and large-scale evacuation protocols, leading to confusion and disorder with the evacuation process. The newest LAFD evacuation maps lacked crucial choke-point information found in older maps, forcing the use of outdated maps for effective evacuations.
6. Accurately tracking assigned resources during the initial attack proved daunting because of radio communication issues, insufficient situational awareness, and the changing incident organization.
7. Companies assigned to structure defense had to continue to readjust their tactics to attempt to save homes that were being exposed versus extinguishing the ones that were already on fire due to a lack of resources, downrange ember casts, structure-to-structure ignition, and the ability to apply water effectively due to the erratic wind.
8. Due to the velocity of the wind and the significant square footage of some of the homes, small handlines were not effective in exterior firefighting. Most companies had to utilize larger diameter handlines and change the nozzle to a lower gpm.

9. Numerous downed power lines, uprooted large trees, and rocks obstructing narrow roads, along with a dense canopy, long-range ember casts, and relentless winds, hindered the visibility and maneuverability of the apparatus.
10. Engine companies faced a challenge in recognizing homes that were clearly aligned with the wind and fire front, as well as those located close to each other, which would become challenging to defend. Structures not aligned with the wind saw improved outcomes when companies and command prioritized suppression efforts for those homes. Leaders at every level struggled to exercise discretion to reduce efforts when the likely outcome for property preservation was low and then redirect those efforts to savable homes.
11. Transitioning from offensive interior structure firefighting in full structural PPE to prolonged exterior structure defense operations posed a significant physical challenge.
12. Due to the terrain features, repeater coverage, and shaded canyons, the VHF communications plan was inconsistent throughout the incident. Communicating on the tactical channel in simplex proved difficult. Some resources turned to squirrel channels on the 800 MHz platform, but over time, this became overused and ineffective for some. There was excessive radio traffic on the initially assigned tactical frequency, leading to delayed communication, reduced situational awareness, and resources struggling to coordinate tactics and tasks.
13. The Type III STEN was assigned a Division while managing structure defense with the Type III Strike Team, causing confusion of responsibilities and ability to traverse the division without a command vehicle.
14. Several fire line emergencies among firefighting personnel were communicated, challenging the OSC in maintaining accountability and safety of the members while ensuring appropriate medical treatment.
15. The volume of life-safety service calls from MFC, including victims trapped and injured, overwhelmed the OSC.
16. Several Chief Officers had limited or no experience in managing an incident of such complexity. Some were unfamiliar with their roles within the command and general staff and reverted to their previous knowledge at lower ranks, resulting in key command and staff positions remaining unfilled and associated tasks being neglected.
17. Chief officers served as Task Force Leaders rather than Strike Team Leaders or in higher operational roles. Consequently, this resulted in missed opportunities to maintain a broader strategic perspective.
18. Due to a lack of organization, in some cases, the Take Initiative Engage and Report (TIER) concept was excessively utilized, resulting in uncoordinated actions



that did not benefit the collective effort.

19. During the first hour of the incident, there was a call for a firefighter down. A subsequent personnel accountability report (PAR) was requested and completed by the incident commander, but the injured member was never identified or located.
20. Hand crews were reassigned to other incident priorities as they attempted to contain the heel of the fire, which reduced the effectiveness of the containment efforts and eventually led to the heel of the fire moving northerly and easterly, eventually affecting homes in the Palisades Highlands area in the evening and contributing to other communities being impacted.
21. The rollout of burning material into the unburned continued to challenge the construction of handline and dozer line, causing spot fires, and forcing the crews and dozers back into the black to wait for air support.
22. At approximately 2029 hours on January 7, 2025, a third wind-driven vegetation fire broke out in Sylmar, in the City of Los Angeles, identified as the Hurst Fire. It grew to just over 799 acres throughout the night, straining resources from the LAFD and mutual aid resources from the region.
23. Several urgent requests for additional resources at the Palisades Fire were denied or delayed, which impacted the firefighters' ability to engage in effective structure defense.
24. Many residents chose not to evacuate and instead approached the fire companies seeking assistance for their homes. However, many of these homes were not threatened, which resulted in delays for the resources reaching the properties that were actually at risk.
25. A rare incident mindset occasionally caused officers and firefighters to think and operate beyond standard safety protocols. This resulted in companies undertaking exceptional risks due to the incident's unusual nature, sometimes lacking the discipline necessary to define clear objectives. Some abandoned less appealing tasks in pursuit of more attractive assignments, becoming overly eager with their responsibilities instead of concentrating on the incident priorities in the area of responsibility.
26. Some assisting agencies adopted divergent approaches to operational engagement, resulting in misalignment with resources under the same leadership, who were striving to protect homes.
27. Most fire officers responsible for leading crews, task forces, and strike teams were educated in wildland courses; however, they lacked CICCS qualifications.
28. A considerable allocation of resources was deployed as move-up companies to

fire stations to ensure coverage within the geographical area affected by the fire. Consequently, these companies promptly engaged in fire suppression efforts and evacuation assistance. Some of these companies were able to establish leadership, while others operated autonomously for several hours without an assigned leader or official directive. The companies integrated into existing task forces or strike teams operated without a clear leader's intent, communication plan, or tactical direction.

