

# Los Angeles Fires

## Arson? Transmission Lines? Fireworks? Cause of the LA Fires Yet Undetermined

Investigators are still working to determine the cause of the catastrophic blazes that have decimated the Los Angeles area, but a jump in power grid faults may serve as a vital clue. As reported by Fox News on January 11, 2025.

Here's what we know:

## How did the fires start?

The Palisades Fire - which has destroyed over 21,000 acres - started Tuesday morning, January 7, 2025, in the wealthy Pacific Palisades enclave just east of Malibu.

There are many different theories about what fueled the blaze.

Palisades residents exclusively told DailyMail.com two men were caught on camera dumping gasoline and setting it on fire just before the deadly Palisades fire broke out.

Los Angeles Fire Chief Kristin Crowley, who is facing calls to resign, said she believes the fire was started accidentally in a back garden but quickly 'spread at a speed beyond anything we've seen'.

The fire's ferocity may have also been fueled by multiple faults along the Los Angeles power grid where power was not immediately shut off as faults soared in areas worst hit by the fires.

Residents who live at North Piedra Morada Drive quickly made the call around 10 am as the hillside fire progresses closer to the multi-million-dollar homes that dot the Pacific Palisades hillsides, according to the LA Times.

Bob Marshall, the Chief Executive of Whisker Labs, a company that monitors electrical activity along the Los Angeles power grid, says, just hours prior to the Palisades, Eaton and Hurst fires, the company recorded sharp increases in faults on the power grid.

According to the Fox News report, Marshall said his company has a network of approximately 14,000 sensors known as ‘ting’ sensors, that can pinpoint and identify faults generated by electrical arcs. Whisker Labs is able to monitor the grid with “extraordinary precision,” through this network of sensors in homes. Whisker Labs Ting sensors notify homeowners of a surge in power so they can take preventative measures to prevent a house fire. “Through artificial intelligence (AI) we take 30 million electrical measurements every second,” says Marchall. He adds that on a typical day faults are a rare occurrence.

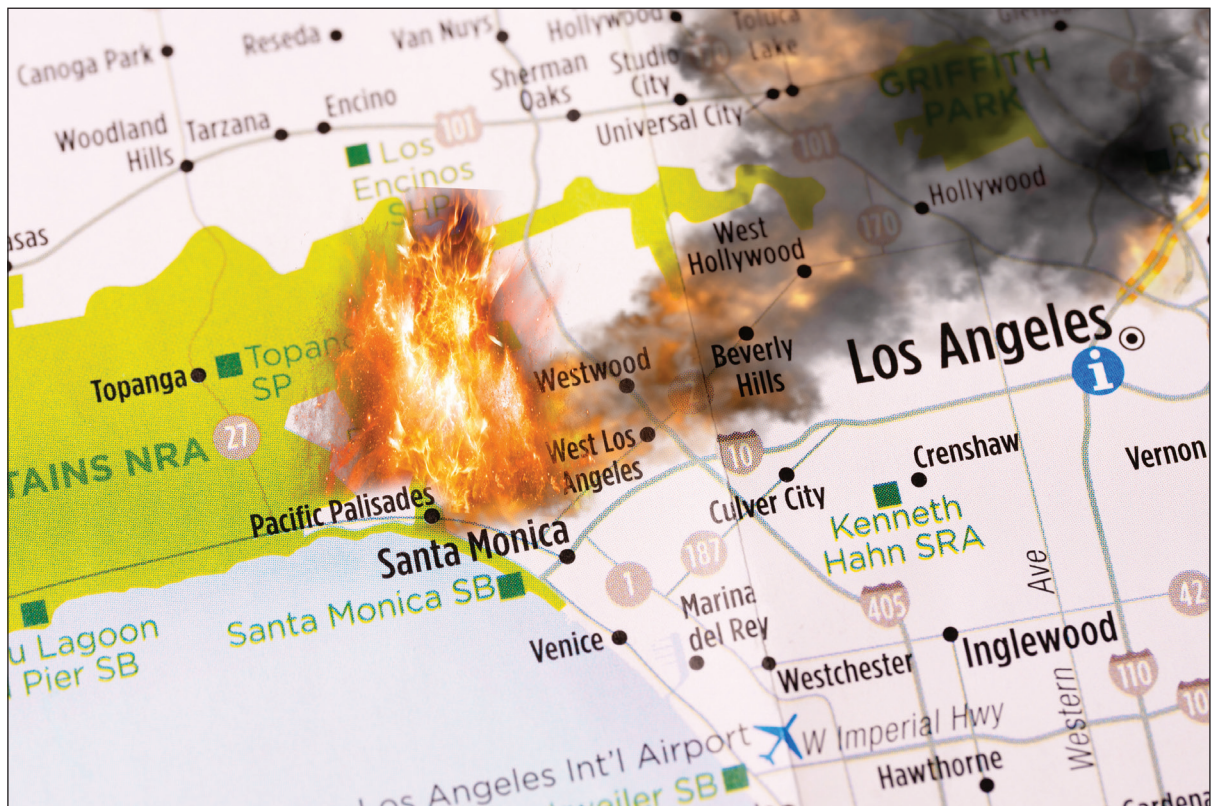
Marshall told Fox News, when strong winds cause transmission lines to touch each other or vegetation like tree limbs, it creates a spark in a fault and Whisker Labs can detect it. Sparks from faults can land on the ground igniting dry vegetation like setting a match. High winds then carry the flames at rapid speeds.

