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Analysis of the January 2025 Windstorm and Critical Fire Events

Beginning on January 7, 2025, the January 2025 Windstorm and Critical Fire Events resulted in multiple brush fires throughout LA County, including the Palisades and Eaton Fires, which burned for weeks before they were fully contained. The Palisades Fire burned 23,700 acres and was driven by gusts of over 80 miles per hour. The Palisades Fire took twelve lives, destroyed 6,831 structures, and damaged 973 structures. The Eaton Fire burned 14,021 acres and ravaged the Altadena community during the windstorm which experienced wind gusts of up to 100 miles per hour. The Eaton Fire took 17 lives, destroyed 9,418 structures and damaged 1,072 structures. These were the most destructive fires Los Angeles County (“County”) and our nation have seen in modern times.

As first responders fought the blaze, their first priority was to protect life through evacuations. County Departments worked together to constantly assess the trajectory of

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the fires, weather conditions, and topography to identify threatened areas to effectively fight the fires, ensure the safety of residents, and provide for structure defense where possible. While our first responders did an incredible job of fighting an unprecedented set of circumstances due to the hurricane force winds, communication issues, infrastructure challenges and other issues that made their jobs even more difficult, the public has many questions about the state of the communication and water infrastructure, including the procedures used for evacuations, firefighting processes and the decisions made regarding repopulation.

Prolonged drought, coupled with other effects of climate change, have created an environment of explosive brush fire development, making firefighting more difficult than ever. We increasingly see residential housing growth at the urban wild land interface which poses greater danger to firefighters and to the residents who live in proximity to the urban wildland interface.

Given these new realities and the attendant dangers, the County must prepare for a "new normal." The County needs to review multiple issues resulting from the January 2025 Windstorm and Critical Fire Events, and while it has already begun its after action review (AAR) of its evacuation policies and emergency alert notification systems, other issues still need to be reviewed and addressed by the County as part of a more comprehensive AAR. The Governor's Office has also commissioned an AAR for the January 2025 Windstorm and Critical Fire Events, which will focus on preparedness and the immediate response to the incident by the state and local agencies in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. Additionally, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal-OES) will begin its own comprehensive state-wide AAR for the January 2025 Windstorm and Critical Fire

Events, which will more broadly cover the longer response and recovery time frame of the incident. Cal-OES is looking to local agencies to complete their AARs so that it may inform Cal-OES' AAR, where appropriate. As such, the County needs to review those issues that are not included in any of the existing AARs, as it prepares for its "new normal", which include existing prevention regulations, and recovery and repopulation efforts and strategies. All entities must be involved and/or provide input in this review and planning process, including applicable County departments, local law enforcement agencies, fire departments, emergency management agencies, city, state and federal agencies involved in emergency response and recovery efforts, residents, city officials and community organizations.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct County Counsel, in consultation with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), Los Angeles County Fire Department (Fire), Department of Public Works (DPW), Department of Regional Planning (DRP), the Chief Executive Office (CEO), Department of Public Health (DPH) and Internal Services Department (ISD) to retain a consultant with subject matter expertise, to conduct an independent AAR of existing prevention regulations, and the recovery and repopulation from the January 2025 Windstorm and Critical Fire Events, and to identify best practices for recovery and repopulation procedures ("Recovery and Repopulation AAR").

The Recovery and Repopulation AAR will explore the following critical issues, how they were handled and what we can improve upon, including but not limited to:

1. Multi-jurisdictional coordination across services and related communications to the public for both the Eaton and Palisades Fires.
2. Multi-jurisdictional/agency coordination and best practices on Disaster Recovery

- Centers, debris removal and assistance for people experiencing homelessness.
3. Strategic communications during the fires and their aftermath between first responders, law enforcement, and municipal governments and the communities impacted by the fire.
 4. Implementation of a comprehensive donation intake system whereby public donations can be received and distributed to the appropriate entities as well as a system to direct potential volunteers.
 5. Community repopulation notification and procedures, including any conflicts amongst cooperating agencies, the implementation of access passes for residents, and effective communication of road closure status.
 6. Evaluation and expansion of existing evacuation shelter locations, shelter resources, and coordination with shelter partners, including the resources, access, and functional needs for seniors and the disability community during an emergency.
 7. Evaluation of the role of DPH, including the impact of the declaration of a local health emergency on response and recovery efforts, including the deployment and coordination of personal protective equipment by DPH post fires.

The consultant will work on the Recovery and Repopulation AAR with all County Departments (and County Departments are directed to work with the consultant), and other agencies involved in the January 2025 Windstorm and Critical Fire Events and their aftermath, including but not limited to County representatives from emergency response agencies, such as the LASD, Fire, CEO-Office of Emergency Management (CEO-OEM), including all relevant Disaster Management Area Coordinators, Animal

Care and Control, DPH, DPW, LA County Homelessness Initiative, County of Los Angeles Probation, Los Angeles County Department of Aging and Disabilities, Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services, DRP, Los Angeles County Emergency Medical Services Agency, as well as local police departments, the California Highway Patrol, California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal-OES), California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal-Fire), the California State Parks, Red Cross, as well as representatives from unincorporated Altadena and Santa Monica Mountains communities and the cities of Los Angeles, Malibu, Pasadena and Sierra Madre. County Counsel shall provide a progress report back to the Board in 90 days and every 90 days thereafter until such time as a final report is prepared and presented to the Board of Supervisors.

WE, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct County Counsel, in consultation with LASD, the Probation Department, Fire, DPW, DRP, and the CEO, to retain the same consultant with subject matter expertise, to perform an evaluation of these additional items:

1. Evacuation and safe housing strategies for:
 - a. Individuals in skilled nursing facilities, group homes, and senior living facilities;
 - b. Individuals in custody in County jails, juvenile halls, and camps, including those at custodial facilities operated by LASD and Probation;
 - c. Justice-involved populations housed via the Justice Care and Opportunities Department and step-down or supportive housing provided by community-based organizations either voluntarily or involuntarily, including those contracted with the Department of Youth Development.

- d. Children under the care of the Department of Children and Family Services.
2. Strategic communications and real-time updates during the fire/natural disasters involving individuals in custody in the County's jails, juvenile halls and camps, or step-down facilities for families and caregivers, and other key stakeholders, including the Board of Supervisors and the greater public.
3. The Los Angeles Regional Interoperable Communications System's (LA-RICS System) performance for interoperable public safety communications for County's first responders and for mutual aid.
4. The Woolsey Fire After Action Report and After-Action Plan to ascertain if additional recommendations should be implemented since the report was submitted to the Board.

WE, FURTHER MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the County through the LASD, Fire, CEO-OEM, and any other County department and labor leaders, where appropriate, in coordination with County Counsel, to engage, participate and collaborate on the Governor's Office AAR , following an agreed upon process as determined by County Counsel which will provide a review of the preparedness and initial response efforts to the January 2025 Windstorm and Critical Fire Events. County Counsel will prepare and present a progress report back to the Board in 90 days, and every 90 days thereafter until the Governor's AAR review is completed. The County departments will work with the Governor's consultant so that the AAR also details lessons learned and the strengths of the incident response and shall also identify areas of improvement to assist the Board in determining whether changes are needed to best prepare the County to respond should another catastrophic event occur. The County will

engage, participate and collaborate on the Governor's AAR to explore the following critical issues, how they were handled and what we can improve upon, including but not limited to:

1. Pre-deployment strategies implemented during Particularly Dangerous Situation weather events;
2. The deployment and adequacy of firefighting resources as the fire progressed, including the availability of mutual aid resources; and
3. Impact of brush clearance policies and interface between property owners and public agencies.

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