29. Cellular service was reduced quickly during the incident due to power outages and eventually became obsolete for hours, delaying critical messages for resource orders, tactical direction, and coordination with other agencies.
30. Agency Representatives (AREP) from cooperating and assisting agencies were not immediately reachable to obtain the assigned resources or their status.
31. The persistent winds and gusts made water drops ineffective for the assigned airships. Severe turbulence impaired the pilots' ability to control the aircraft and raised safety concerns during water drops and at low altitudes, where they risked losing altitude quickly and unexpectedly. The sustained winds and gusts exceeded the aircraft's limitations, challenging even the most experienced pilots. The USFS King Air reported damage to the aircraft caused by severe turbulence. Ultimately, the weather forced LAFD HLCO to ground all aircraft by approximately 1945 hours.
32. Unauthorized UAS activity disrupted aerial suppression efforts with approximately 500 UAS within the Temporary Flight Restriction. There was a total of 732 flights, involving 419 unique drone IDs, with 223 flights exceeding 400 ft AGL, and 90 conducted at night. The highest altitude attained by a single UAS was 21,289 ft. A UAS incursion caused damage to one CL-415 aircraft wing. UAS incursions caused multiple fixed and rotor-wing aircraft to "overfly" UAS, narrowly avoiding collision.
33. Steep canyons in close proximity to residential structures complicated retardant drop zones and required precise coordination.
34. The initial attack, which transitioned into extended attack, exposed all pilots to fatigue, particularly in back-to-back rotations during peak fire activity.
35. Multiple concurrent incidents in the region compromised aircraft availability. No aircrafts were accessible for the Hurst Fire as a result of grounding procedures due to adverse weather conditions.
36. Multiple "Recon" flight requests required integration and coordination, often distracting from operations. Some of these requests were from agencies not involved in the fire.
37. Air-to-ground communications were not readily monitored by ground crews early

in the incident. The frequencies became positional, even more so than “line of sight,” and communications were missed.

38. Multiple briefings, meetings, weather and staffing discussions, along with regular night operational briefings requiring representation from the AOBBD impacted operational tempo from a remote section.
39. The helibase struggled to manage night operations due to staffing rest ratios, aircraft maintenance times, and fire activity.
40. Political pressures created challenges for the air operations team’s process. Particularly when the AOBBD was pressured to fly five different agency aircraft, and the National Guard. There was a community pressure to use the mobile retardant base that was not ordered or prioritized by the OSC or the IC.
41. The detail process for Helitac was initially challenging due to the necessity of detailing LAFD members who were hired at different work locations. Due to these constraints, responding to additional start dates proved difficult, particularly about work/rest compliance.
42. A shortage of vehicles (vans, plug buggies, sedans) assigned to Air Operations limited the ability to support multiple Helispot locations during simultaneous incidents.
43. Members supporting air operations experienced interruptions to their rest during the day after night operations due to shared quarters with active task forces at Fire Station 90, which hindered the availability of rest and sleep accommodations.
44. The initial and subsequent geographical control objectives developed by the IC during the initial and extended attack did not encompass the required work of the Division supervisors to provide a control line to meet the objectives.
45. Some of the overhead vehicles lacked the necessary radio equipment to effectively manage the incident.
46. Although technology is a valuable tool that generally increases efficiency, improves situational awareness, and provides a real-time understanding of resource allocation, losing broadband connection hampers the ability to maintain situational awareness.
47. Due to a lack of member qualifications, there was a considerable delay in deploying qualified line safety officers to the respective geographical divisions and branches.
48. Due to the lack of air support, it was difficult to get situational awareness of the fire’s location, which made evacuation zone decisions more challenging.

49. There was a lack of staffing in the Evacuation Branch which made it difficult to manage all functions of evacuation.
50. "Command 2" Incident Command Post was inadequate for the number of members of the FIMT to conduct command operations. There was no functional air conditioning and due to leaks within the trailer members were exposed to smoke.
51. The Command Post location did not have the necessary resources needed to support the Plans Section. (GIS Plotter, WiFi, Printers, and workspace.) Runners were sent to off-site locations to produce map products, which took a significant time due to distance and road closures.
52. An Incident Within an Incident (IWI) occurred with a VNC Captain being struck by an auto during fire suppression efforts. The extent of this injury was difficult to ascertain due to reduced radio performance upon initial communications.
53. Providing coverage for the 420-square-mile geography of the City of Los Angeles complicated efforts to pre-position or stage additional resources while ensuring adequate coverage for all threatened communities.
54. Certain members of FIMT experienced ambiguity regarding their roles and responsibilities to transfer command from the Initial Attack command and general staff to a CAL FIRE IMT.
55. Significant delays in the approval of ICS-213 requests negatively impacted the timely deployment of essential communications equipment and personnel.
56. No contact information was provided for members of the incoming CAL FIRE team, hindering continuity of communications planning and transition procedures to the Type I team.
57. Upon transitioning to the CAL FIRE FIMT, the interoperable communications plan created confusion as LAFD resources continued using 800 MHz frequencies.
58. Enterprise Record Systems access, necessary for resource tracking and single resource identification, was overly restrictive and not available to essential personnel, including field leaders. The ability to see which members were available for a single resource deployment and the hiring order was only visible to a select few members.
59. The media featured numerous dignitaries who were not pertinent to the circumstances at that time, thereby disrupting ICP efficiency.
60. Within the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), there was a lack of clarity regarding the allocation of members to specific positions as the incident persisted over multiple operational periods. Fire department personnel were able to



provide only sufficient staffing for 24 hours across several consecutive days, whereas non-fire department personnel maintained adequate numbers for both A and B watches. Fire department members experienced minimal rest, often attempting to sleep in their vehicles for a few hours during their 24-hour shifts. This situation resulted in frustration among EMD staff, who observed that certain positions remained unfilled during critical moments when vital decisions needed to be made.