In the Palisades areas, where the largest fire is raging, Whisker Labs reported there were 63 faults within two to three hours prior to the start of the fires. In the Altadena area, Whisker Labs reports there were 317 faults prior to the ignition of that fire, and in the Hurst Fire, 230 faults were recorded by the network prior to the start of that fire.

*Although we cannot conclude that the fires started from transmission lines, The Wall Street Journal reported when the faults started to sharply rise, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power didn't proactively turn off power to mitigate the risk of a wildfire starting.*

Newsom has come under fire for slashing California's funding for wildfire and forest resilience by \$101 million less than a year before devastating fires tore through Los Angeles.

Rep. Kevin Kiley (R-CA) blasted Mayor Bass,



“Just seeing these scenes of absolute total destruction, these apocalyptic scenes. I mean, it is shocking. It is surreal,” the congressman stated in a Newsmax interview.

***Rep. Kiley (R-CA) said California needs to get back to basics: "Manage our forests. Store our water. Maintain our grid. Build our roads. Fund our police and fire. Do the things government is supposed to do, do them well, and do nothing else."***

"It is the culmination of years and years of policy failure in California, where we've had absolutely insane forest management policies, insane water policies. We haven't adequately prioritized support for firefighting. We've had an insurance crisis that's been spiraling out of control," he said. "We have by far the worst homelessness situation in the entire country. And homelessness leads to a lot of fires as well. And all of this has gotten much, much worse during the Newsom administration."

Actor Mel Gibson, who lost his home in the fire, was on Fox New's Laura Ingraham Show and questioned if the fires were similarly 'commissioned' to Lahaina, Hawaii's fires, in order to remove people from valuable real estate that is planned to become a 'Smart City.'

“I can make all kinds of horrible theories up in my head, conspiracy theories and everything else, but it just seemed a little convenient that there was no water,” Gibson said. “And that the wind conditions were right and that there are people ready and willing and able to start fires,” he conjectured. The actor then referenced how police in the area caught strangers, perhaps illegals and homeless, that were equipped with jars of gasoline and other ignition material.

"I know they were messing with the water, letting reserves go for one reason or another. They've been doing that for awhile. California has a lot of problems that sort of baffle the mind as far as why they do things," he noted.

"And then in events like this, you sort of look, well, is it on purpose? Which, it's an insane thing to think. But one begins to ponder whether or not there is a purpose in mind. What could it be? You know, what do they want? The state empty? I don't know," he opined.

Ingraham commented, “And obviously there’s a great need for high density housing in California and across the country. That’s a big push by the climate folks. And you’re already hearing rumblings of that. In this case, like goodbye single-family homes. Hello high density housing!”

The actor remarked at the 'pretty scary' idea and added that it reminded him of 'old cattle barons clearing people off the land.'

Gibson is not alone in his theories, and many heated disagreements over the handling of the wildfires have cropped up. More than 180,000 people have been displaced from their homes since the fire started in Pacific Palisades on January 7th, according to NBC Los Angeles. It has scorched more than 40,000 acres in less than a week and displacing almost 400,000

people according to Cal Fire data.

