



PATHWAYS TO RECOVERY  
IN THE AFTERMATH OF DISASTER

# Lessons Learned from the California Wildfire Response

#PrepSummit25

San Antonio, TX  
April 29-May 2, 2025



## **Moderator**

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## **Panelists**

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# San Diego 2007 Wildfire



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[SANDIEGOCOUNTY.GOV/HHSA](http://SANDIEGOCOUNTY.GOV/HHSA)



# San Diego 2007 Wildfire



- Over 12 Fires burned during the Emergency
- Over 15 % of the County of San Diego - 400,000 Acres



# Overview



Fire Name	Date Started	Location	Acres	Homes Destroyed	Other Structures Destroyed	Injuries	Deaths
Harris	10/21/2007	South East County	85,000	111	88	37	5
Witch Creek	10/21/2007	NorthEast County and City of San Diego	197,990	911	205	28	2
Rice Canyon	10/22/2007	Fallbrook	9,000	206	42	3	0
Poomacha	10/23/2007	North East County Merged with Witch on 10/26/2007	42,000	78	19	18	0
Horno	10/23/2007	Camp Pendleton	21,084	0	0	1	0
TOTAL			355,074	1,306	354	87	7

•Source: WebEOC, PreHospital MICN data, Medical Examiner Data



LIVE WELL  
SAN DIEGO



# 2007 San Diego Wildfire Statistics

- Land/Infrastructure Burned
  - 370,000 acres
  - 1,700 homes and structures
- Evacuated
  - 2,200 Medical patients
- Displaced
  - 515,000 people evacuated
- Sheltered
  - 20,000 people
  - 2,000 horses, 2 zebras, 2 packs of wolves, 1 cheetah, and 1 python sheltered
- \$ 2+ billion in local economic damages



Signonsandiego.com

# Response : County of San Diego



- Operational Area Emergency Operation Center (EOC) activated Sunday, October 21 at Level III
  - Coordinated requests for medical needs, PHN interaction with American Red Cross (ARC), donations, etc...
- The EMS DOC (now known as the Medical Operations Center) and HHSA DOC were also activated.
- Multiple burn patients were identified.
- San Diego County EMS activated Annex D to enable the system to absorb more burn patients.
- Ongoing efforts with City, County, and other community partners to coordinate Local Assistance Centers (LACs) that served 2,300 people.







# Response : Clinics

- Most Council of Community Health Clinics (CCHCs) remained open
  - 26 Clinics closed doors
- Served patients on a walk-in basis, backfilled for closed clinics, Sheltered and treated fire victims
- Activated mobile clinics, extended hours
- House calls to rural and homebound patients
- Stored vaccines at home
- Provided on-site childcare for staff
- Coordinated with relief agencies for meds
- Public information outreach

Slide Courtesy of: Kelly Cheffet

# Mass Care & Shelter



Max of 52 Shelters

# Medical Reserve Corps

- In 2007 Fire Response:
  - 66 members deployed:
    - 48 Nurses
    - 15 Physicians
    - 1 Nurse Practitioner
    - 1 Physician Assistant
    - 1 Respiratory Therapist





# Lessons Learned

- Medical Operations Center needs the ability to expand
- We can not be effective without GIS
- Community Partners belong in our Operations Centers
- Planning for AFN population in shelters is crucial
- Don't forget about Pharmacy teams in shelters
- Have masks, air quality matters, a lot
- Documentation is essential
- Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) became a thing



Photo credit: Union Tribune

## We will burn again!



# January 2025 LA Fires

## Public Health: Readiness, Response and Recovery

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National Weather Service  
Los Angeles/Oxnard, CA

Red Flag Warning  
**Particularly Dangerous  
Situation (PDS)**



The NWS issues a PDS Red Flag Warning for extremely rare and dangerous fire weather conditions, that have previously led to large and deadly wildfires. What does this mean?

High risk of...	Criteria
❖ Extreme fire behavior and very rapid growth	❖ Extremely low humidity
❖ Many downed trees	❖ Damaging winds
❖ Power outages and Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS)	❖ Very dry vegetation
	❖ Issued rarely, only for most extreme events

@NWSLosAngeles  
[www.weather.gov/losangeles](http://www.weather.gov/losangeles)

- NWS issued the highest Red Flag Warning for most of LA County for critical fire conditions
- PHEP Program notified department leadership and staff of conditions and advised to prepare



## DME AND IN-HOME SERVICE PROVIDERS

The National Weather Service has issued a Red Flag Warning for most of Los Angeles County for Tuesday and Wednesday of this week, including the potential for extreme fire conditions, with very strong winds and low humidity. These conditions may lead to downed trees, power outages, and possibly wildfires. It is anticipated that the high winds and low humidity will continue through the end of this week.