61. The Fire Branch of the EOC was receiving requests for supplies and equipment through personal phones or from other City Departments, bypassing normal channels and lacking approval or an authorized funding source.
62. The VEOCI event and incident management software was unfamiliar to many because it is rarely used. Most department members either lack access to the application or don't require it regularly, making it challenging to navigate the program during a disaster situation.
63. The aging PIO sedan was unable to sustain radio power and mobile phone charging, and its battery continuously depleted when parked. PIOs require phone access for media contacts, radio capabilities for safety while on the fire line, and reliable transportation.
64. The disparity in capabilities and presentation between ArcGIS and Genasys caused confusion among the public and media, as well as inefficiencies among personnel responsible for disseminating map information. The need to update ArcGIS to match Genasys, as repopulation orders were issued, resulted in avoidable delays.
65. The PSO experienced sustained pressure from external agencies regarding tasks unrelated to public safety information. This demand coincided with the office's duty to disseminate critical information to the public. Consequently, the heightened workload and associated stress adversely affected operational efficiency and placed strain on the working relationships vital to the effective functioning of the PSO. The Department Operations Center (DOC) was activated; however, it did not furnish department-wide situational awareness or resource accountability until the following day.
66. Maintaining sufficient staffing levels within the DOC proved to be a considerable challenge. Several factors were identified as contributing to this issue, including members being off due to injury or vacation, as well as members' private residences being affected by fire.
67. There were information gaps during the first 24 hours concerning the resources allocated and actively deployed in comparison to those that had been released.
68. Many of the IMT staff at all levels were new to their roles, and the Palisades fire was both their first experience with a DOC activation and their initial opportunity

to clearly understand their responsibilities.

69. Numerous members assigned to the IMT were detailed to be part of the Fire Chief's staff for the incident. This resulted in unfilled positions and necessitated additional members to work across multiple operational periods.
70. When DOC assumed responsibility for facilitating the tactics and operational briefings for the DDC, a misalignment occurred between the expectations of the DDC and the actual meeting outcome.
71. Multiple requests were received at the EOC/DOC for supplies from the Will Rogers Base Camp without prior approval from the IC. This resulted in a delay in procurement, as GSD required order numbers to be assigned.
72. The hiring practices for overhead personnel were inconsistent, with requests being submitted through the DOC Finance Chief, who was responsible for inputting hiring information for Non-IMT members. This led to confusion and delays in documentation due to the need for order numbers for these individuals.
73. In the process of recalling members, it became essential to identify available resources for staffing purposes and to facilitate communication regarding members' availability. During the recall, a social media post requested firefighters to call in, causing volunteer and career firefighters around the country to contact the DOC. By the evening, there was a sufficient number of members recalled; however, the Department lacked the apparatus necessary for the additional staffing. Certain members independently chose to alter their assignments from the locations to which they had been directed to report, resulting in a diminished ability to understand their whereabouts and staff resources efficiently.
74. The hiring procedures and V-codes posed significant challenges; Command 22 (now AC2), which generally supervises staffing, was occupied with field operations, consequently impeding the ability to obtain essential staffing information.
75. Initial communication from S&M to the DOC proved to be false regarding the availability of apparatus at the maintenance facility. Several members were sent to obtain apparatus that were supposedly available, but when they arrived, there were no apparatus to staff.
76. A considerable quantity of duplicate orders (ICS 213 – General Message) for similar resources were submitted via various channels, resulting in numerous delays in the resource request and documentation process.
77. During the early stages of the incident, there was a shortage of IROC-certified fire department personnel necessary to fulfill initial overhead, equipment, and supply orders.

78. No accommodations were provided for IROC members, who were compelled to sleep in their vehicles, storage closets, or on the floor at Fire Station 4 and the DOC. Alternatively, they had to undertake lengthy drives to find sleeping arrangements, which substantially impeded their operational efficiency.
79. There were independent requests submitted directly to IROC members from incidents, aiming to procure resources and equipment without following established procedures, ultimately hindering IROC members' ability to process requests approved by the IC or Command and General Staff.

## LESSONS LEARNED and RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Although an effort was made to maintain fiscal responsibility within the Department, there remains no substitute for preparedness and response when deploying resources effectively to wind-driven vegetation fires in the matter of public safety. The original vegetation deployment matrix was developed by a committee of individuals tasked with determining the optimal staffing levels necessary to manage such conflagrations within the City of Los Angeles. Transitioning from the term “shall” to “consider” when determining the type and number of resources that should be deployed on a high-hazard day shifts the decision-making responsibility to a singular human being. Multiple human factors, including level of experience, knowledge, training, and even the number of deployments in a year where there are limited incidents, can introduce bias, or even create complacency and ultimately influence the incorrect deployment model. Although a considerations document exists, the decision to deploy was overwhelmingly based on perceived financial constraints rather than the factors outlined in the document.
2. The Department's daily fire weather forecast relies on an antiquated method to calculate the brush burning index for the entire City. While this approach considers the worst-case scenario, the information can be inaccurate due to the City's multiple microclimates. The relative humidity ahead of and during the Palisades fire remained at 5%; however, the LAFD's fire weather report recorded the relative humidity much higher. This number is significant in making decisions about pre-deployment, augmentation, prepositioning, and reimbursement of resources. It is recommended that the Department adopt new technologies and access remote weather stations to better assess weather and fuel conditions, thereby providing more relevant, localized information. This will ensure that the diverse microclimates and fuel beds are forecasted accurately, enabling more precise decision-making for augmentation, pre-deployment, prepositioning and reimbursement.
3. The Department follows a formal process to identify upcoming weather events and determine staffing needs. A pre-tactics and tactics meeting is held to plan for augmentation and pre-deployment for the following day. On the day of the event, operational briefings take place at 1000 hours, provided for command staff, operational battalion commanders, and specialized resources to receive relevant updates. However, line officers must wait until Battalion Commanders share this

information after being briefed. It is recommended that the operational briefing be expanded to include all officers for better situational awareness. Additionally, when the NWS forecasts a PDS or Red Flag weather event, the Department should consider holding a tactics meeting more than 24 hours ahead to develop plans for multi-day augmentation and pre-deployment when possible and make adjustments daily if necessary. This will allow for predictability in hiring and ensure the Department is appropriately staffed.

