



County of Los Angeles

April 28, 2025

Dawyn R. Harrison
County Counsel

Board of Supervisors

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Supervisor, First District


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TO: SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER, Chair
SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS
SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL
SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH
SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN

FROM: DAWYN R. HARRISON 
County Counsel

RE: **After Action Report for the January 2025 Windstorm and
Critical Fire Events: First 90-Day Report Back
(01/28/25 Board Agenda; Item No. 10)**

Purpose of Memorandum

This memorandum responds to your Board's
January 28, 2025, motion directing the Office of the County Counsel
("County Counsel"):

- In consultation with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department ("LASD"), Los Angeles County Fire Department ("Fire"), and the Chief Executive Office's Office of Emergency Management ("CEO-OEM"), retain a consultant with subject matter expertise to review the evacuation policies and emergency alert notification systems utilized by the County of Los Angeles ("County") and its partners in responding to the Palisades and Eaton Fires;
- Review what the County, including LASD, Fire, and CEO-OEM, did in terms of the evacuation efforts; and



- Prepare and present a progress report back to the Board in writing in 90 days, and every 90 days thereafter, until the consultant has complete comprehensive review, subject to review by County Counsel.

This is the first 90-day report back due under the January 28, 2025, motion.

Background

The January 28, 2025, motion follows the catastrophic January windstorm and fire events ("January Windstorm and Fire Events") that resulted in the worst fire disaster in modern County history. Severe windstorms resulted in multiple wind-driven destructive fires, with the Eaton and Palisades Fires devastating communities and resulting in 30 confirmed deaths. Your Board ordered a review and assessment of existing emergency notification systems to understand what was done with respect to alerts and evacuations, and what the County should do moving forward. Your Board also ordered that this analysis and report be conducted by a third party to ensure independent review.

Progress to Date

On February 3, 2025, our office, after consulting with LASD, Fire and CEO-OEM, retained McChrystal Group to conduct an independent review of the evacuation policies and emergency alert notification systems utilized by the County and its partners in responding to the Palisades and Eaton Fires. McChrystal Group is led by retired four-star General Stanley McChrystal, former leader of the US military's Joint Special Operations Command. The consultant has extensive emergency management and disaster response experience, including with the September 2024 North Carolina hurricane.

McChrystal Group's work has begun in earnest, and Sheriff, Fire, and CEO-OEM have been fully engaged in this review, including by participating in interviews. At this initial 90-day juncture since the passing of the motion, McChrystal Group has begun and continues to undertake work to complete its independent after action review ("AAR") on alerts and evacuations for the January Windstorm and Fire Events. In coordination with our office, McChrystal Group engages with County departments to collect and review needed documents and information.

Data Collection

McChrystal Group started its data collection effort, given the collection, curation, synthesis, and interpretation of data is central to the AAR. McChrystal Group

engaged the County and key stakeholders to collect relevant data assets reflecting the events, alerts, communications, and environmental factors in the time leading up to and during the January Windstorm and Fire Events. Additionally, McChrystal Group employed its technical data acquisition capabilities to collect and process high volumes of publicly available information, including weather forecasts and data, official government updates/alerts/advisories, local and national media content, and other relevant information.

Interviews

McChrystal Group conducted 33 group and individual interviews with personnel who responded to the fires. McChrystal Group anticipates scheduling and conducting another 18 interviews. Departments and entities that have been interviewed or have interviews scheduled include Fire, Sheriff, CEO-OEM, County-wide Communications, National Weather Service Oxnard, U.S. Forest Service and Genasys Inc., the County's EVAC and ALERT system vendor. Interviews were requested of other third-parties who responded with and/or assisted the County in some manner during the Eaton and Palisades Fire, including departments within the cities of Los Angeles, Pasadena, and Sierra Madre, California Office of Emergency Services, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Federal Communications Commission.

Incident Timeline

Combining its intensive data collection efforts with information gathered from interviews, McChrystal Group is working on an incident timeline for the January Windstorm and Fire Events. The incident timeline will contain factual information related to alerts and evacuations, from fire start to when actual evacuation warnings and orders were issued and will contain publicly available and County data.

Community Listening Sessions

Finally, McChrystal Group has planned and scheduled six community listening sessions to gather feedback from residents on their experiences with emergency alerts and evacuations during the Eaton and Palisades Fires (collectively, "Community Listening Sessions"). This feedback is important for the AAR and the County, and will help inform recommendations for improving future emergency alert and evacuation procedures. Confirmed and/or completed dates for the three Community Listening Sessions for the Palisades Fire in Supervisorial District 3 are:

- April 7, 2025, in-person from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at Santa Monica College

- April 10, 2025, in-person from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at Topanga Community Center; and
- April 29, 2025, in-person from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., Malibu Public Library

Confirmed and/or completed dates for the three Community Listening Sessions for the Eaton Fire in Supervisorial District 5 are:

- April 26, 2025, in-person from 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at Pasadena Convention Center
- May 3, 2025, in-person from 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., First AME Church; and
- May 7, 2025, virtual from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

As part of the process for these Community Listening Sessions, residents from the Eaton and Palisades Fires can participate in a survey that will collect information about each resident's experience related to alerts, warnings, notifications, and evacuations, even if they decide not to participate in one of the sessions.

Conclusion

Once the work in the information collection phase is substantially completed, McChrystal Group will transition in the next 90 days to begin report drafting and compilation for the AAR. This concludes our first 90-day progress report. The next 90-day progress report will be delivered by no later than July 27, 2025.

DRH:TM:ec

c. Fesia A. Davenport
Chief Executive Officer

Edward Yen
Executive Officer
Board of Supervisors