You have been identified as a provider of medical equipment or services for individuals in the affected area. Public Health recommends that you help your patients prepare for fires and the possibility of losing power or needing to evacuate.

Please advise your clients to:

- Fully charge any medical devices and backup batteries
- Order any needed backup supplies or medications that may be running low, especially oxygen
- If available, sign up for power outage alert notifications with their power company
- Have a "go" kit with needed supplies and an evacuation plan should they have to leave quickly
- Call 911 if they have a medical emergency

Information and resources can be found at [publichealth.lacounty.gov/eprp](https://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eprp) for emergency preparedness and response program. Again, that's [publichealth.lacounty.gov/eprp](https://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eprp)

This concludes the message from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

## HEALTHCARE FACILITIES AND PROVIDERS

Subject: Extreme Fire Conditions – Widespread Damaging Winds and Low Relative Humidity Tuesday – Friday (Jan 7 – 10)

Dear Healthcare Facilities and Providers:

Tomorrow (Tuesday), January 7 through Friday, January 10, we will experience a widespread Red Flag event across Los Angeles County. The National Weather Service notes the period of greatest concern will be Tuesday afternoon through Wednesday afternoon. Widespread North/Northeast gusts 50-80 mph and isolated wind gusts up to 80-100 mph in the mountains and foothills will likely lead to downed trees and power outages and may lead to wildfires.

The National Weather Service has forecast strong winds in these areas: Eastern San Fernando Valley, Eastern Santa Monica Mountains Recreational Area, Interstate 5 Corridor, San Gabriel Valley, Santa Clarita Valley, and Western San Fernando Valley.

Please use this opportunity to be sure that your facility has reviewed its plans for power disruption and that your backup generators are functional and ready to go. Please also ensure that staff at your facilities are aware of these potential conditions and are prepared for the possibility of a power outage or an evacuation.

Please also be aware that patients that depend on electrical power for durable medical equipment may report to healthcare facilities for assistance if a power shutoff occurs.

For impacted communities, some power companies provide community resource centers or other assistance.

Southern CA Edison provides updated information about power outages and community resources here: <https://www.sce.com/outage-center/check-outage-status>

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power can be contacted here: <https://www.ladwpnews.com/ask-question/>

For additional resources, please visit [ready.lacounty.gov/wind/](https://ready.lacounty.gov/wind/) for information about emergency preparedness for high winds and red flag conditions, and [ready.lacounty.gov/fire/](https://ready.lacounty.gov/fire/) to prepare for wildfires.

# Fires Erupt



# Fires Erupt



Source: Ethan Swope, AP



## EVACUATION TERMINOLOGY in Los Angeles County



### Evacuation Warning

Potential threat to life and/or property. Leave now if you or someone in your household require more time to evacuate or have pets or livestock.



### Evacuation Order

Immediate threat to life and property. This is a lawful order to leave now. The area is lawfully closed to public access. You are in danger if you stay.



### Shelter In Place

Go indoors. Shut and lock doors & windows. Prepare to self-sustain until further notice and/or contacted by emergency personnel for additional direction.



Ready LA County

[Ready.Lacounty.gov](https://Ready.Lacounty.gov)

- The Health Officer declared a Local Health Emergency due to Critical Fire Events and Windstorm Conditions
- Activated ICS to ensure swift and coordinated response actions
- Deployed agency reps to incident command posts and emergency operation centers for situational awareness and resource requests
- Dispatched environmental health staff to evacuation shelters and fire base camps to ensure food safety and sanitary conditions

- Winds blew wildfire smoke across Los Angeles, leading to hazardous air quality, ash and debris, and disrupted essential health services
- Issued Smoke Advisories due to unhealthy air quality
- Urged the public to avoid unnecessary outdoor exposure and to limit physical exertion, especially the vulnerable
- Began distributing N95s, PPE and educational materials at evacuation shelters and community sites impacted by the fires