4. The Department should immediately review its recall procedures and utilize technological advancements to formulate a comprehensive recall system. Although there were presumed limiting factors concerning the recall of members in conjunction with the coded-assign hire letter of agreement, the bulletin explicitly states that the Department agrees to restrict the use of recall procedures as outlined in Volume 1, 2/7-00.00 to circumstances where it is necessary, such as during a catastrophic event, a single large and overwhelming incident, a combination of major emergency incidents, or due to an actual or forecasted unusual, critical, and sustained increase in emergency activity. Additionally, the Department should consider reconstructing the coded-assign hire implementation of codes to cover 365 days of the calendar year to ensure adequate staffing each day.
5. Annually, during the vegetation season, leaders are advised to analyze the geography of the City of Los Angeles and to make informed decisions concerning the deployment of pre-positioned and augmented resources. A thorough threat assessment should be conducted to evaluate deployment opportunities, response times, and areas most vulnerable to vegetation fires. It is important to note that regions with recent burns may require fewer resources, while areas with inadequate coverage on routine days may necessitate additional resources. Consideration should also be given to weather influences, microclimates, and the experience levels of leadership.
6. The Department should continue to collaborate with other agencies that face a shared threat in the wildland-urban interface working together to optimize resource allocation at the onset of a vegetation fire. Holding annual regional fire agency partner meetings will increase seasonal situational awareness and develop professional relationships.
7. On high-hazard days, Chief Officers should be deployed as a single resource overhead to support initial incident organization. Historically, when strike teams are assembled and deployed, their leader is often reassigned to a branch or division during the initial attack, thereby separating leadership from the crew and requiring the strike team to identify a new leader and realign accordingly. Task Forces should be led by the most qualified individual, rather than merely replacing Captain Is with Captain IIs based solely on rank. Some Captain IIs replaced Captain Is with the necessary qualifications for multi-day operations. It is also advisable for the Department to review the use of the term 'Task Force' within CICCIS to encompass a combination of resources, rather than solely three



engine companies. The term “Tactical Task Forces” should be discontinued. These resources should be meticulously staged on high-hazard days based on the potential for rapid fire growth.

8. Vegetation responses must have a dedicated communications plan. The Department should evaluate the necessity of establishing a formal communications plan for any all-hazard incident. This plan should include an administrative channel, a command channel, and primary and secondary tactical channels pertinent to the bureau of operation, along with a common emergency channel. When responding to wildland incidents where multiple agencies are involved, especially when fixed-wing aircraft are requested, MFC should immediately request a VHF communications plan from LAC Dispatch with the goal of providing that plan within 60 seconds of the initial dispatch.
9. The normal brush response on a Red Flag day would have consisted of 27 fire resources. When the initial brush response was only assembled for a normal to moderate vegetation response, it seriously impeded the ability of resources to provide initial suppression and structure defense efforts on the initial attack. IC's and the dispatch center need to critically analyze whether the Computer-Aided Dispatch System is recommending the correct amount of resources on a given day and immediately augment the deployment by dispatching the additional resources requested.
10. When the initial Light Force requested 10 engine companies and the first arriving Battalion Chief requested a total of 20 engine companies, in addition to some resources that self-dispatched, only a portion of resources requested were actually dispatched. The resources that arrived on scene within the first hour included the initial vegetation response, an LAFD Type III strike team, LAC's normal vegetation response due to the proximity of their jurisdiction, agreed upon Area A resources, and resources attempting to make themselves available from a previous wind-driven vegetation fire in Hollywood. It is essential to recognize the size, scope, and complexity of any incident, especially when such an incident is an anomaly. Considering the predicted wind speeds, the amount of vegetation available to be consumed before impacting structures, and the severity of the fire as indicated by HLCO, it would have been appropriate for the IC to request the closest fire resources from MFC initially. Depending on the size, scope, and complexity of an incident, a second large resource order for additional specialized resources such as Type 1, Type II, and Type III fixed-wing aircraft, all available regional rotorcraft, Type-I Strike Teams, Type III Strike Teams, Type I and Type II Hand Crews, Type VI Strike Teams, Dozer Strike Teams, Tactical Water Tenders, and overhead support staff should be requested. When ordering single resources, it is essential to consider the number of overhead personnel necessary to fulfill critical roles within the command and general staff, as well as the overall organization of the incident. Due to the dispatch of a standard vegetation response, there was a notable deficiency of overhead personnel from the LAFD required to manage the incident effectively.

