

Wildfires in Southern California: January 8, 2025

Thousands flee, homes destroyed as several Southern California wildfires rage out of control

Firefighters in California are battling several wildfires tearing across the Los Angeles area, as wind-whipped flames destroy homes and businesses. Governor Gavin Newsom, who was on the ground Tuesday, has declared a state of emergency.

The Palisades Fire has exploded to 3,000 acres near Los Angeles' Pacific Palisades neighborhood. Residents trying to flee the inferno created a traffic jam that kept people from evacuating. Many left their cars on foot in their desperate effort to escape flames. The blocked roads kept emergency vehicles from getting through, according to The Associated Press.

A bulldozer was brought in to push abandoned cars out of the way.

Pacific Palisades resident Kelsey Trainor told the AP the only road out of her neighborhood was blocked.

By Tuesday evening the flames had spread into neighboring Malibu where several burn injuries have been reported.

Pacific Palisades is located about 10 miles from Malibu, where the Franklin Fire burned more than 4,000 acres, including several homes, after erupting during similar windy conditions in December. Video and photos show widespread destruction of homes and businesses along the Pacific Coast Highway.

Officials didn't give an estimate of structures damaged or destroyed, but Gov. Gavin Newsom, who visited the scene, said many homes had burned. About 30,000 residents were under evacuation orders and more than 13,000 structures were under threat.

As firefighters continue battling the ballooning inferno in Pacific Palisades Tuesday, three additional wildfires broke out to the north of Los Angeles near Pasadena and Altadena forcing thousands more to evacuate. The second largest, the Eaton Fire, has ripped across 1,000 acres, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) who added they're working to slow the spread of flames under "extreme conditions."

"The combination of low humidity, dry fuels, and shifting winds has heightened the potential for spot fires and rapid expansion. Residents are urged to remain alert and follow instructions from local authorities as the situation evolves," the alert says.

Flames from a second fire that broke out Tuesday evening near a nature preserve in the inland foothills northeast of LA spread so quickly staff at a senior living center had to push dozens of residents in wheelchairs and hospital beds down the street to a parking lot, the AP reported. The Eaton Fire began 6:23 p.m. Tuesday and has burned over 1,000 acres to far east of Altadena, California and northeast of Pasadena.

A third wildfire, the Hurst Fire started around 10:30 p.m. and quickly spread to 500 acres overnight, prompting evacuations in Sylmar, a San Fernando Valley community in the northernmost area of Los Angeles. The fire is threatening San Fernando and Newhall with the Governor's office saying the Hurst Fire has prompted evacuation orders for more than 44,000 people and evacuation warnings for 27,000, with 40,000 structures threatened, according to KTLA.

The causes of all three fires are under investigation.

"This is pretty much the worst possible scenario for a firefight," David Ortiz of the LAFD said, according to KGET. Ortiz added, calling the Palisades Fire a blowtorch and urging residents to follow orders if asked to leave. "Do not stand in the way of this fire," he said.

Wind gusts of 30 to 50 mph have the ability to carry embers miles away from the wildfires, which can potentially spark new ones, putting lives and property at significant risk.

The dire situation prompted the Los Angeles Fire Department to take the rare step of putting out a plea for off-duty firefighters to help. It was too windy for firefighting aircraft to fly, further hampering the fight.

Gov. Newsom posted on X early Wednesday that California had deployed more than 1,400 firefighting personnel to combat the blazes. "Emergency officials, firefighters, and first responders are all hands on deck through the night to do everything possible to protect lives," Newsom said.

Los Angeles and Ventura counties are under a rare, "particularly dangerous situation" red flag warning, the most dire warning issued by the National Weather Service, for a high risk for dangerous fire weather conditions Tuesday afternoon until Wednesday afternoon. Widespread damaging winds and low relative humidity will produce critical to extremely critical fire weather in Southern California through Thursday with fire starts to rapidly grow in size with extreme fire behavior, the NWS warned.

"Wind gusts are expected to peak at 50-70 mph across portions of Southern California, with localized gusts of up to 80 mph," according to AccuWeather Meteorologist Gwen Fieweger. This would be the case for communities like Santa Clarita and Riverside. An AccuWeather Local StormMax™ of 100 mph is most likely in the mountains.

Tuesday evening, the Hollywood Burbank Airport gusted to 63 mph while Ontario International Airport gusted to 58 mph. Winds gusts in the mountains above 2,500 feet have ranged from 65 mph to 90 mph as Tuesday night.

Although the past two winters of epic rain and snow helped pull California out of drought, the pendulum has swung back with drought in much of Southern California climbing to moderate in December, including most of Los Angeles County,

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.

which had been drought-free since March 2023. Vegetation is drier than normal across the region and more prone to fire starts and spread, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Around 300,000 customers were without power as of Wednesday morning, according to PowerOutage.us. Power shutoffs are possible as Southern California's energy providers try to prevent damaged infrastructure from starting blazes. More than 400,000 of Southern California Edison's 5 million customers may have their power shut off in the coming days via scheduled outages, according to the utility's website.

Winds are expected to gradually subside on Thursday as the storm moves away from Southern California, AccuWeather forecasters say.

Source: <https://www.accuweather.com/en/weather-news/palisades-fire-in-california-rages-out-of-control/1731028>

To Get Help

California

- United Way 2-1-1: Dial 2-1-1 or visit: <https://www.211ca.org>
- American Red Cross of Northern California: 916.993.7070 or visit: <https://www.redcross.org/local/california/northern-california-coastal.html>
- American Red Cross of Southern California: (858) 309-1200 or visit <https://www.redcross.org/local/california/southern-california.html>
- Office of Emergency Management: 916.657.9494 or visit: <http://www.caloes.ca.gov/home>

Road Conditions

California Department of Transportation

- <https://dot.ca.gov/>

Power Outage

To check your specific area, please click this link: <https://poweroutage.us/>

California

- PG&E: 800.743.5000: <https://www.pge.com/>
- Southern California Edison: 1-800-611-1911: <https://www.sce.com/>

Shelters

<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/find-an-open-shelter.html>

Airport Closures

Passengers are urged to not come to the local airport unless your flight has been confirmed. If your flight was canceled, please call your airline's customer service telephone number or rebook through your airline's website.

Flight delay information: <http://www.flightstats.com/go/Home/home.do>

Another option: <https://www.flightaware.com/miserymap/>

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.

Crisis Portal

www.guidanceresources.com/crisis

The GuidanceResources(r) Online crisis portal offers immediate, direct access to online tools and information.

- * No login or registration required
- * Access the site's most relevant and popular articles on disaster, grief, trauma and other relevant topics

Extra Resources

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection: CALFIRE

<https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents>

Frontline Wildfire Defense

Live California Fire Map and Tracker

<https://www.frontlinewildfire.com/california-wildfire-map/>

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.