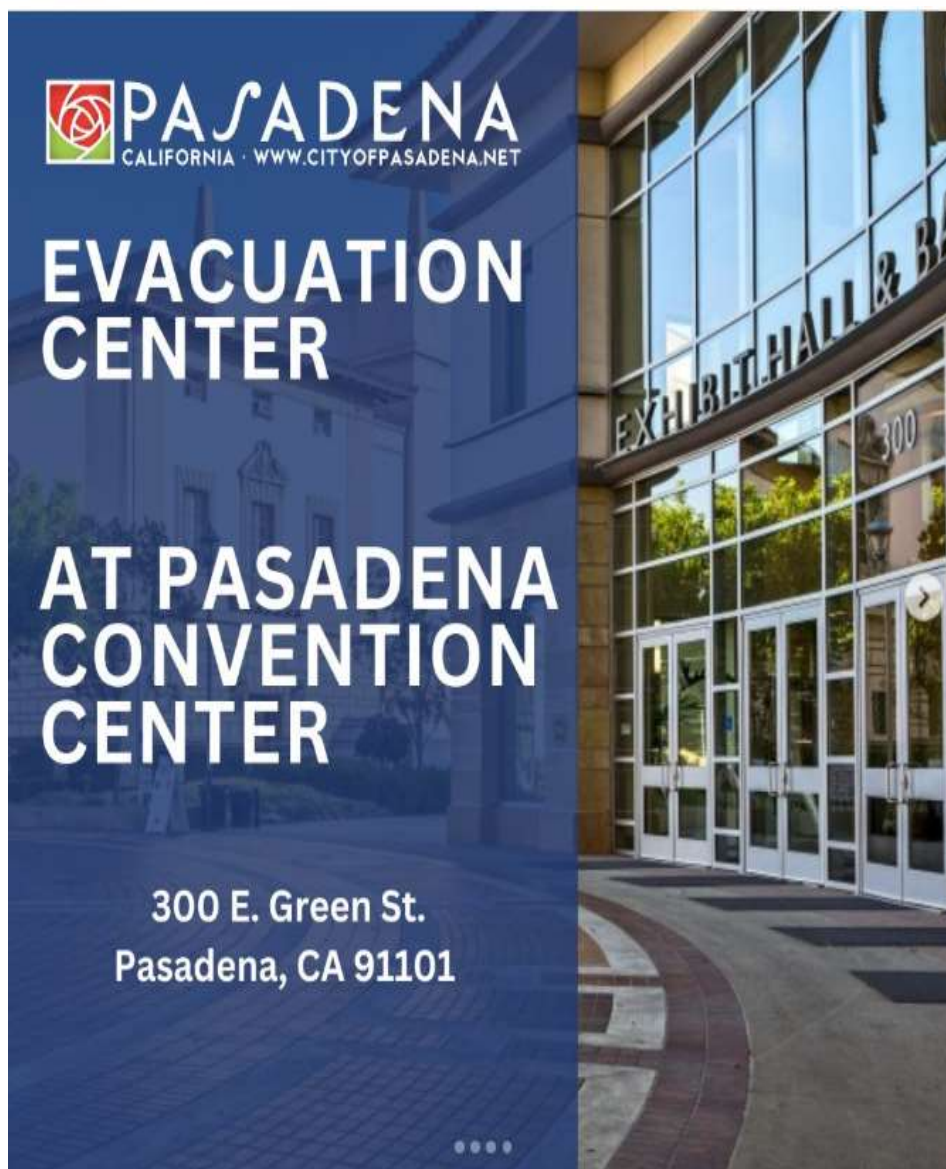


# Smoke Impacts



# Smoke Impacts





- Dispatched medical staff to evacuation center who assisted 1,000+ evacuees with first aid needs, triage for medical transport, medication supply, and referrals to DPH Telehealth, healthcare providers, and pharmacies
- Deployed nursing staff to support 2,500+ persons at ARC shelters. Also helped with disease prevention and vaccination services.



# Public Health Response



Source: Ethan Swope, AP

- Posted information and materials to website dedicated to Wildfire, including:
  - Returning to areas impacted by wildfires
  - Workplace health and safety
  - Resources for schools