11. The phrase “hit it hard and fast” encompasses all aspects of combating a wind-driven vegetation fire. This terminology has been incorporated into the fire department’s procedural manual for managing brush fires for decades and is constantly encouraged in the mindset of fire service leaders. Particularly concerning aircraft involved in wind-driven vegetation fires, multiple agencies across the state have recently focused on the expeditious deployment of aircraft and the identification of incidents that may necessitate a substantial initial deployment of aircraft. Although significant wind was present from the onset and persisted throughout the incident, initial wind speed readings at the time of the alarm indicated opportunities for a considerable request for aircraft from neighboring agencies, contract aircraft, and state and federal aircraft during the initial attack. It is imperative that incident commanders possess a comprehensive understanding of the types and capabilities of aircraft available within the region and state, and, in the event of an anomalous wind-driven vegetation fire, request the deployment of all available aircraft. While Type II and Type III airtankers are effective for deploying retardant within the canyons of the City of Los Angeles, this particular fire necessitated the need for at least two Very Large Air Tankers (VLAT) in conjunction with Type II and III fixed wing and contracted rotorcraft.
12. When determining staging locations for wildland incidents, the IC should try to pre-establish staging areas before the fire to allow enough space for apparatus deployment from a central part of the incident. Sometimes these areas need to be remote from the fire to accommodate all apparatus and logistics required to support equipment throughout the incident, including a check-in point. It may be necessary to create multiple staging areas depending on the size of the fire. A single person cannot serve as a STAM at a wind-driven vegetation fire. For the LAFD, either a qualified STAM with resources or at least a Light Force is a good start to help organize the staging area.
13. It is essential to maintain consistent collaboration with LAPD concerning evacuation procedures and communication protocols. While the LAPD bears responsibility for executing evacuations in accordance with the Penal Code, the fire department is tasked with identifying the location of fire, providing LAPD with information regarding the affected area approximately 30 minutes prior to the fire front, and issuing initial evacuation directives to the public – including orders, warnings, or shelter-in-place notifications. The fire department must maintain ongoing coordination with LAPD to improve and update information within the Genasys Protect application, which has been adopted by both the LAFD and LAPD following the Pacific Palisades incident. It is imperative that the LAFD and LAPD continue to contribute additional critical information into the application to enhance its robustness and usability during subsequent vegetation fires. Additional training should be provided to all fire department members regarding evacuation procedures and the use of the Genasys Application in collaboration with LAPD. Public outreach programs and evacuation exercises utilizing fire mapping technology and fire history should be conducted annually across all neighborhoods in the City of Los Angeles.

14. Considering the location of neighborhoods within the Pacific Palisades region, it was evident that there was only one means of egress. It is imperative that the department immediately conduct an assessment of the neighborhoods' necessity to establish two evacuation routes for all Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ), thereby determining whether supplementary means of egress are warranted. Senate Bill 99 mandates that cities and counties identify residential developments situated in hazard zones that lack a minimum of two emergency evacuation routes. Additionally, Assembly Bills 747 and 1409 stipulate the requirement for evacuation route analysis and the periodic revision of local hazard mitigation plans.
15. Evacuation orders, warnings, and shelter-in-place information should be disseminated within minutes of the onset of any vegetation fire. Failure to do so may result in the public spontaneously evacuating in unintended directions or sheltering in place when an immediate evacuation is required. The decision to evacuate should be based on information from AI alert cameras, aerial reconnaissance, conditions enroute, and communicated early and clearly. Factors to consider in evacuation decisions include the ignition location, rate of fire spread, time of impact, community profile and preparedness, time of day, and the capacity of resources to deploy effectively to affected communities. Community evacuation drills and mapping of fire behavior are essential to determine whether residents should shelter in place or evacuate immediately; such assessments can only be accurately made through community evacuation exercises with technology-driven evacuation applications.
16. Although the Los Angeles County region has made progress in technological solutions for early warning notifications through Alert LA County, NotifyLA, and WEA, an evaluation of the installation of warning sirens within the City of Los Angeles should be considered. Had the fire originated in the late evening or early morning hours, the potential impact on human lives could have been significantly more severe. Warning sirens have the capability to alert residents continuously throughout a 24-hour period, independently of cellular service, thereby ensuring that residents who are asleep at night receive some form of notification apart from their mobile phones.
17. Wildland Operational Plans for the Department should be reviewed and refined to include pre-attack strategies for areas susceptible to vegetative fires, most especially in the WUI. These plans need to be shared with neighboring agencies to promote coordination and a unified response. Key elements should include the location of ICPs, pre-established organization, staging areas, helispots, evacuation routes, pre-arranged incident structure defense tactics, resource types and numbers, suppression methods, population, and traffic management.
18. The Department should immediately review the 2008 maximum commitment plan and review policy and procedure, including the degraded modes that can be selected to limit responses within the City. Additionally, EOPS and MFC should analyze the document for areas of improvement and updating, especially since

the Department's resources now differ from those in 2008. When the Department does meet their maximum commitment plan, MFC should immediately start requesting regional assistance to backfill fire stations. Currently, there is no procedure to backfill fire stations. Coverage should be based on fire flow requirements and support of advanced life support availability. Ultimately, MFC is responsible for resource control.

