

Questions about the L.A. Wildfires?

Read ahead for critical insights from CSM's Fire Technology Instructor Christy Baird!

How did the firefighters run out of water?

During the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires, particularly the Palisades Fire, firefighters faced significant water shortages due to high demand depleting local storage, inadequate system capacity, and low water pressure in elevated areas. The issue was worsened by the Santa Ynez Reservoir being emptied for maintenance, removing a critical supply source. Additionally, aging infrastructure and budget cuts had weakened the fire department's ability to respond effectively to large-scale emergencies.

Why did they do maintenance on the reservoir in January

Reservoir maintenance is scheduled in winter due to lower water demand and a reduced wildfire risk. With decreased irrigation and consumption, temporarily taking a reservoir offline has less impact. Also, cooler temperatures and higher humidity create a safer period for maintenance.

What are the evacuation levels?

Level I (Evacuation Alert): A wildfire threat is in the area; residents should start planning and preparing for potential evacuation.

Level II (Evacuation Warning): A high probability of evacuation; residents should pack, prepare vehicles, and move vulnerable individuals and animals to safety.

Level III (Evacuation Order): Immediate evacuation is required; residents must leave with essential items via designated routes, as roadblocks are established.

Where do I go if I evacuate?

Check in with your local Red Cross shelter (even if you don't intend to stay there). Check in with them and let them know where you will be in case your family is looking for you. Drive with your lights on, safely and SLOWLY remaining aware of your surroundings as you leave the area.

How many firefighters does it take to extinguish a standard house fire?

To extinguish a single-family residence house fire, typically at least 10 firefighters are needed, depending on the fire's size and complexity, requiring multiple fire engines, ladders, and support personnel to effectively contain and put out the flames.

How many resources did the Office of Emergency Services move into place before the Los Angeles fires?

The California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) proactively positioned a significant number of resources including 113 fire engines, 15 water tenders, 9 helicopters, and 9 dozers across the affected counties, ensuring a quick response to potential fires.

Just to put it into perspective: In order to save the 9,418 homes that burned OES would have had to position over 94,000 firefighters. There are only 27,750 firefighters in the state of California.