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Wildfire/>





# Fire Impacts





# Fire Impacts



# Fire Impacts





# Fire Impacts

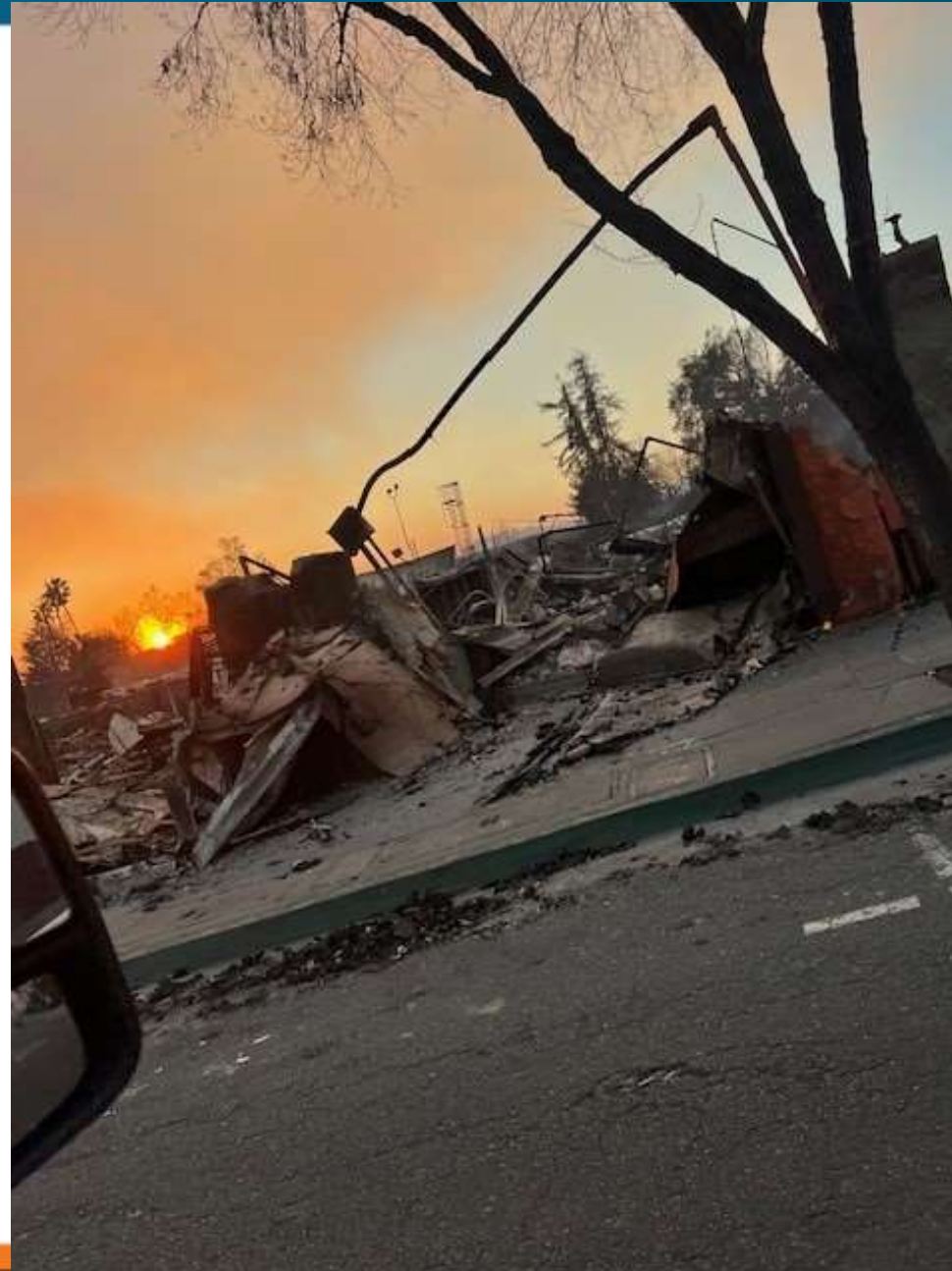




# Fire Impacts



# Fire Impacts





# Fire Impacts





- The fires were declared fully contained by January 31<sup>st</sup>
- The ten fires collectively:
  - Killed 30 persons
  - Burned nearly 40,000 acres
  - Destroyed or severely damaged almost 20,000 homes and businesses
- Recovery is ongoing
- Thousands were displaced

- FEMA Major Disaster Declaration
  - Individual Assistance Applications: 274,186
  - Approved Individuals and Households Program: \$120,889,022
  - Approved Housing Assistance: \$33,835,135
  - Households Still Receiving Temporary Sheltering Assistance: 66
  - Households Still Receiving Rental Assistance: 2,777
- Disaster Recovery Center is still open has served almost 27,000 persons to date

- Distributed re-entry kits with Tyvek suits, goggles, masks, gloves, booties
- Provided PPE and info at recovery centers, community events, and sites to residents re-entering burn areas
- Distributed air purifiers to the affected public, community partners, and County departments





- Attended Town Halls/Community Meetings to provide PPE, educational materials, and environmental health consultation
- Issued Health Officer Orders
  - Safe Removal, Transport and Disposal of Fire Debris
  - Prohibition of Use of Power Air Blowers/Leaf Blowers that re-aerosolize ash
- EH Processed more than 500 community complaints related to debris removal and leaf blower use concerns

- Deployed more than 300 staff across affected areas
  - Support sheltering operations
  - Address environmental hazards
  - Respond to public health concerns
- Inspected nearly 2,000 food facilities impacted by closures, fire damage, and power outages to ensure food safety
- Assessed nearly 1,200 additional regulated businesses to support safe cleanup and reopening

- Issued Windblown Dust and Air Advisories and Ocean Water Advisories
- Developed factsheets:
  - Workers' rights
  - Debris clean-up safety
  - Health Officer Orders
- Conducted outreach to day laborers, domestic workers, and gardeners hired for cleanup



- Trained 400+ community health workers to provide health information, promote safety precautions, address complaints, and refer residents to resources
- Trained 45 worker organizations on wildfire smoke safety and workers' rights during active wildfires & recovery
- Conducted > 800 outreaches, reaching over 500+ workers and 20 employers in the affected areas

