



Metropolitan Water District

Operational Response to Wildfires



January 16, 2025

Topline

- Metropolitan did not sustain significant impacts or damage to its facilities as part of this emergency event. Extensive work has been done over the past 10 days to adjust operations, safeguard our infrastructure, and deliver water supplies requested by our member agencies.
- Metropolitan's focus continues to be supporting impacted water agencies through our operations and by collaborating with our member agencies and their retail agencies on mutual assistance, including providing skilled staff support and needed supplies.

Emergency Operations Center and System Operations

- Metropolitan's Emergency Operations Center was activated Tuesday, Jan. 7. The Incident Command Posts at Weymouth and Jensen treatment plants, and our Western distribution region, were activated as well. Over this past week, Metropolitan has had staff embedded in the LA County EOC, the Eaton Fire ICP at the Rose Bowl, and the Palisades ICP at Zuma Beach. We continue to maintain our command trailer and presence at the Rose Bowl ICP.
- Over the past 10 days, Metropolitan took extraordinary measures to help with the response to the wildfires, including increasing flows at our treatment plants in response to needs from our member agencies, ending a shutdown early to provide additional system flexibility and resilience, continuing reliable treatment and distribution operations despite power disruptions, and delivering water to an emergency service connection not typically used.
- Staff coordinated with CalFire, Los Angeles Fire Department, and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to ensure that Metropolitan's Sepulveda Pressure Control Structure (north of the Getty Center) was prioritized when it was threatened by the Palisades Fire. Staff also worked around the clock at Sepulveda PCS to monitor conditions, wet the facility perimeter with water trucks, and cut back vegetation to help protect the facility. Operation of this facility was essential to Metropolitan's deliveries of water to LADWP to support fighting the Palisades Fire.
- Metropolitan is beginning to phase down its EOC over the next few days, as we shift from emergency response to recovery efforts. We are establishing a cross-functional team that will continue supporting local water agencies impacted by the wildfires to recover systems.

Safety and Water Quality

- Metropolitan has done several site assessments to ensure safe conditions for staff working in impacted areas. Safety bulletins have been developed and are being shared with the member and retail agencies for their use.
- Metropolitan convened a virtual meeting for impacted agencies on wildfire impacts on water systems and recovery strategies. Purdue Professor Andrew Whelton, an expert on post-wildfire recovery of water systems and water quality, provided insight on potential sources of contamination, system testing and flushing needs, and communication with the public. Officials from the state's Division of Drinking Water also participated in the webinar. Additional meetings are planned.

Mutual Assistance

- Metropolitan staff has provided support and mutual assistance to Pasadena Water and Power and Foothill Municipal Water District, along with its retail agencies. This has included providing generators and pumps; deploying skilled electricians and mechanics to help with recovery; shuttling diesel fuel reserves for back-up generators for critical pumps; and delivering additional supplies and resources, including bottled water.
- Much of this mutual aid is in support of Foothill's retail agencies in the Altadena area, which have seen severe damage to seven reservoirs and thousands of water service connections. Metropolitan is helping these agencies assess their systems to determine rebuild needs as a way to hasten the restoration of water service to about 30,000 impacted residents.
- Staff is coordinating with public works and fire officials to remove hazardous trees and debris from damaged reservoirs within Altadena communities that are operated by Foothill Municipal Water District's retail water agencies.

Media Services and Community Outreach

- Metropolitan's media team has worked closely with member agencies to provide accurate information to local, national, and international outlets.
- In coordination with local agencies, Metropolitan used social media platforms including NextDoor, to share targeted messaging on water quality. This includes "Do Not Drink" warnings for drinking water systems affected by the Eaton Fire - and we are working with the appropriate agencies to help provide guidance for evacuated residents on safely resuming tap water use upon returning home.
- Our public outreach staff have worked with our operations and engineering experts to respond to inquiries from local city and county officials about local water infrastructure, including the Palos Verdes and Live Oak reservoirs.