**At least 27 people** have been killed and more than 12,300 structures destroyed, including many celebrity mansions, in some of the worst fires in memory to engulf America's second biggest city. As of print time, the Palisades Fire is 56% contained, and the Eaton Fire is 73% contained.

The fire is on track to rank among the most expensive natural disasters in American history. Morningstar DBRS estimates insured losses from the infernos to surpass \$8 billion, a figure that could change depending on the final count of damaged properties. JP Morgan's analysts predict that overall insured losses could be higher than \$20 billion, a Financial Times report on January 10th suggested.

The LA fires will take a heavy toll on property insurers with exposure in areas affected by the blazes and in other states as well. Even before these catastrophic fires, the property insurance market in California—home to about 40 million people—had struggled due to the mounting risk of wildfires, surging construction costs and regulations limiting insurers' ability to hike rates. Some of the largest insurers, including State Farm and Allstate, have been quietly pulling out of the Golden State, refusing to either insure new customers or renew existing policies. The latest event may accelerate this insurer exodus, lead to increased premiums and make it even more difficult for homeowners to find affordable insurance in the state.

## LA's \$750k-A-Year Water Chief Janisse Quiñones 'Knew About Empty Reservoir and Broken Hydrants' Months Before Fires

The \$750,000-a-year LA water czar came from PG&E (remember PG&E from Erin Brockovich fame where PG&E poisoned the water in Hinkley, CA and the Dixie and Camp fires?). Those fires cost PG&E a \$13.5 billion legal settlement. The DailyMail.com writes, “She served as Senior Vice President at Pacific Gas & Electric from 2021 to 2023. PG&G’s power lines sparked the second-largest wildfire in California history, Dixie, in 2021. Quiñones is also responsible for a raft of failures that contributes to the devastating Palisades Fire, fire department insiders confided to the DailyMail.com.

“On Mayor Karen Bass’s orders, the city maxed out its budget to ‘attract private-sector talent’, hiring Department of Water and Power (LADWP) CEO Janisse Quiñones on a \$750,000 salary in May – almost double that of her predecessor,” as reported by the DailyMail.com.

Once again, per the DailyMail.com, “Quiñones is being blamed by LA Fire Department (LAFD) insiders for leaving a nearby reservoir disconnected and fire hydrants broken for months, leading to firefighters running out of water as they battled the devastating Palisades Fire.”

The DailyMail.com's take:

"It can simultaneously be true that stuff is on fire in LA, AND that the story of stuff being on fire is being weaponized by patriots in order to shed light on systemic corruption and long-buried truths."

Quiñones joined PG&E in April 2021 as Senior Vice President of Gas Engineering, switched to Senior Vice President of Electric Operations in





July 2022, and left the firm in December 2023.

Sources told DailyMail.com that since her hiring at LADWP, Quiñones oversaw the shutdown and emptying of a reservoir in the Pacific Palisades during brushfire season. Experts say the shutdown meant firefighters battling the current Palisades Fire ran out of water faster.

The Santa Ynez Reservoir is designed to hold 117 million gallons of drinking water. But it was taken offline in recent months to repair a tear in its cover that exposed the water and potentially impacted its drinkability. The shutdown was first publicly reported by the LA Times on Friday, January 10th. Former DWP general manager Martin Adams told the paper that having the Santa Ynez reservoir would have helped fight the Palisades Fire that wiped out most of the Pacific Palisades neighborhood this week.

'Would Santa Ynez have helped? Yes, to some extent. Would it have saved the day? I don't think so,' Adams said. He said the crucial reservoir had been offline 'for a while' before the fires, but didn't know the precise date.

But a source in the LA Fire Department (LAFD) told DailyMail.com that DWP officials told them 'had it not been closed they probably would have been ok and had enough water for the fire.'

As the fast-moving fire progressed into neighborhoods and consumed one block after another, fire crews were faced with another problem: fire hydrants had little to no water.

### Why did the hydrants run out?

By Tuesday afternoon, one of the LA Department of Water and Power water tanks that service the Palisades area ran out of water, according to Janisse Quiñones, chief executive and chief engineer.

Three tanks that each hold a capacity of 117 million gallons should maintain enough water pressure that allows water to travel uphill through pipes and to fire hydrants in the neighborhoods.

But water pressure began to decrease because of the heavy water use, LA Department of Water and Power officials said.

