State and Local Officials and Experts Comments
Wind and Fire Emergency Response - January 2025

FIRE OFFICIALS

"We did have water during this operation. We are limited. The fact is, is when we fight a normal structure fire, we flow about a thousand gallons a minute, fighting that normal structure fire and that's a single structure fire with multiple handlines and may be heavy streams that we use, that flow more water. If you can imagine how many structures were burning, plus perimeter, we just outpaced the amount of water that any major water can supply so we had to use alternate tactics bringing water tenders. We ordered a whole bunch. DWP did a great job bringing extra so we're basically mobile hydrants to be able to fight the fire." – ***Chief Christian Litz, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Operations***

SOURCE: Cal Fire speaking at LA County FD's Virtual Town Hall (1/9/2025)

"City water supplies are just not meant to be able to supply the capacity needed to protect as many structures that were affected by this particular fire they're designed to uh supply us with water for fire hydrants that put out a normal residential house fire they're usually adequate to supply us for the average wildland fire however these big wind-driven fires where its widespread use of those fire hydrants in those mains we always do end up with issues. We got plenty of support from the Department of Water and Power. I was actually at the command post for 30 hours or so from the start of the Palisades fire out in the field. And uh we got water trucks; the Department of Water and Power assisted us as best they could. They were sending crews out into the field to try to do everything they could to assist us with augmenting that water pressure. But in a situation like this, there's really no way that we're gonna ever have as much as water as we need. So, it's really a challenge." ***– Captain Branden Silverman, L.A. City Fire Department***

“Metropolitan water systems are not designed to sustain a fire fight like this. Your viewers can't expect a municipal water system to supply enough firefighting water to extinguish every one of these houses. That's unrealistic.”
– Chief Anthony Marrone, L.A. County Fire Department

Source: CBS News (60 Minutes) - Los Angeles County wildfires: The ongoing fight to stop the fires and the devastation of neighborhoods

“…We think we've lost 8,000 structures, so times three fire engines each, that-- that requires 26,000 fire engines. I don't think the state of California has 26,000 fire engines that could be at one place, right now.” ***– Chief Anthony Marrone, L.A. County Fire Department***

Source: CBS News (60 Minutes) - Los Angeles County wildfires: The ongoing fight to stop the fires and the devastation of neighborhoods

“The fires that they experienced this week were unstoppable...That is the mindset: We're gonna put our lives on the line. We're gonna, give a lot to save a lot. So when you have a fire like you say that's unstoppable? Man, that is-- it's-- it's uncomfortable. It's very uncomfortable. – ***Chief Brian Fennessy, Orange County Fire Department***

Source: CBS News (60 Minutes) - Los Angeles County wildfires: The ongoing fight to stop the fires and the devastation of neighborhoods

“All of the brush clearance, fuel breaks — they’re very effective on what we would consider a normal day. But what you’re talking about here is probably less than 1% of all the fires that we respond to in Southern California. You could have put a 10-lane freeway in front of that fire and it would not have slowed it one bit.” – ***Chief Brian Fennessy, Orange County Fire Department***

Source: LA Times - Could better brush clearance have helped slow the spread of the Palisades fire?

FIRE EXPERTS

“It’s all these cascading probabilities — you can improve your chances of survivability, improve the chance that firefighters will protect your home, improve the chance that flame lengths will be lower…but somewhere all

those probabilities show up on the ground in real life and the fire tests them. And you can see, well, there wasn't enough there to change the outcome. - ***Jason Moghaddas, Fire Ecologist and registered professional forester for the organization Spatial Informatics Group***

Source: LA Times - Could better brush clearance have helped slow the spread of the Palisades fire?

WATER EXPERTS

"One of the basic functions of a public water system is to provide fire protection, and the purpose is to protect lives and structures. However, it is important to understand that public water systems are not designed to fight wildfires.

The design standard for a public water system is to provide sufficient supply to extinguish a fire affecting the single largest structure served. These standards are defined in the applicable fire code and usually expressed in terms of a flowrate for a specified duration.

When we encounter wildfire conditions, firefighters use the water system to the fullest extent possible to protect lives and homes, frequently pushing the water system well beyond its capabilities. Due to the very high demand, water tanks supplying the area can be drained quickly and pumps that normally replenish storage overnight can be strained to keep up.

If a structure burns, water will continue to flow into the dwelling. The fire can cause pipes to rupture or melt, allowing the water to hemorrhage until water agency response personnel can safely access the site and manually shut the flow off. This causes additional stress on an already stressed system." ***- David W. Pedersen, LVMWD General Manager***

"The system has never been designed to fight a wildfire that then envelops a community" – ***Martin L. Adams, Former General Manager and Chief Engineer of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power***

Source: LA Times - Why hydrants ran dry as firefighters battled California's deadly fires

“Local water systems are usually designed to fight local, small-scale fires over a limited time period. They are not generally designed to fight large, long-lasting wildfires.” - ***Kathryn Sorensen, Director of Research at Arizona State University’s Kyl Center for Water Policy***

Source: LA Times - Why hydrants ran dry as firefighters battled California’s deadly fires

"If Palisades residents really want a super robust system to handle fires like this one, it would be unlike anything that exists in the world. That's going to cost an incredible amount, and that cost can't reasonably be borne by the

entire city of Los Angeles.” - ***Gregory Pierce, a water researcher and co-director of UCLA's Water Resources Group***

Source: Daily News - Municipal water systems aren’t designed to fight wildfires, but maybe they should be, experts say

"I'm not sure any level of preparedness from the water side would've stopped the fire. DWP is doing an analysis on this now. No one can say exactly what condition the pieces of infrastructure were in except the DWP, but there's no good reason to think that they performed anomalously. They were just overwhelmed because they aren't built for wildfires, and this was a very quick and ferocious start to a wildfire." - ***Gregory Pierce, a water researcher and co-director of UCLA's Water Resources Group***

Source: Daily News - Municipal water systems aren’t designed to fight wildfires, but maybe they should be, experts say