

SEPTEMBER 2025

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After Action Review of Alerts and Evacuations for the Eaton and Palisades Fires



McChrystal Group



McChrystal Group





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● Scope and Methodology


What was the scope and intent of this After-Action Review?

Scope of the Los Angeles Windstorm and Fire Event Alert and Evacuations After Action Review


-  **Time Period:** December 31, 2024 - January 23, 2025
-  **Geographic and Event Focus:** Eaton and Palisades Fire areas
-  **Functional Areas:** County-level public alert and evacuation systems and processes, decision-making, and public messaging about fire risk and protective orders
-  **Key Organizations Assessed:** Los Angeles County Fire Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff Department, Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management

Intent of the Los Angeles Windstorm and Fire Event Alert and Evacuations After Action Review

What this AAR is:

- 
- Comprehensive evaluation
 - Learning tool
 - Forward-looking analysis
 - Evidence-based assessment

What this AAR is not:

- 
- An investigation
 - A critique
 - A determination of legal liability

How did McChrystal Group approach execution of this After-Action Review?

OUR APPROACH

McChrystal Group after-action reviews examine the systems **interplay of people, process, and technology systems** during complex events to determine gaps in performance and actionable recommendations to improve future operations.

Our Data Inputs



150,000 +
EMPIRICAL DATA
POINTS ANALYZED



147
COUNTY FIRST
RESPONDERS
INTERVIEWED



180
RESIDENTS PARTICIPATED
IN 6 COMMUNITY
LISTENING SESSIONS



1,020
COMMUNITY MEMBERS
COMPLETED A SURVEY

Situational Data: *Information on wind and fire events prompting evacuations*

Response Data: *Information representing the County’s alerting and evacuation response to the windstorm and fire events*

Community Impact Data: *Information on the public’s experiences with the County’s alerting and evacuation efforts*

RESPONSE CONTEXT:

● The Eaton and Palisades Fires



Timeline of LA County Fires in January 2025



Six fires ignited between January 7 and January 9, and an additional fire on January 22.



Extreme hurricane-force winds hindered firefighting efforts and caused power outages, impacting connectivity and situational awareness.

The Eaton and Palisades Fires were the most catastrophic, burning approximately 37,000 acres over the course of 24 days, resulting in 31 fatalities and the destruction of more than 16,000 structures.

PALISADES FIRE

Burned **23,448 acres**
Destroyed **6,837 structures**
Damaged an additional **1,017 structures**

EATON FIRE

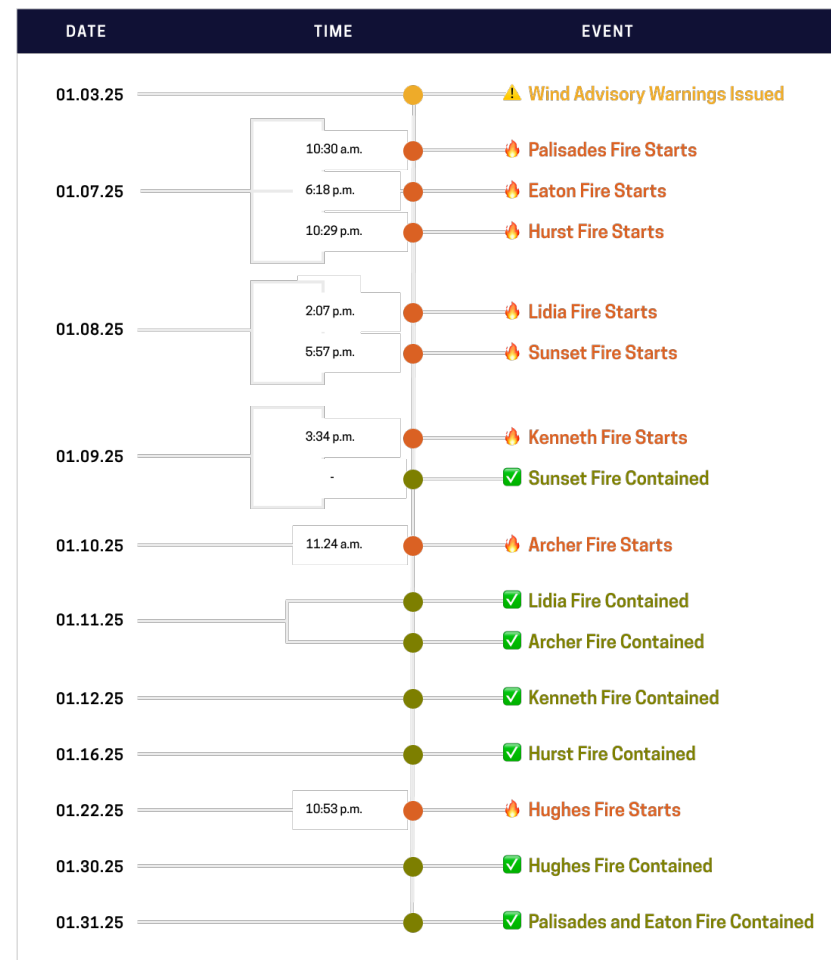
Burned **14,021 acres**
Destroyed **9,414 structures**
Damaged **1,074 additional structures**

51 evacuation notifications issued:

- **32 evacuation warnings**
- **19 evacuation orders**

158 evacuation notifications issued:

- **58 evacuation warnings**
- **100 evacuation orders**



A firefighter in full protective gear is seen from behind, spraying a high-pressure stream of water onto a building that is heavily on fire at night. The scene is dark, with the primary light source being the intense orange and yellow flames and the white steam from the water. The firefighter is positioned on a sidewalk or street in front of the burning structure. The overall image has a dark, somber tone with a reddish-brown color overlay.

Overview of Findings and Recommendations

What did McChrystal Group find in its review of alerting and evacuation efforts?

Primary finding: There was no single point of failure in LA County’s alerting and evacuation response, but rather a series of weaknesses that impacted overall response effectiveness. Gaps in decision authority and process clarity combined with resource constraints drove alerting and evacuation challenges during the January 2025 wildfires.

Five Critical Focus Areas



Conflicting Policies Create Confusion in Evacuation Decision-Making



1. Policies, Protocols, Standard Operating Procedures, and Authority
(Report page 67)

FINDINGS



Policies and protocols are **unclear and contradictory** regarding decision-making authorities for evacuation warnings and orders



OEM operates with **critical structural and resource deficiencies** hindering LA County's emergency management capabilities

Conflicting Policies Create Confusion in Evacuation Decision-Making



1. Policies, Protocols, Standard Operating Procedures, and Authority
(Report page 67)

RECOMMENDATIONS



Deconflict

key departmental policies, procedures, and processes



Update

County Code and related policies discussing departmental interoperability and authorities



Formalize

all aspects of the evacuation process



Restructure

Office of Emergency Management organizational framework

Training Gaps Leave Agencies Unprepared for Multi-Fire Response



2. Training & Planning Coordination (Report page 71)

FINDINGS



Standardized collaboration and preparedness training is needed across County departments



Enhance Los Angeles Sheriff Department training on fire and evacuation operations

Training Gaps Leave Agencies Unprepared for Multi-Fire Response



2. Training & Planning Coordination (Report page 71)

RECOMMENDATIONS



Standardized
collaboration and preparedness
training across all County departments
and partners