# Public Health Recovery



- Heading the Health and Social Services Task Force and participating in the Debris Removal Task Force
- Continuing to support Disaster Recovery Centers for public health and environmental issues
- Continuing to support various community and educational partner needs

- Mission: To help individuals who have been displaced or otherwise adversely impacted by the wildfires access health and social services, including people who live, work, and/or go to school in the affected communities.
- Created four subcommittees focused on:
  - Environmental Health Impacts
  - Access to Care
  - Benefits & Social Services
  - Vulnerable Populations



## Task Force Priorities

- Ensure residents impacted by wildfires are and remain connected to health and social services
- Ensure equitable access to recovery resources including physical, social, and emotional well-being resources
- Leverage and sustain strategic and responsive community partnerships/support networks to address the diverse health and social service needs of the affected communities

- Provided messaging and guidance to support debris removal in areas that were impacted
- Provided information on soil testing for properties and schools
- Created a post-fire Air, Soil, and Water Assessment public-facing dashboard at:  
[http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/wildfire/post\\_fire\\_assessment\\_plan.htm](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/wildfire/post_fire_assessment_plan.htm)
- Providing blood lead level testing at community events

- Conducted a Community Rapid Needs Assessment and developing an Agency and Public Resource Guide based on results
- Developing Benefits and Social Services Resource Guide
- Provided guidance for schools on public health impacts of returning to campuses
- Developed a Mental Health Resource Guide and offering Psychological First Aid Train the Trainer classes to County staff and trusted community partners



- Enormous ongoing environmental impacts
- Disproportionate impact on vulnerable persons
  - Mobility and sensory impaired, chronic conditions
  - Socially isolated
  - Persons experiencing homelessness
- Persons with DAFN will come to evacuation sites and shelters in need of assistance and relocation
- Recovery is complex and expected to take years
  - Massive debris clean-up and disposal
  - Rebuilding in face of growing threat, rising costs and shrinking insurance market

# Initial PHEP Capabilities Implemented



<b>Capability 1: Community Preparedness</b>	<b>Capability 6: Information Sharing</b>	<b>Capability 11: Nonpharmaceutical Interventions</b>
<b>Capability 2: Community Recovery</b>	<b>Capability 7: Mass Care</b>	<b>Capability 12: PH Laboratory Testing</b>
<b>Capability 3: Emergency Ops Coordination</b>	<b>Capability 8: MCM Dispensing &amp; Administration</b>	<b>Capability 13: PH Surveillance &amp; Epi Investigation</b>
<b>Capability 4: Emergency Public Info &amp; Warning</b>	<b>Capability 9: MCM Management &amp; Distribution</b>	<b>Capability 14: Responder Safety &amp; Health</b>
<b>Capability 5: Fatality Management</b>	<b>Capability 10: Medical Surge</b>	<b>Capability 15: Volunteer Management</b>

# Initial HPP Capabilities Implemented



**Capability 1: Foundation for Health Care and Medical Readiness**

**Capability 2: Health Care and Medical Response Coordination**

**Capability 3: Continuity of Health Care Service Delivery**

**Capability 4: Medical Surge**



# Acknowledgements



American Red Cross  
ASPR emPOWER Program  
California Office of Emergency Services, CDPH  
Center for Preparedness and Response  
CDC Office of Readiness & Response, Agency for  
Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
Direct Relief  
Emergency Network Los Angeles  
FEMA  
LA City Emergency Management Department  
LA City Fire Department  
LA City Police Department  
LA County EMS Agency  
LA County Fire Department  
LA County Department of Mental Health  
LA County Public Works Department  
LA County Sheriff's Department  
National Weather Service  
Pasadena Fire Department  
Pasadena Police Department  
Pasadena Public Health Department  
World Central Kitchen