19. When identifying a single ordering point, dispatchers should communicate on V-Fire 21 the agency that has been identified as the single point of ordering. The additional staffing of floor captains at MFC was extremely beneficial. Having double coverage of MFC Floor Captains assisted with work-rest ratios and ensured effective decision-making.
20. MFC and the IC should maintain ongoing communication to establish the fire's footprint. When fire stations are affected by the fire, it is not necessary to move companies for additional coverage. The jurisdiction becomes the responsibility of the IC. 911 calls concerning addresses within the area of responsibility should be relayed from MFC to the IC. The IC is responsible for continuously informing dispatch of the fire's footprint so MFC knows which addresses are involved.
21. Expanding the broader organization by establishing branches at an early stage permits overhead to oversee a larger jurisdictional area, thereby enabling the assessment of specific needs for resources within that area of responsibility. It also supports the IC in proactively managing the incident effectively. Furthermore, branch management necessitates the need for individual tactical channels, which should be designated as quickly as the branches are being developed. It is beneficial to assign actual names to the branch directors along with their respective identifiers to ensure clear recognition during reporting, particularly when outside agencies are involved. Communicating the initial incident organization, as well as any subsequent organizational modifications through the command channel, will ensure that all members fully comprehend the complexity of the incident and understand the reporting structure. Once the organization is established, the IC should communicate the control objectives and incident priorities. Should any organizational changes occur, it is the collective responsibility of all personnel to communicate these modifications clearly and to uphold accountability for all resources across the incident command structure.
22. Although MCAD is a valuable tool for real-time resource location tracking, the Department should consider exploring applications that enable digital resource accountability and may be integrated across multiple platforms to ensure that assignments are tracked accurately and accountability is maintained.
23. At a large-scale incident, the initial IC should consider staffing all overhead positions in command and general staff in addition to operational positions to ensure the basic skeleton of ICS is created to manage all aspects of the incident. Chief officers assigned to fill out command and general staff positions should be



knowledgeable about the responsibilities associated with each role. A lack of familiarity can lead to confusion, duplication of efforts, neglected tasks, conflicting instructions, safety concerns, and operational failures. It is essential that officers fulfill their designated roles and complete tasks relevant to their positions to ensure effective operations. Although not officially incorporated within the National Incident Management System (NIMS) or LAFD policy, it is advisable to designate a Planning Operations Chief at an early stage to support the Planning Section Chief and OSC in managing the resources necessary for the upcoming operational period. This arrangement will enable the Deputy OSC (DOSC) to concentrate on the current plan during extended attack operations, at least for the initial operational period. The establishment of an intelligence branch at the outset of a large-scale incident to oversee emerging technologies and real-time intelligence could facilitate more informed decision-making based on predictive modeling.

24. When any incident is anticipated to extend beyond IA or extended attack, it is prudent to request the FIMT promptly. Upon the team's arrival, members are expected to immediately assume unstaffed positions and operate under the supervision of the designated overhead personnel to assist with outstanding tasks. Positions already staffed by initial attack overhead should be shadowed, and members should seek opportunities to assist within their discipline. The FIMT IC does not require a delegation of authority (DOA) to respond. The initial request, approved by the DDC, implies consent that the team has the authority to deploy. The FIMT OSC or DOSC should anticipate and consider supporting the initial attack OSC upon the arrival at a complex incident. The burden of command and required decision-making of the initial OSC can be overwhelming and tax the ability to make sound decisions. A rotation should be immediately established, considering night operations and multiple operational periods, to incorporate the IA OSC, FIMT OSC, and FIMT DOSC. As the incident transitions into the management phase, the DOA becomes more applicable. The FIMT IC or Deputy IC should assemble a meeting with the IA overhead to determine when the IA IC intends to request the transition or staffing of positions by the FIMT. Once the FIMT IC or Deputy IC understands the objectives, it is their responsibility to communicate the objectives, the leader's intent, and the timing for transitioning of the entire team. During a complex incident expected to extend across multiple operational periods, the OSC should consider replacing tactical resources in the subsequent operational period if there is an anticipation that such resources will remain engaged for more than 24 hours. Rotating crews efficiently prevents exhaustion-related mistakes, provides accountability of the first on scene resources, and assists in managing work-to-rest ratios.
25. Dozers, hand crews, and Type III engines should be prioritized at the heel of and perimeter of a wind-driven fire. This helps anchor the fire effectively, controls lateral or reverse spread, allows crews to safely build hand lines, and prevents the fire from wrapping around, reducing the risk of entrapment and protecting homes.

26. It was clearly evident that resources that decided to prep and defend homes, and remained until a sufficient tactical patrol was established, were more successful in protecting communities. The concept of a WUI environment involves positioning adequate resources in forward positions and supporting them with additional resources until they can adequately defend a number of homes, anticipating the fire's path, and deploying additional resources to affected neighborhoods until the fire front has moved past.
27. Division Supervisors must make every effort to meet their members on the line and brief them on the state of the fire, current weather, and fire conditions regardless of time or conditions.
28. Ember intrusion through vents, combustible fences, ornamental vegetation, leaf litter, and combustible outdoor items continued to ignite fires prior to, during, and following the fire front. The tactics of fire front following and tactical patrol are crucial in ensuring that structure defense efforts are maintained and effective. Older constructions on elevated foundations contained numerous vents that facilitated entry of ember cast into crawl spaces and attics. Modern constructions incorporating shear walls for earthquake compliance proved equally problematic. Typical metal gusset plate truss roofs with shear walls in attics generate unseen voids; however, all such voids are equipped with attic vents. Ember cast entering these vents could gradually ignite insulation and foster substantial concealed fires within homes located significantly behind the fire front. Homes continued to ignite ahead of, during, and well after the fire front's passage. Tactical patrols are essential; nonetheless, adequate resources are imperative for effective management.
29. Resources that utilized pools for supplemental water sources were highly effective in structure defense. However, some resources require additional training on acquiring water from alternative sources, rather than relying solely on the hydrant system. All members should continue to train on the procedures for acquiring water from an alternative source to combat fires when hydrants are non-operational. Multiple pools remained filled following the containment of the Palisades fire. Although this tactic may not have saved every residence, it would have significantly improved the situation within the affected area.
30. Numerous opportunities existed for salvage operations and some companies attempted to remove many important items from citizens' homes but the absence of strategic planning and adequate knowledge hindered their execution. The utilization of trash cans, coolers, or other storage containers could have facilitated the salvage of items that fit within these receptacles. Furthermore, employing floor jacks to relocate vehicles from garages could have minimized the fire load within the garage premises and potentially preserved the vehicles from total loss.
31. The Department should allocate resources toward enhanced eye and respiratory protection PPE. The limited visibility and breathing capability during the incident created additional challenges, hindering some firefighters in their firefighting