Enhance
wildfire- and evacuation-specific training
and planning for all responders

Resource Shortages Strain Multi-Agency Coordination



3. Resource Management (Report page 74)

FINDINGS



Shortages of Law Enforcement Personnel
due to 900+ vacancies



OEM understaffed for area of responsibility
with 37 Full Time Employees and in need
of improved trainings and formalization of
the Agency Representative Program

Resource Shortages Strain Multi-Agency Coordination



3. Resource Management (Report page 74)

RECOMMENDATIONS



Coordinate
additional planning within
LASD to formally identify
surge resources and
strategies



Formalize
staffing protocols, training,
equipment needs, and the
field A-Rep and alerting
programs within OEM



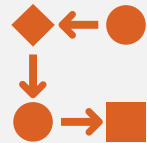
Increase
OEM staffing to a more robust
level comparable with other
large U.S. city and county
emergency management
organizations

Outdated Technology Isolates County Departments in Information Silos



4. Situational Awareness & Interoperability (Report page 80)

FINDINGS



Lacking situational awareness and interoperability across departments



Inconsistent access, standardization, and integration of technology and tools across Unified Command partners

Outdated Technology Isolates County Departments in Information Silos



4. Situational Awareness & Interoperability
(Report page 80)

RECOMMENDATIONS



Align

situational awareness and interoperability across County departments and agencies



Update

obsolete systems and integrate technology to enable a common operational picture



Assess

validate and test consistent implementation, training, and use of updated tools and systems

Fragmented Messaging Leaves Public Without Clear Guidance



5. Community Engagement & Public Information

(Report page 85)

FINDINGS



Delayed establishment of a Joint Information Center (JIC)



Fragmented public messaging across multiple County departments and jurisdictions



Significant gaps in public understanding of evacuation zones, alerts and evacuation protocols

Fragmented Messaging Leaves Public Without Clear Guidance



5. Community Engagement & Public Information

(Report page 85)

RECOMMENDATIONS



Establish

a consistent and formalized JIC activation protocol



Develop

a robust and consistent emergency preparedness public education campaign across the County



Introduce

programming to foster a sense of responsibility for personal preparedness

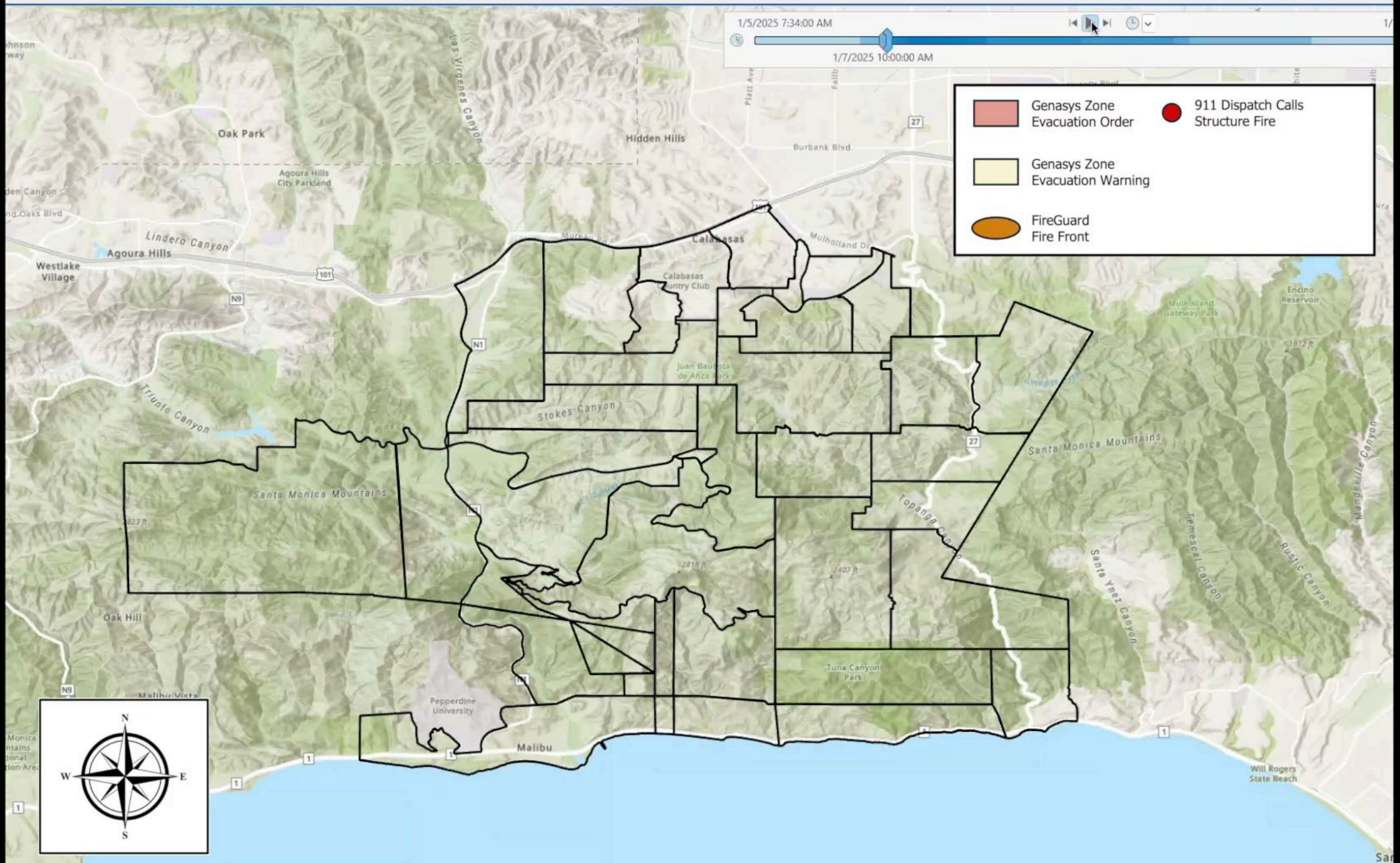
FINDINGS IN CONTEXT:

Visualizing the Alerting and Evacuation Response



FINDINGS IN CONTEXT:

● **Palisades Fire**



1/5/2025 7:34:00 AM
1/7/2025 10:00:00 AM 1/7/2025 7:00:00 PM

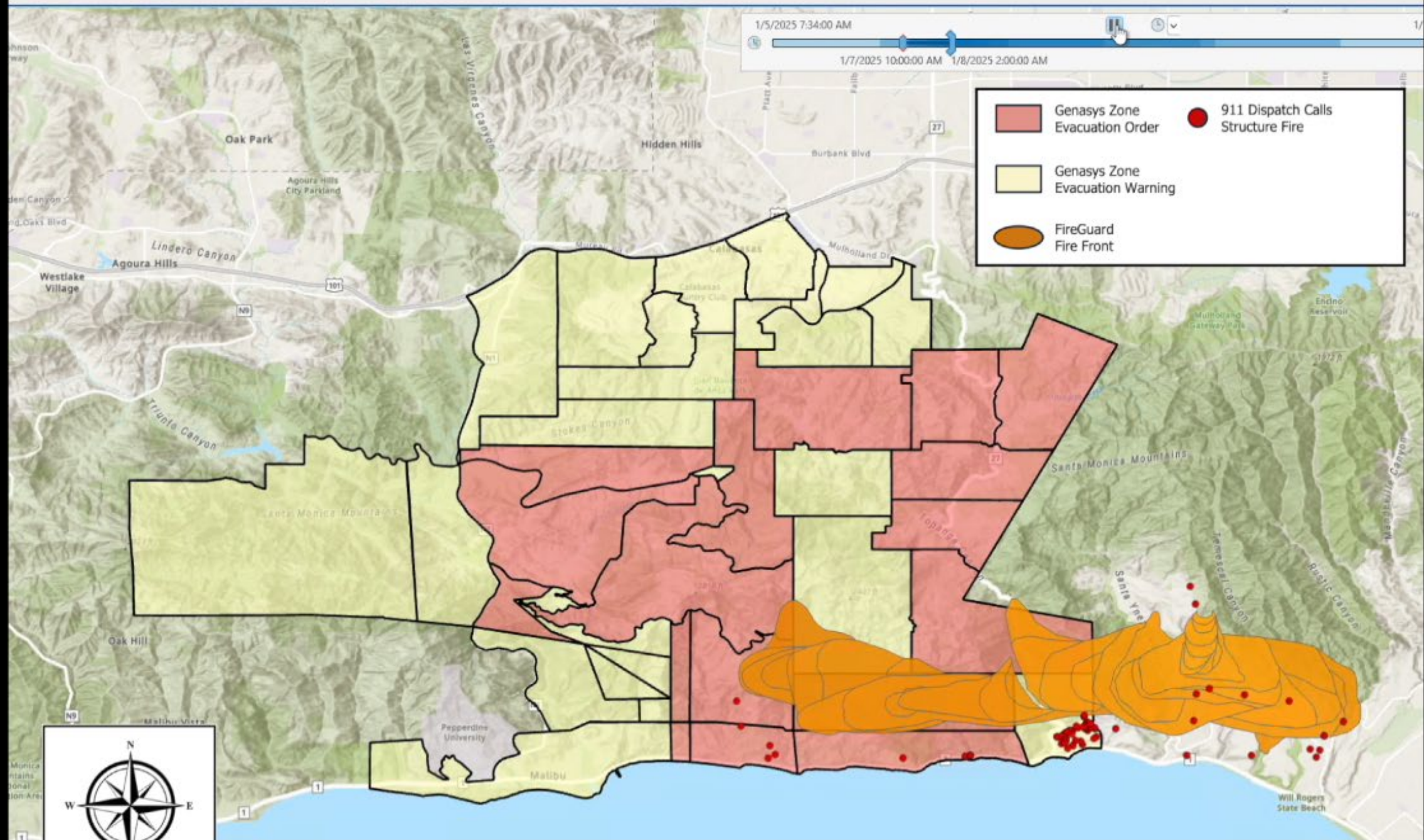
Genasys Zone Evacuation Order

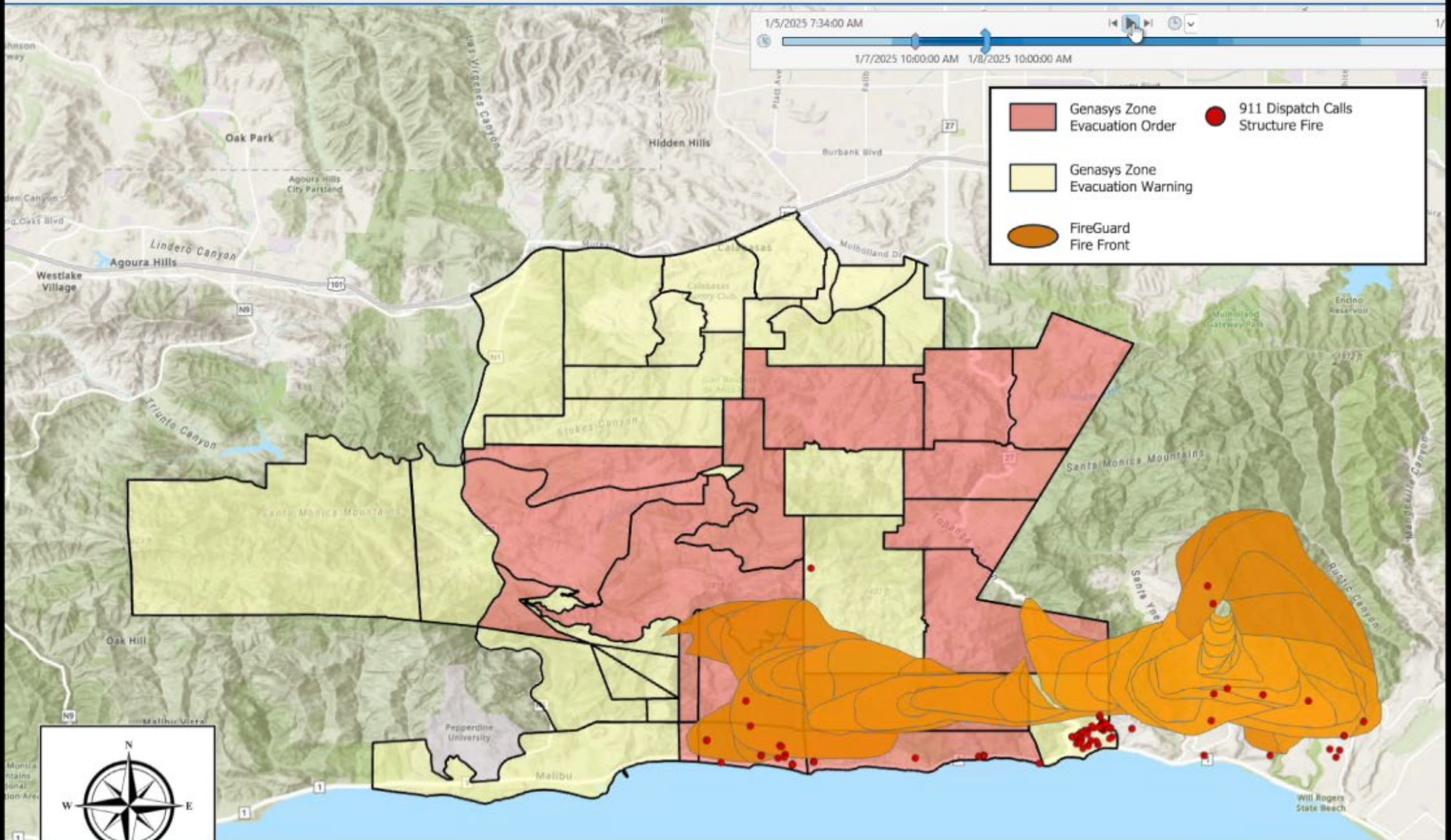
Genasys Zone Evacuation Warning

FireGuard Fire Front

911 Dispatch Calls Structure Fire










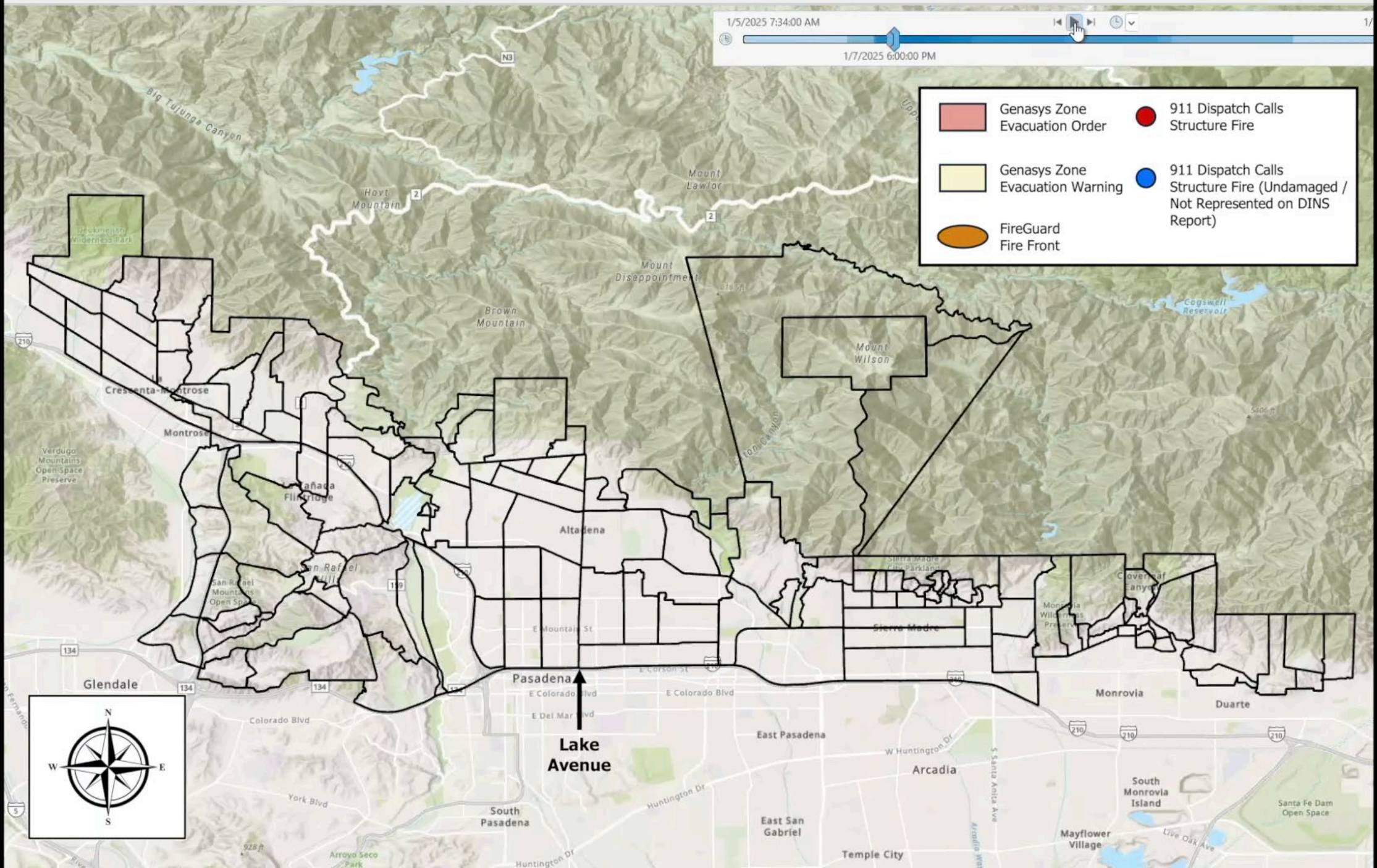


A firefighter in silhouette stands in the foreground, holding a hose that extends across the ground towards a building. The building is engulfed in flames, with thick smoke billowing from the roof. The