**Thank you!**

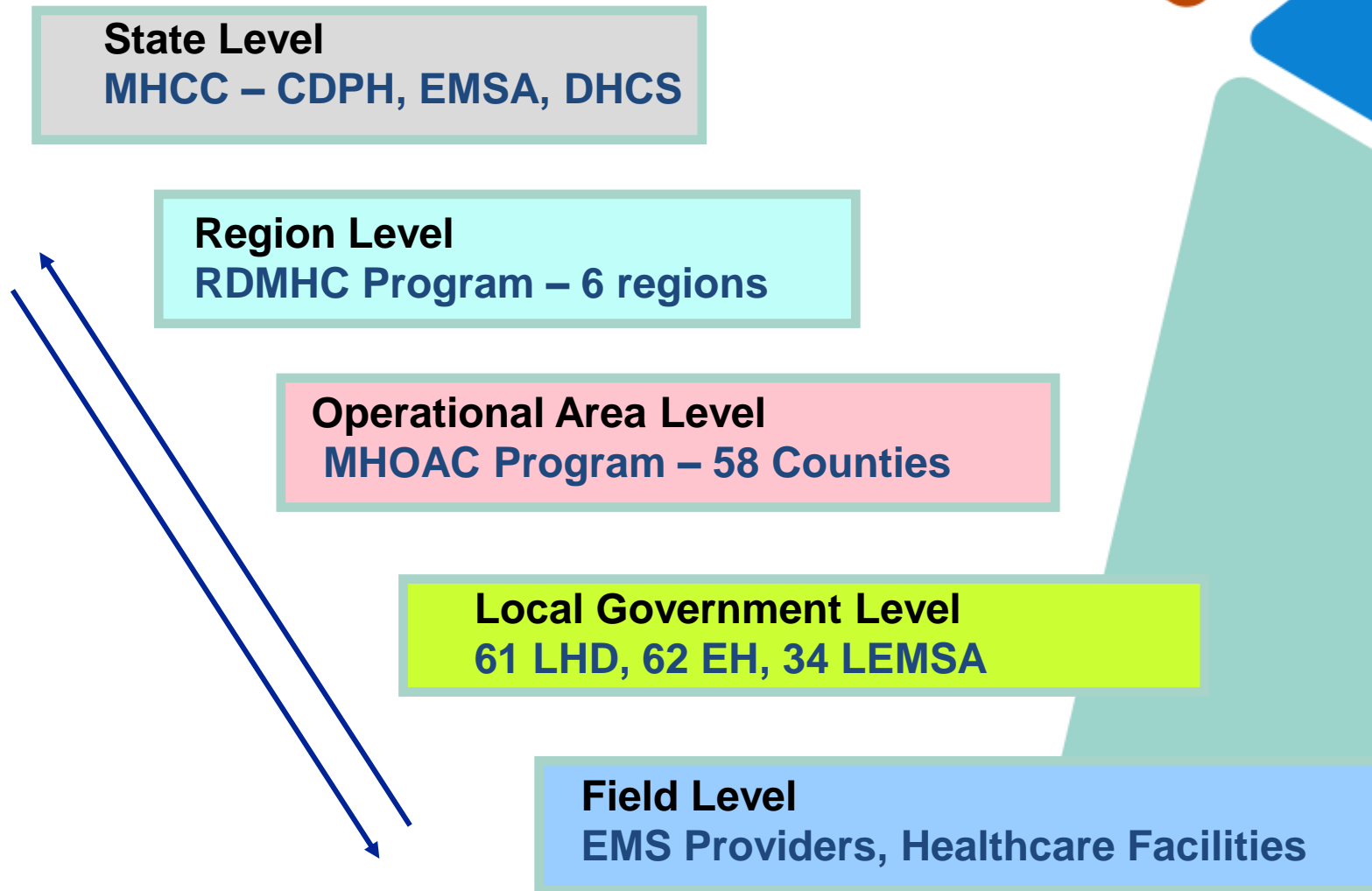




# LA Wildfire Response & Recovery

Tricia Blocher  
Deputy Director  
California Department of Public Health  
Center for Preparedness and Response

# SEMS/NIMS and the Public Health and Medical System in California





# Pre-Incident Conditions

- Unusually dry December in Southern California
- Santa Ana (dry, desert wind) conditions
- Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS)



# January 7, 2025

- 10:30 AM – Reports of a rapidly growing fire (**Palisades Fire**) in Palisades, CA..
  - Grew from 10 to >10,000 acres in less than 24 hours..
- 6:42 PM – Reports of a wind-driven wildfire (**Eaton Fire**) breaking out in the hills just outside the cities of Pasadena and Altadena.
  - Grew from 1,000 to >10,000 acres in less than 12 hours.
- Reports of emergent LTC facility evacuations.
- Three (3) more fires broke out in the area over the next 24 hours: **Sunset Fire**, **Hurst Fire**, and **Lidia Fire**.





# State-level Public Health and Medical Response

## Primary Objective – Support, coordinate, and determine immediate needs

- CDPH activated the Medical and Health Coordination Center (MHCC) on January 8, 2025.
- Cal OES activated the State Operations Center (SOC) on January 8, 2025. CDPH and EMSA immediately sent Agency Reps to represent ESF-8, Health and Medical.
- MHCC initiated outreach to LA county through the Region I Regional Disaster Medical Health Specialist for immediate resource needs and situation updates.