The second ran out at approximately 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday and the last tank ran out and 'went dry' at about 3 a.m. Wednesday, according to Janisse Quiñones, LADWP chief executive and chief engineer.

At a press conference shortly after the fires envelope Pacific Palisades, Quiñones said, “We had tremendous demand on our system in the Palisades. We pushed the system to the extreme-four times the normal demand was seen for 15 hours straight, which lowered our water pressure.”

A well-connected former LAFD senior officer told DailyMail.com that lack of water was already a ‘common’ problem, exacerbated by DWP failing to fix cutoff fire hydrants.

The Liberty Bell contacted the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) but the LADWP did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Per the former LAFD officer that spoke to the DailyMail.com, “Yearly, the fire department goes out and checks every hydrant. For my entire career we would do this once a year then send in a report to our Hydrant Unit with all the problems we encountered. Year after year the same hydrants that had problems were not fixed. One example that comes to mind were the hydrants by Palisades High School on Temescal Canyon. They were dry many times we checked them. DWP knew they had problems and it would take months to fix them. It’s a City-wide known problem with DWP. Last year the yearly hydrant checks were given back to DWP because the firefighters literally are too busy on calls. I would be willing to bet DWP didn’t do this. I would love to see if they have the documents.”

Also reported by the DailyMail.com, “A current senior LAFD official also told DailyMail.com that some hydrants in the Palisades were not working when desperate firefighters tried to use them this week, and that they had not been fixed because of budget cuts by LA Mayor Karen Bass.”

DailyMail.com exclusively obtained a memo to



© Diana Mack | Dreamstime.com

LAFD 'top brass' sent on Monday January 6, the day before the Palisades Fire began, revealing demands from Bass to cut the fire department's budget further, by 49 million, on top of \$17.6 million of cuts already voted on by the city council.

The Los Angeles Daily News previously reported that the city's overall spending on its fire department increased by \$53 million in the fiscal year 2024-25 which runs to this July, but that \$7 million of their budget was put in a separate fund for personnel while pay negotiations were still being hashed out, leading to the \$17.6 million accounting shortfall.

***“As officials try to determine the cause of a wildfire that has burned an estimated 7,000 structures in and around Altadena, investigators keep returning to an electrical transmission tower in Eaton Canyon.”***

Department veterans told DailyMail.com that the net effect of the budget machinations has meant less firefighters on the ground for years.

The under-fire LADWP was only just recovering from a series of major scandals, including in 2022 when its former General Manager David Wright was sentenced to six years in federal prison for bribery.

Wright took bribes from lawyer Paul Paradis to help secure a \$30 million, three-year, no-bid LADWP contract for the lawyer's company, according to federal prosecutors.

Compounding the corruption, Paradis was also taking nearly \$2.2 million in illegal kickbacks from a complex scheme where he simultaneously represented LADWP and residents suing the department over a billing debacle. LADWP implemented a new billing system in 2013 that inaccurately inflated utility bills, sparking class-action lawsuits.

Paradis represented the city as Special Counsel, but was simultaneously representing claimants in the billing debacle, and colluded to get a favorable payout for himself and clients. He was sentenced to three years in prison in 2023.



© Diana Mack | Dreamstime.com

Extreme dry weather conditions due to a prolonged drought, dry vegetation and powerful Santa Ana winds that reached up to 80 mph in some areas this week proved to be the 'perfect storm' for the worst fire the area has seen in more than two decades.

Fire officials believe the fires started in a back garden, but residents have told DailyMail.com they saw suspicious individuals in the area where smoke was first spotted.

Sources told DailyMail.com the Sant Ynez Reservoir was actually empty when the Palisades Fire began because it was closed for repairs. A source in the LA Fire Department told DailyMail.com that DWP officials told them ‘had it not been closed they probably would have been ok and had enough water for the fire.’ Former LADWP general manager Martin Adams told the LA Times if the reservoir was operating, it could have extended water pressure that first night.

LA County and LA City officials are facing even further scrutiny after residents pointed to a decision to suspend the annual fire hydrant testing for the 2024-25 fiscal year because of ‘fiscal challenges which are likely due to Mayor Bass reducing their budget.

LA Fire sources told DailyMail.com that city-wide fire hydrant testing was supposed to take place last January and usually took three days.