scene is set at night, with trees visible in the background. The entire image has a warm, orange-brown color overlay.

FINDINGS IN CONTEXT:





● **Eaton Fire**

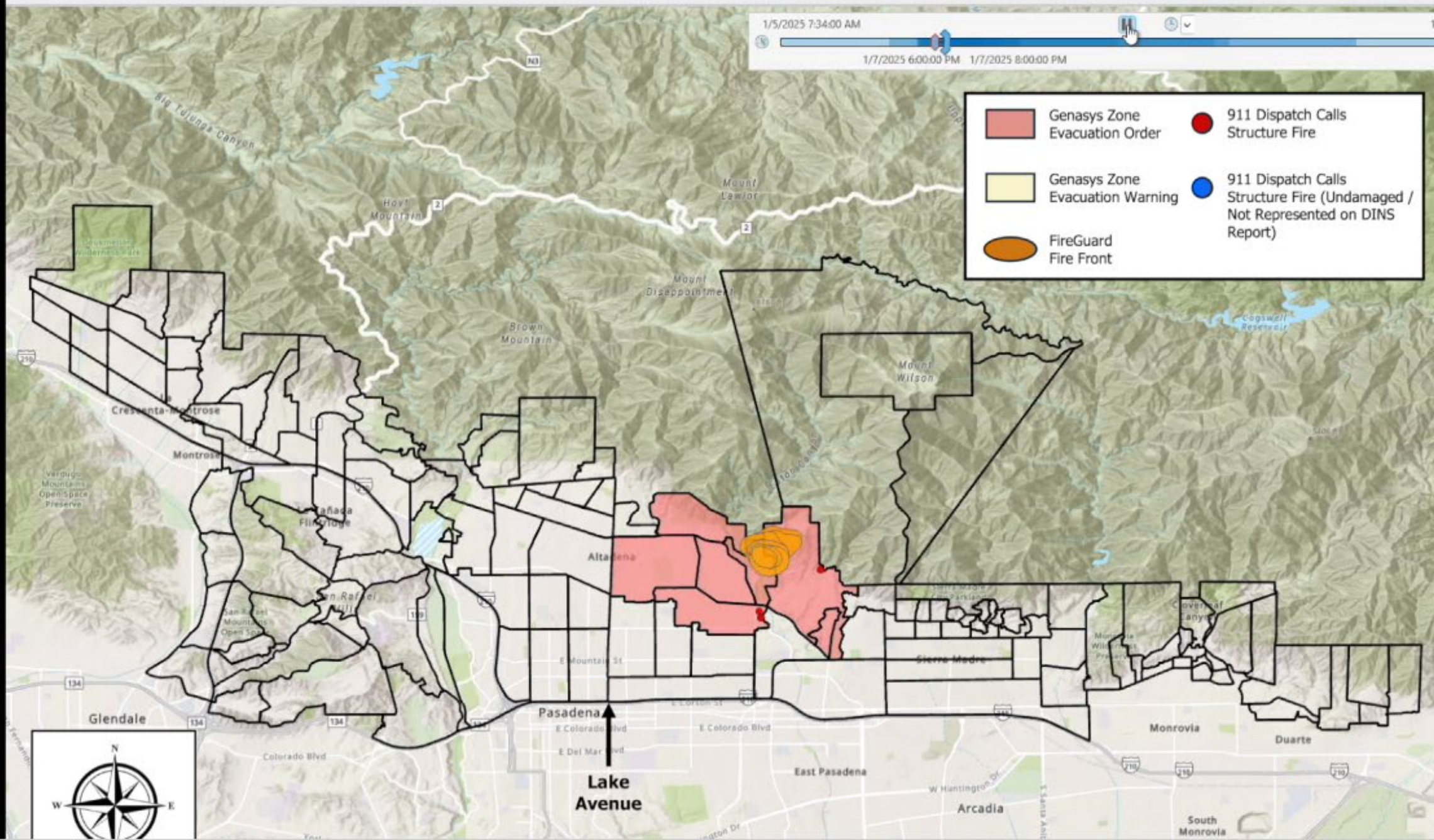
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|---|------------------------------------|---|---|
|  | Genasys Zone Evacuation Order |  | 911 Dispatch Calls Structure Fire |
|  | Genasys Zone Evacuation Warning |  | 911 Dispatch Calls Structure Fire (Undamaged / Not Represented on DINS Report) |
|  | FireGuard Fire Front | | |