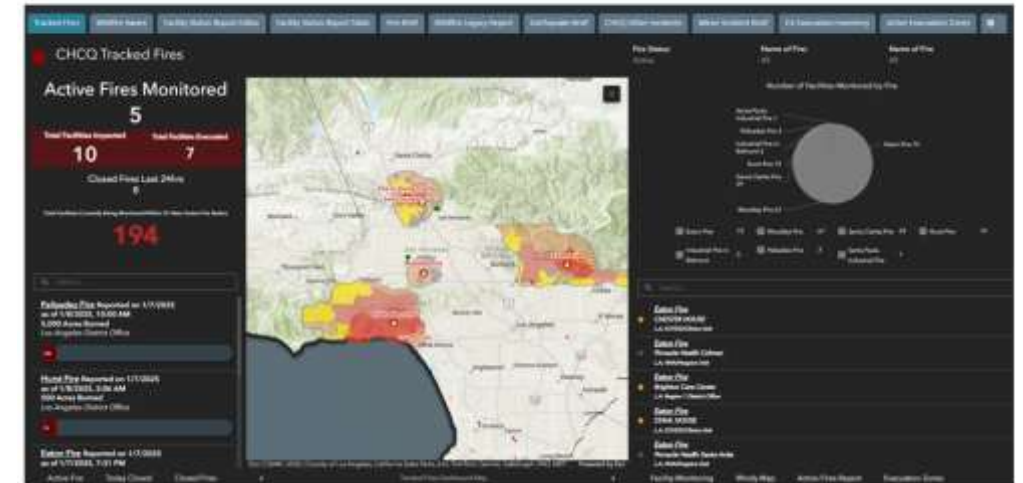
Medical Health Coordination Center



# Public Health and Medical Actions

- Activated the CDPH Licensing and Certification field staff to coordinate HCF and patient status in CDPH licensed facilities.
- GIS dashboard to visualize LTC facilities and evacuated patient status in real time.
- Cal EMSA activated 2 Medical Assistance Teams (Cal MAT) and 2 ambulance strike teams to assist LA county with patient movement and medical care.
- Within 24-hours, CDPH posted evacuated HCF information on the public website to assist families looking for a loved one.

CHCQ All Hazards Dashboard (Experience)



## Current Facility Evacuations

Know and Understand Natural Disasters

Earthquakes

Wildfires

Floods

Extreme Heat

Extreme Cold

Power Outage

Build a Family Disaster Kit

Situational Awareness Tool

Statewide Medical and Health Exercise

EPO Learning Center

Guidance Documents

## Wildfires 2025

Wildfires can lead to emergency evacuations and it's important to follow your local officials when evacuations are ordered. If you're looking for current evacuation information, monitor local news outlets (television, radio, etc.) as well as official social media sites for emergency responders (sheriff, police, fire). Be sure to follow the directions of safety personnel to ensure your safety and the safety of first responders. If you are ordered to evacuate your home or the area, do so immediately. Time is crucial!

The table below contains the latest health facility evacuation information:

Evacuated Facility	Facility Type	Total Number of Patients/Residents	Relocation Facility
Brighton Care Center	Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF)	Unknown	TBD
Camelia Gardens Care Center	SNF	115	TBD
Chester House	Intermediate Care Facility/Intermediate Care Facility for the Developmentally Disabled-Habilitative (ICF/DDH)	4	Brown House Sister Facility

# Immediate med/health needs identified

- Emergently evacuated LTC facilities - 20 in total; over 800 medically fragile residents evac in <12 hours.
- Some LTC facilities completely/partially destroyed.
- Shelters in Pasadena overwhelmed with medically fragile patients.
- Medical care, cots, and medical supplies needed in the shelters.