efforts. N95 or P100 masks for respiratory protection, in addition to “Whiffs” type brush masks for extended operations, would be helpful in operating in hazardous wildfire environments. The Department needs to consider purchasing more tactical water tenders. A larger cache of water and MRE’s should be pre-stocked on the apparatus.

32. Due to the consistent turnover within the Incident Management Team (IMT) the department must establish a process similar to the FIMT selection procedure. This process should involve recruiting qualified individuals based on their experience, education, and training. Relying on personnel on special duty to remain actively engaged and pursue educational opportunities is impractical. Members of the IMT should be selected in accordance with their qualifications and training, and the deployment procedure should be conducted through a systematic and professional process. In the meantime, members assigned to the DOC must be prepared to deploy with a basic understanding of their duties, responsibilities, overall purpose of the DOC, and review job aids to assist with the expectations of their position.
33. Improve local area relationships between aviation units by continuing the following best practices:
- Pre-season aviation cooperators meetings.
  - Pre-incident access to the FC106 Aircraft Dispatch documents, which provide communication plans.
  - Use local partners to augment aerial firefighting support.
  - Obtain aircraft mechanic support during large incidents. Leonardo Helicopters and General Services both offered immediate mechanical support.
  - Support the budgeting of aircraft replacement at designated intervals. The LAFD has proven that the type of aircraft currently operating is the most effective for our local response area, and is critical in getting water on a fire quickly.
  - Support the seasonal lease of a Helitanker, with funding to allow for contract extensions with a period of no season-ending rain. Consider partnering with LADWP to purchase or lease a heavy-lift helicopter for shared use for 365 days.
  - Support HLCO training and funding during the most active periods of fire risk.
  - Support Helitac hiring. Every member of Fire Station 90 was utilized for the duration of the incident to support aircraft filling and fueling. The Department needs to fully staff a second aircrew to provide air ambulance and hoist support, that will reduce the impact to Fire Station 90 for the use of helitac.
34. There is a need to ensure adequate awareness level training of UAS operations during wildfires. UAS detection equipment is needed. Local agencies have UAS detection equipment and policies in place.

35. The LAFD should develop a plan to ensure that relevant city Critical Infrastructure/key resource locations affected or potentially affected during a large-scale incident are operational prior to the loss of utilities and communications in order to ensure continuous operational capabilities. This would include delivering necessary supplies and ensuring that backup systems are deployable at the onset of a potentially catastrophic event. During a large-scale incident, identify the fire stations on the perimeter of the incident and provide those stations with resources to assist with operational capabilities, including managing communications and public relations.
36. The LAFD acknowledges the significant post-incident safety concerns related to hazardous material exposures and pulmonary hazards resulting from the combustion of toxic materials, emphasizing the need for enhanced personal protective equipment use, monitoring, and post-incident medical awareness.
37. Over the past decade, the qualifications for wildland discipline training have declined significantly. Economic challenges, staffing shortages, and agency policies on certifications and deployments have resulted in members with expired task books, decreased motivation to pursue specific disciplines, and widespread lack of qualifications within the ICS system. As a result, fewer members in leadership roles are authorized to sign off on subordinate disciplines, and members must volunteer outside their off-duty time and typically take compensatory time off to attend training sessions and gain qualifications. It is advisable for the Department to proactively identify members early in their careers who have specific expertise and support their development within that discipline. Additionally, it is recommended that the Department significantly increase the number of members available to respond outside the City at any given time, providing more opportunities for them to become qualified before their task book timeline expires. Lastly, the Department should consider reallocating training funds to support members' attendance at discipline-specific courses, helping to build a strong pool of qualified personnel and ultimately enhancing competence in the WUI.
38. The Department should re-establish or implement new training on WUI tactics and command and control for wind-driven vegetation fires for all members. Some Chief Officers, and captains lacked fundamental knowledge of structure defense strategies, tactics, structural triage, control measures, and basic suppression techniques. It is essential to instruct all officers on management action points, which align with the risk management policy, risk assessment procedures, and the OODA Loop teaching methodology. The Standards of Command emphasize the importance of evaluation and revision, which should be a continuous process for everyone involved in an overhead role.
39. All LAFD sworn personnel must review, understand, and rehearse WUI strategies and tactics to ensure their proper deployment and execution during hybrid structure wildland events. It is crucial to familiarize all members with the TIER concept and regularly review it to ensure effective decision-making and

communication in rapidly evolving incidents. Additional training needs to be conducted on how to refuse an order properly and how to provide alternative measures to complete the requested task before aborting the order.