1/5/2025 7:34:00 AM

1/7/2025 6:00:00 PM 1/7/2025 8:00:00 PM






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|--|---|
|  Genasys Zone Evacuation Order |  911 Dispatch Calls Structure Fire |
|  Genasys Zone Evacuation Warning |  911 Dispatch Calls Structure Fire (Undamaged / Not Represented on DINS Report) |
|  FireGuard Fire Front | |

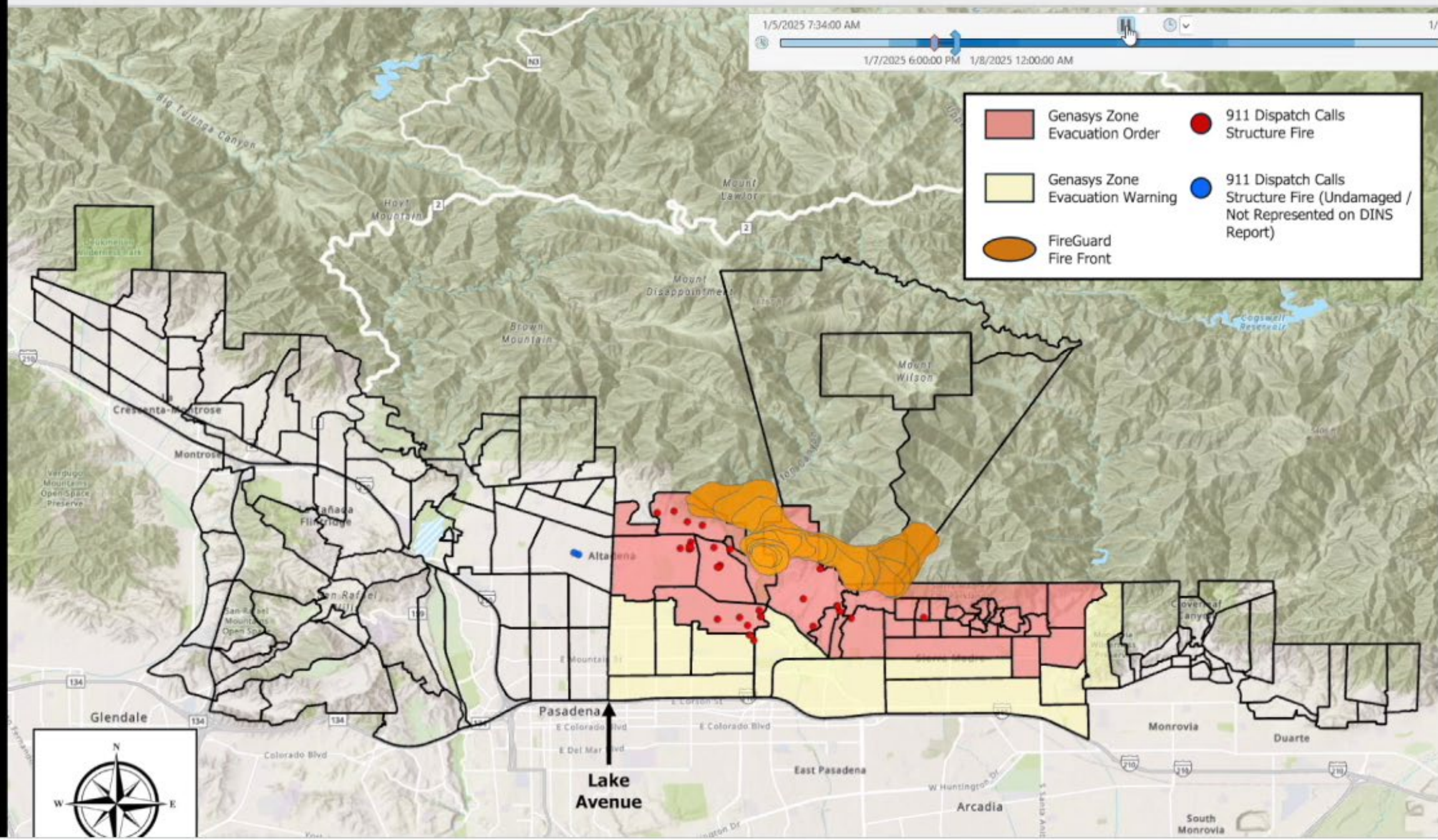


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