‘You have to make sure these hydrants work, and yes, it absolutely would’ve made a difference in fighting all of these fires,’ the source said. ‘We’ve had some issues with hydrants and that’s why it’s important to test them annually so we can tell LADWP to fix it. They can’t fix it unless they know it’s broken, and it was our job to do that but that [testing] was suspended.’

Sources also told the DailyMail.com that morale in the LA City and County fire departments are 'at an all-time low' as they faced severe budget cuts.

In the meantime, the city's police budget increased by \$126 million.

### Why was the fire department budget slashed?

Records show the city's fire department budget was cut more than \$17.5 million just seven months before the Palisades fire.

Mayor Laren Bass signed the budget allotting \$819.64 million for the fire department. In the previous fiscal year, the fire department's budget was \$837.2 million.

In a statement in June, Bass said the cuts were a necessary 'reset.'

The National Weather Service in LA issued numerous warnings about the dangerous weather conditions days leading up to the deadly Palisades fire. Why weren't more fire departments alerted in neighboring communities and at the federal level to prepare for the possibility of wildfires?

Firefighters with the LA Fire Department told the DailyMail.com they were not asked to mobilize until it was too late. Sources with the LA Fire Department said they did not receive a call to 'pre-deploy' until Tuesday morning. 'Usually, when there is a high wind warning, we staff extra fire engines to be ready to go', the source told the DailyMail.com. 'There should've



been a pre-deploy at least a day before. They didn't do that so we went home.'

Sources added that once many of the firefighters came back, some were once again called off by Wednesday, January 8th because there were not enough operable rigs.

*Fire agencies are investigating whether downed Southern California Edison utility equipment played a role in igniting the Hurst fire near Sylmar.*

'It would've made a huge difference, having 30 to 40 more engines they could have fully staffed. We could've done water shuttles into the fire, but when you don't have the apparatus, you can't do that.'

LAFD Chief Kristin Crowley wrote in a December 4 memo to the Board of Fire Commissioners that the budget cuts 'have adversely affected the Department's ability to maintain core operations.'

She added that the \$7 million reduction in overtime hours limited the Department's capacity 'to prepare for, train for and respond to large-scale emergencies'. It also affected the Department's other duties, including inspecting homes for brush clearance inspections on residential homes.

*"The department now has fewer firefighters and medics than it did 15 years ago, despite emergency calls surging by over 50% during the same period."*

LAFD Chief Kristine Crowley warned added budget cuts to her department's coffers would be detrimental. The DailyMail.com received an exclusive memo written by Los Angeles Mayor



© Fernando Astasio | Dreamstime.com

Bass, just a week prior to the devastating fires, where she demanded an additional \$49 million dollar budget cut from the Los Angeles Fire Department.

The memo said: 'The LAFD is still going through a FY [financial year] 2024/2025 \$48.8 million budget reduction exercise with the CAO [City Attorney's Office],' the document said.

The DailyMail.com reported, "The only way to provide a cost savings would be to close as many as 16 fire stations (not resources, fire stations); this equates to at least one fire station per City Council District."

Sources told the DailyMail.com that firefighters across the county are fed up. "We are running a skeleton crew every single day,' a veteran firefighter said. 'They didn't pre-deploy anybody and they didn't hire because they don't want to spend the money. We can't sustain 2,000 calls a day and successfully fight a wildfire. And no one does a damn thing because they don't give a s--t."



© Noman Hussain | Dreamstime.com

People fleeing the Palisades Fire abandoned their vehicles on Sunset Boulevard as flames surrounded the two-lane road

Police hastily told the motorists to abandon their cars and the residents - many who are elderly - struggled to walk down the road.

By 3 p.m., bulldozers were brought in to push dozens of abandoned cars on Palisades Drive so firetrucks could drive up the hillside where the fire was raging.

By the end of the night, the fire had already consumed hundreds of homes, businesses and other structures. Entire communities once known for posh shops and restaurants and multimillion dollar home were left unrecognizable.

Actor and comedian Billy Crystal wrote a heartbreaking statement on their loss.

'Janice and I lived in our home since 1979,' Crystal wrote.

'We raised our children and grandchildren here. Every inch of our house was filled with love. Beautiful memories that can't be taken away.

'We are heartbroken of course but with the love of our children and friends we will get through this.' 🕊



© Diana Mack | Dreamstime.com