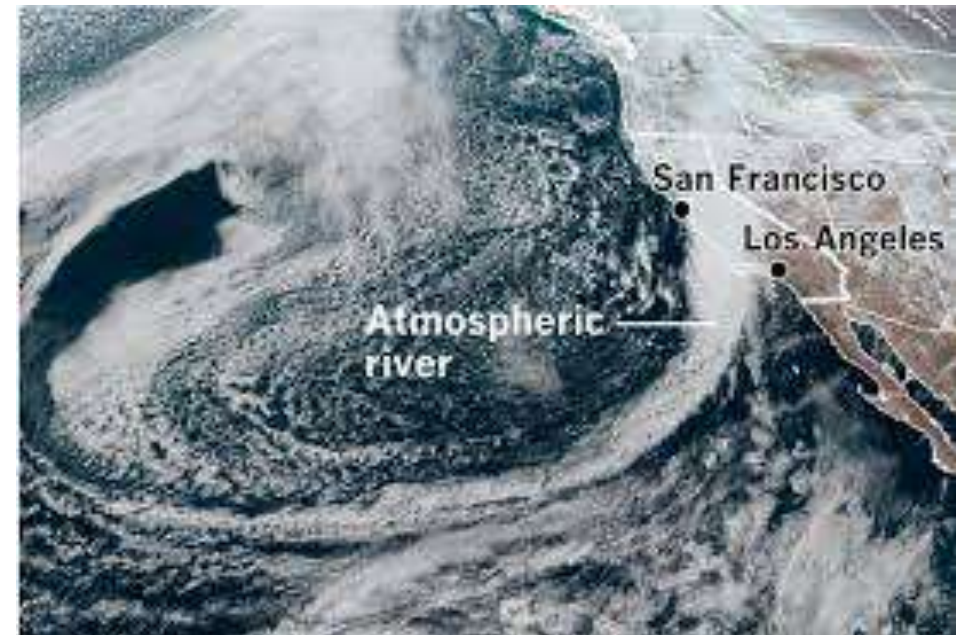
# Other urgent med/health needs

- Health impacts to the region- smoke, ash, hazardous materials, fire debris in the ocean.
- Clean Up guidance and messaging
- Boil Water/Do not Drink notices for large communities in the area.
- Pharmacy and Prescription Access
- Mobile Health Clinics
- Norovirus outbreak in large shelter; deployed EISO and epi staff
- HCF waivers



# Compounding incidents

- PSPS events in 3 other counties
  - Monitor over 100 HCFs
  - 2 Facility evacuations and 9 on generator power
- Atmospheric River event starting Jan 31, 2025





# Behavioral Health Needs

- BH needs were identified early in the response
- Coordination with HHS-ASPR and LAC DMH to address identified needs and gaps
- ASPR will coordinate Train the Trainer courses of Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR) to increase capacity.

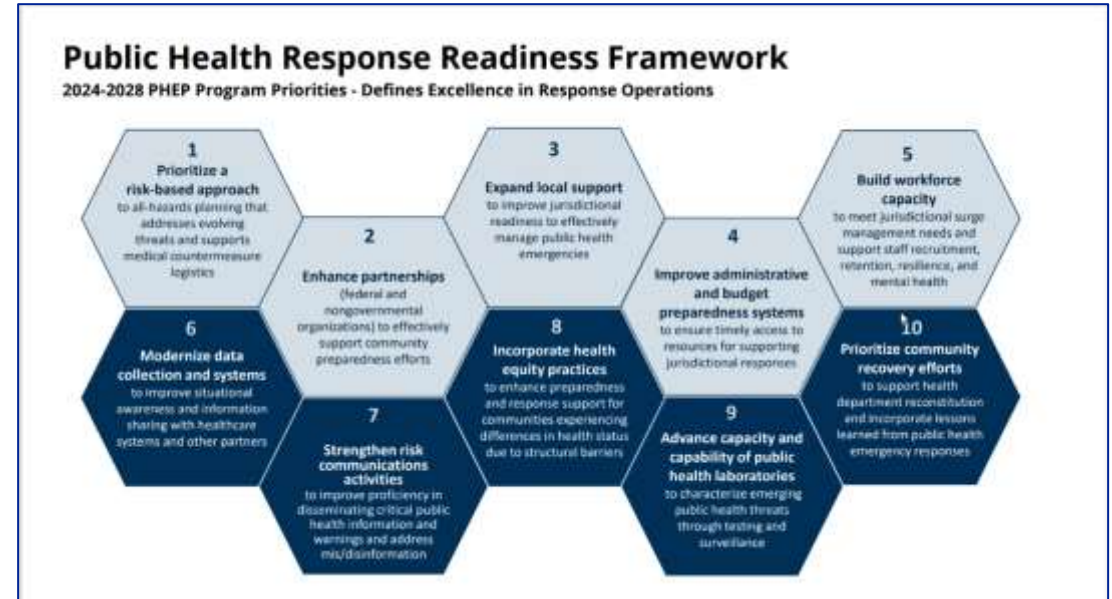


# Recovery

- Healthcare Facility re-population
- Technical Assistance to LACounty and Pasadena Public Health
  - Toxicologists, Vector Control, Environmental and Occupational Health, etc
- Coordination of relevant Fed & State agencies; multiple state and local taskforces
  - Water boards, toxic substances, vector control, etc.
- Staff Disaster Recovery Centers (e.g. Vital Records)
- CDPH staff deployed to JFO in Pasadena to support State and Federal Recovery Support Function #3 – Health & Social Services
  - Develop Recovery Needs Assessment and Support Strategies - documents that identify state and federal resources to fill local recovery gaps.

# Capabilities

- Need all capabilities!
- But need to innovate/expand
- Communication
- Trained and Skilled workforce
- Constant EOC Activations – little time for resilience and recovery
- Bigger, more frequent and more destructive – need to think differently.



## HPP Capabilities

Foundation for  
Health and Medical  
Readiness

Health Care and  
Medical Response  
Coordination

Continuity of Health  
Care Service  
Delivery

Medical Surge

# Questions

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