1/7/2025 6:00:00 PM 1/8/2025 12:00:00 AM

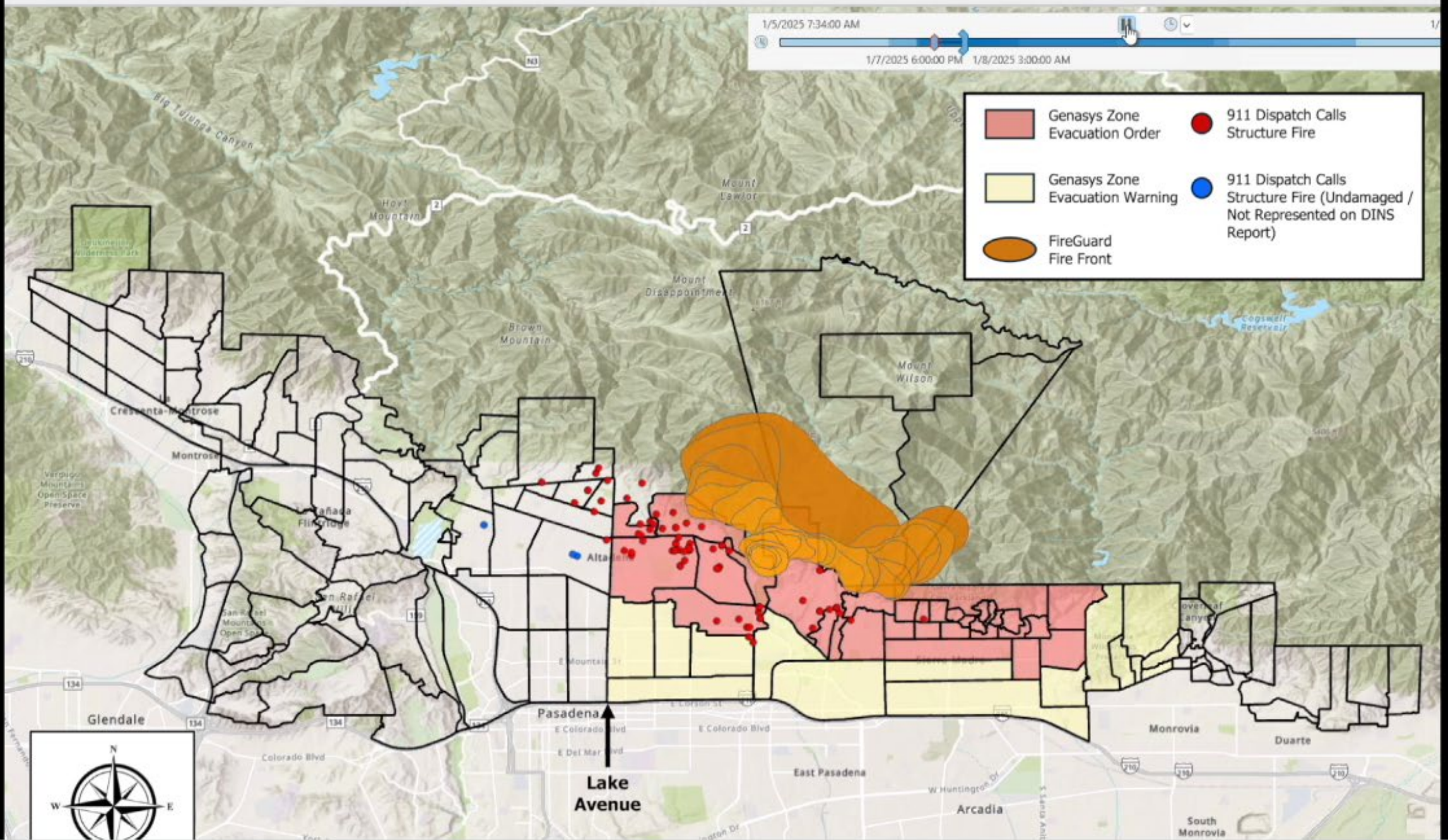
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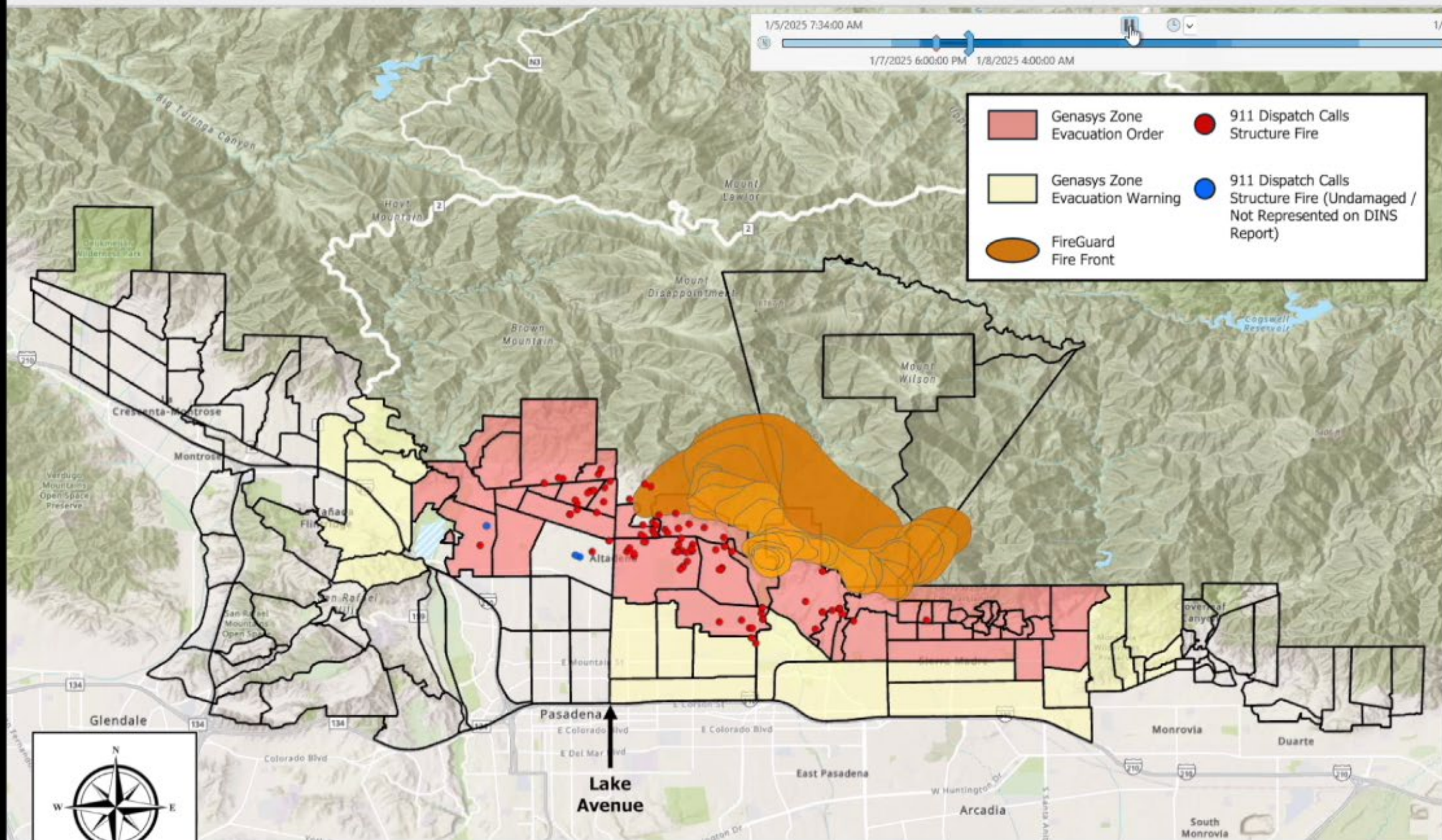
1/5/2025 7:34:00 AM

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|  Genasys Zone Evacuation Order |  911 Dispatch Calls Structure Fire |
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|  FireGuard Fire Front | |








