

Los Angeles Fire Destroys Over 1,000 Structures as Rabbi Leads Heroic Preschool Evacuation

Los Angeles, California, is facing a catastrophic wildfire crisis as multiple blazes, fueled by fierce Santa Ana winds, spread rapidly across the region. From the Pacific Palisades to Sylmar, thousands of residents have been evacuated, homes and businesses destroyed and containment remains elusive.

Palisades Fire: A Community Devastated

The Palisades Fire, ignited in the Santa Monica Mountains, has scorched between 2,900 and 5,000 acres as of Jan. 8, with 0% containment. Ferocious winds, some gusting over 85 mph, have propelled the flames into residential areas, forcing the evacuation of 30,000 people.

Over 1,000 structures, including parts of Palisades Charter High School, have been lost, leaving residents reeling. Power outages have plagued over 200,000 people across Los Angeles County as utility companies preemptively shut down electricity to prevent further fires.

Mandatory evacuation orders extend from Merrimac Road west to Topanga Canyon Boulevard and south to Pacific Coast Highway. The Westwood Recreation Center has been established as a shelter for displaced residents.

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Miracle Amidst the Chaos

At the Chabad Jewish Community Center of Pacific Palisades, Rabbi Zushe Cunin oversaw the safe evacuation of around 100 preschoolers. “It was a real incredible task to make sure that everybody was safely back with the families,” Rabbi Cunin told “Fox & Friends.”

Acting swiftly at the first sign of danger, the center’s staff evacuated the children even before official orders were issued. “Unfortunately, as we see this horrendous, devastating fire continuing to rage, our hearts go out to the men and women and children and families who have been devastated by this,” the rabbi said.

Despite losing iconic community spaces, Cunin emphasized the importance of unity: “It’s really a time for us all to come together and be there for each other and support each other.”

Hospital patients in Pasadena being evacuated on foot from the fires raging in California.

Chatter of inadequate water in fire hydrants for the firefighters and boots on the ground. Concerning.

Praying for people in the line of fire in Los Angeles, the Palisades, & Pasadena.

– Pastor Travis Johnson (@TravisJohnson73) January 8, 2025

Eaton Fire: Tragedy in the Foothills

The Eaton Fire, burning near Altadena and Pasadena in the Angeles National Forest, has engulfed 2,227 acres and claimed two lives. Like the Palisades Fire, it remains at 0% containment. Overnight, high winds caused the fire to grow rapidly, destroying over 1,000 acres and consuming the

Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center.

Thousands have been evacuated from affected areas, with emergency shelters set up for those fleeing the flames.

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Hurst Fire: Rapid Growth in Sylmar

In Sylmar, the Hurst Fire—also known as the Sylmar Fire—has torn through 500 acres with alarming speed, burning 100 acres in just 15 minutes. Evacuations have been ordered as the fire pushes northward toward Santa Clarita. Residents have been directed to the Ritchie Valens Recreation Center for safety.

The wildfire response includes over 1,400 firefighters battling the blazes, yet containment efforts have been hindered by relentless winds exceeding 100 mph in some areas. These conditions have grounded aircraft crucial for firefighting operations.

Both the city of Los Angeles and the state of California have declared states of emergency. Schools in Los Angeles and Pasadena remain closed, leaving families scrambling to adjust amidst the chaos.

In times of tragedy, believers are reminded of Psalm 46:1-2: “God is our refuge and strength, a well-proven help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

Lift up the people of Los Angeles and their leadership in prayer during this difficult time.

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