40. Training in RT-130 protocols and fire safety should be provided to LAPD personnel and any City Department operating water tenders. Equipping water tender drivers with appropriate training and PPE would enhance operational efficiency.
41. The Department should analyze the value of reestablishing the Vegetation Steering Committee to gather the subject matter experts to establish best practices, policy, and procedures; develop literature; establish regional relationships; and develop after-action reviews following vegetation fires.
42. Type VI apparatus are ideal for tactical patrols. Previously, the Department chose not to join the Cal OES Type VI program, fearing the State might require additional LAFD staffing from outside the City. Now that staffing levels are at a reasonable level, it is advisable for the Department to participate in the program. Additionally, purchasing a substantial number of Type VI apparatus is recommended to handle the City's call volume more effectively, thereby reducing wear and tear on heavy apparatus, especially given the lengthy lead times for fire engine and truck manufacturing.



## REFERENCE MATERIAL

- [Book 30 - Command Procedures](#)
- [Book 99 - Brush Fire Operations Manual](#)
- [Training Bulletin 057 - Evacuation Guidelines](#)
- [Training Bulletin 088 - Compressed Air-Foam Brush Patrol Apparatus](#)
- [Training Bulletin 096 - Wildland Fire Fighting Protective Clothing](#)
- [Training Bulletin 101 - Standardized Emergency Management System](#)
- [Training Bulletin 106 – LCES](#)
- [Training Bulletin 151 - Progressive Hose Lay and the Smokey Pack Lightweight Hose System](#)
- [Training Bulletin 155 - Wildland Urban Interface Structure Protection](#)
- [Training Bulletin 190 - Brush Tools And Handline Construction](#)
- [Departmental Bulletin 24-15 - Brush Fire Operations – 2024](#)
- [Departmental Bulletin 15-11 - Risk Management Policy and Firefighter Emergency/Mayday Procedures](#)
- [Departmental Bulletin 03-15 - Fire-Danger Rating - The Burning Index \(BI\)](#)
- [Departmental Bulletin 03-24 - No Parking Priority Enforcement Program](#)
- [Departmental Bulletin 08-18 - Pre-Planning for Selection of Strike Teams](#)
- [Departmental Bulletin 03-19 - Augmentation of Department Resources on High-Hazard Burning Index Days](#)
- [Manual of Operations 1/4-09.70 Brush Clearance Unit](#)
- [Manual of Operations 2/3-10.24 First Alarm Assignment](#)
- [Manual of Operations 9/3-18.00 Brush Clearance Program](#)
- [Manual of Operations 11/1-28.85 Station Responsibility](#)
- [Manual of Operations 11/5-18.00 Brush; Grass and Vegetation \(Divisions 21 & 25\)](#)
- [Manual of Operations 12/8-00.00 Bush Inventory Program](#)
- [2022 NWCG Incident Response Pocket Guide \(IRPG\)](#)
- [2025 NWCG Incident Response Pocket Guide \(IRPG\)](#)
- [2022 Field Operations Guide \(FOG\) ICS 420-1](#)

• [2024 RT-130 Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher\](#)

- LAFD Wildland Operational Plans
- LAFD Response Agreements
- 2008 Maximum Commitment Plan

• [ICS 206 WF, Medical Plan](#)

- FIREScope - Wildland Urban Interface Structure Defense
- FIREScope - MACS 408 Drawdown Considerations for Fire Agencies
- FIREScope - MACS 410-2 Resource Designation System

## GLOSSARY

AARR	After-Action Review Report
AGL	Above Ground Level
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALS	Advanced Life Support
AOBD	Air Operations Branch Director
AREP	Agency Representatives
ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
BI	Burning Index
BP	Brush Patrol
Cal OES	California Governor's Office of Emergency Services
CFAA	California Fire Assistance Agreement
CICCS	California Incident Command Certification System
CLO	Community Liaison Officer
CM	Command
DDC	Deputy Department Commander
DOA	Delegation of Authority
DOC	Department Operations Center
DOSC	Deputy Operations Section Chief
DOT	Department of Transportation
DZ	Dozer
EMD	Emergency Management Department
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FIMT	Field Incident Management Team
FIREScope	Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies

FIRIS	Fire Integrated Real-Time Intelligence System Program
FMAG	Fire Management Assistance Grant
FSRI	Fire Safety Research Institute
FTA	Fire Traffic Area
GPM	Gallons Per Minute
GSD	General Services Department
HLCO	Helicopter Coordinator
IA	Initial Attack
IAP	Incident Action Plan
IC	Incident Commander
ICP	Incident Command Post
IMT	Incident Management Team
IROC	Interagency Resource Ordering Capability
ICS	Incident Command System
LAC	Los Angeles County Fire Department
LF	Light Force
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
LAFD	Los Angeles City Fire Department
MCAD	Mobile Computer Aided Dispatch
MFC	Metropolitan Fire Communications
MRE	Meals Ready to Eat
MMA	Master Mutual Aid
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NSW	National Weather Service
NWCG	National Wildland Coordinating Group
ORC	Orange County Fire Authority
OODA	Observe, Orient, Decide, Act
OSC	Operations Section Chief
PCH	Pacific Coast Highway
PDS	Particularly dangerous situation
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PSO	Public Safety Officer
QRF	Quick Response Force
RA	Rescue Ambulance
S&M	Supply and Maintenance
SPC	Storm Prediction Center
STAM	Staging Area Manager
TIER	Take Initiative Engage and Report
TOR	Torrance Fire Department

TRF	Temporary Flight Restriction
UAS	Unmanned Aircraft System
UC	Unified Command
VEOCI	Virtual Emergency Operations Center
VHF	Very High Frequency
VHFHSZ	Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones
VNC	Ventura County
WEA	Wireless Emergency Alerts
WUI	Wildland-Urban Interface