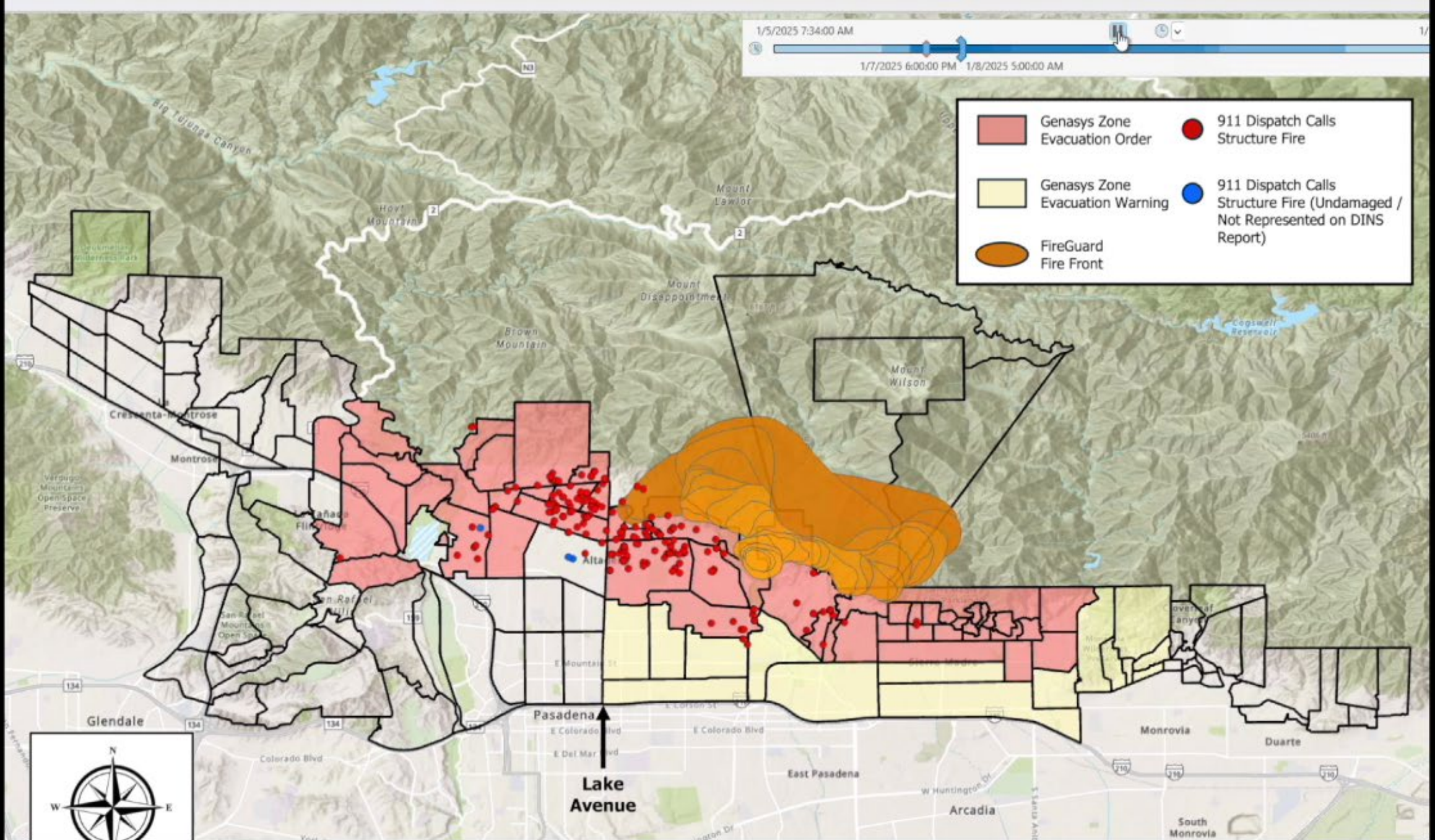
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1/5/2025 7:34:00 AM

1/7/2025 6:00:00 PM 1/8/2025 5:00:00 AM






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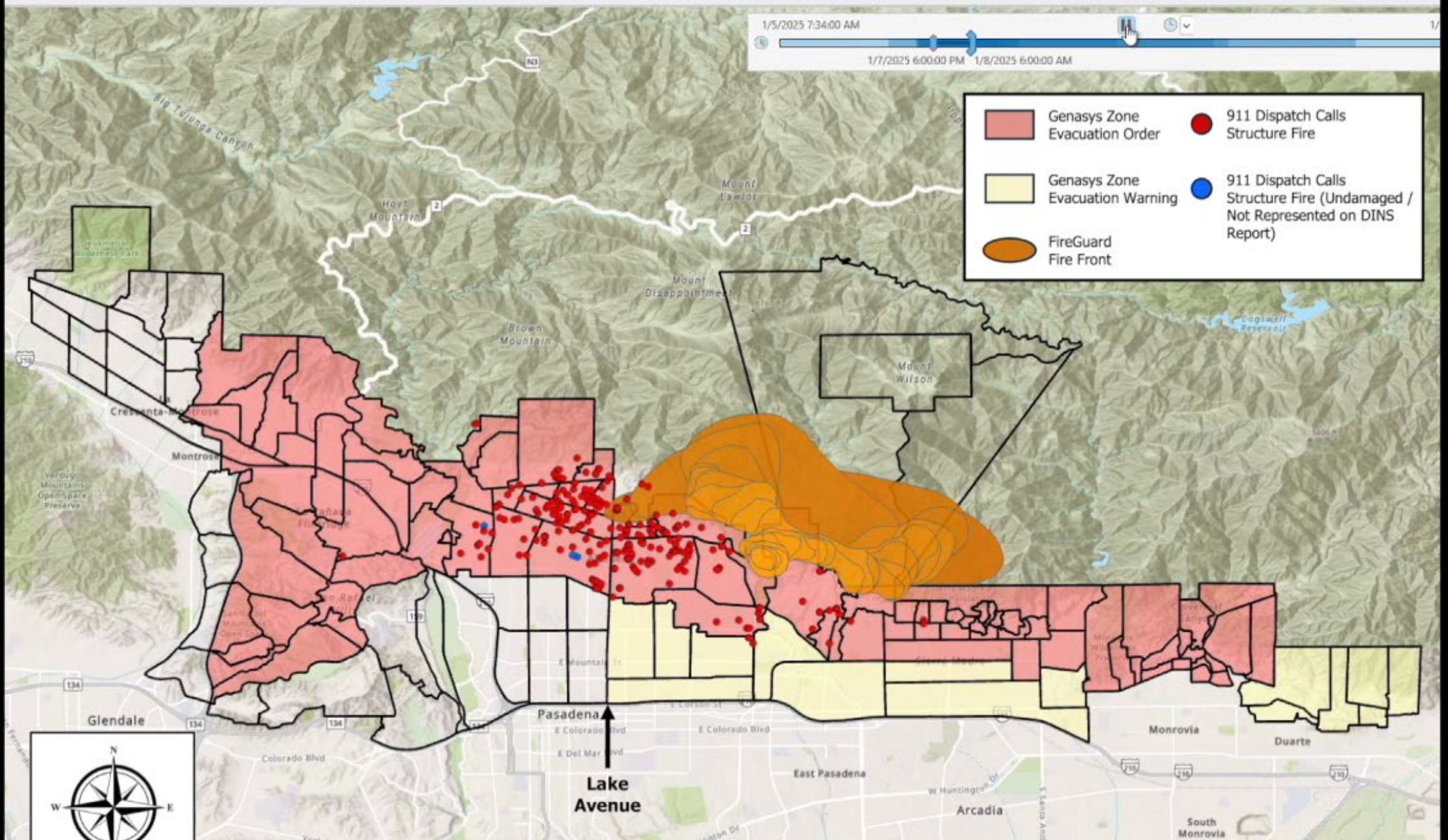


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




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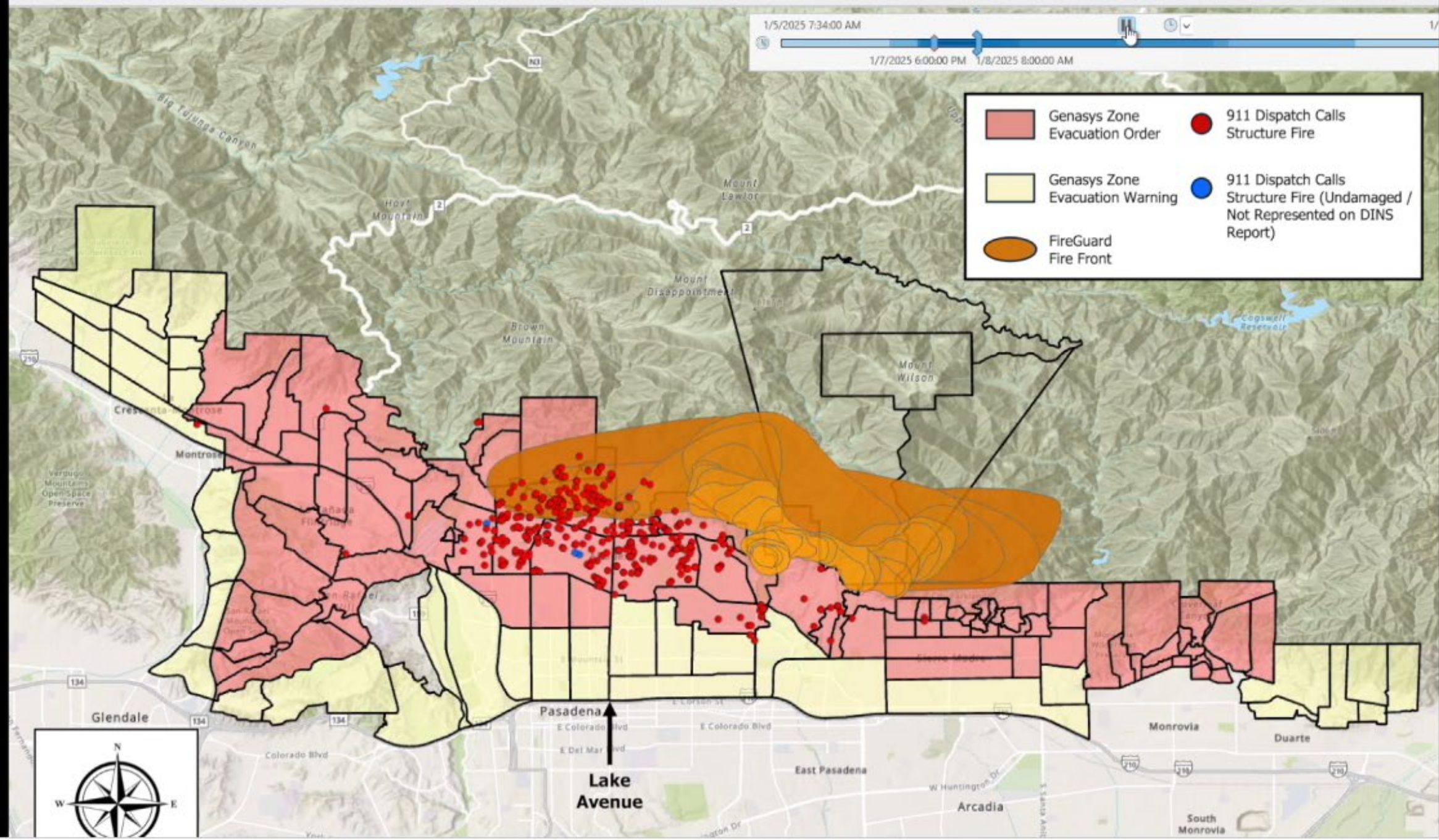
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|  | Genasys Zone Evacuation Order |  | 911 Dispatch Calls Structure Fire |
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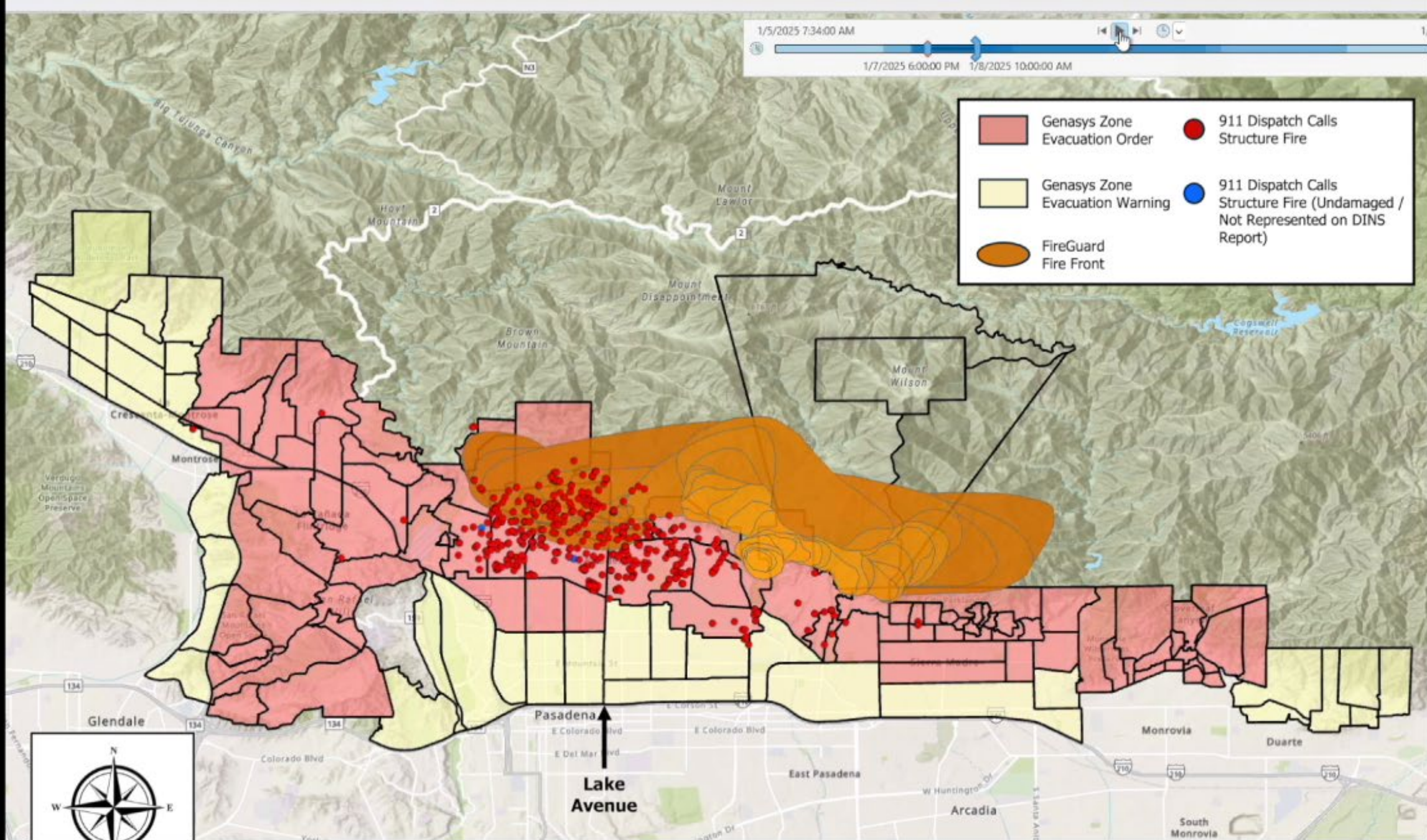
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|  | Genasys Zone Evacuation Order |  | 911 Dispatch Calls Structure Fire |
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1/5/2025 7:34:00 AM

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|  | Genasys Zone Evacuation Order |  | 911 Dispatch Calls Structure Fire |
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|  | FireGuard Fire Front | | |



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• Questions and Discussion

McChrystal Group

McChrystal Group makes it possible to optimize your organization **without compromising performance**. Forged in combat and proven across industries, we use our Team of Teams® framework to **transform how your people, processes, and technology work together** so you can optimize the organization on your terms.

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