



Feds raise releases at 2 dams in state

Trump orders huge boost, but California officials and water experts say the timing is wrong for farms.

BY IAN JAMES AND JESSICA GARRISON

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has dramatically increased the amount of water flowing from two dams in Tulare County, sending massive flows down river channels toward farmlands in the San Joaquin Valley.

Federal records show that water releases from Terminus Dam at Lake Kaweah and Schafer Dam at Lake Success jumped early Friday.

The sudden increase occurred four days after President Trump said on social media that the U.S. military had "entered" California and "TURNED ON THE WATER."

Trump also vowed during a visit to Los Angeles last week to "open up the valves and pumps" in California to deliver more water.

According to federal data, the flow from Terminus Dam into the Kaweah River near Visalia increased from 57 cubic feet per second to more than 1,500 on Friday morning. The flow from Lake Success near Porterville into the Tule River increased from 105 cubic feet per second to 990.

The Army Corps of Engineers is "conducting controlled water releases" from the two dams, said Tyler [See Dam releases, A7]

Escape from the Palisades

By Nathan Fenno, Melody Gutierrez and Paige St. John

The dirty brown smoke signaled trouble as it curled skyward near a popular hiking trail above Pacific Palisades on a breezy Tuesday morning in early January. A luxury real estate agent about to show a 7,200-square-foot mansion on West Sunset Boulevard wondered if a house up the hill had caught fire. A resident near the top of the stepped bluffs between the Santa Monica Mountains and the Pacific Ocean glanced briefly at the plume, then resumed pulling in trash cans as a garbage truck rumbled past. A mother running errands in posh Palisades Village watched the fire morph from back-of-the-mind concerning to all-out frightening before she rushed home. From backyard decks and breakfast tables, residents slowly realized this smokestack on the ridge wasn't stopping.

Decades of warnings that the community's three major roads were inadequate escape routes for thousands of people living in upper reaches of the Palisades proved prophetic. Streets were gridlocked at least 40 minutes before the first widespread evacuation order. As flames approached, firefighters and police told motorists to get out and run. The abandoned cars worsened the jam and prevented first responders from getting through. Residents trapped by blocked roads said they were forced to shelter in place. They wondered how — or if — they would escape.

The challenge of evacuating thousands of residents was compounded by delayed alerts and overwhelmed first responders. Residents told The Times they felt as if they were left to fend for themselves. But state leaders and fire officials assessing the evacuation that day said getting people out quickly was the primary focus.

Los Angeles city and county emergency man-

agement departments would provide no details of how they coordinated evacuation orders, or why repeated requests for an evacuation order by fire commanders at the scene were not immediately heeded.

Twelve deaths have been tied to the Palisades fire. More than 5,400 homes were destroyed. What was remarkable, to both residents and seasoned fire veterans, was that the snarled evacuation in one of the worst wildfires in modern California history did not take a greater toll.

This is the story of the first critical hours of that fire, when thousands of terrified residents had to decide whether and how to flee the inferno churning through hillsides and threatening their homes. Based on dozens of interviews, an analysis of more than 40 hours of dispatch recordings, public records and time-stamped photos and videos, it details the chaotic, heart-pounding and disorganized exodus of Jan. 7. [See Palisades, A10]

Photo illustration by JIM COOKE Los Angeles Times; Photos courtesy of TY DUFFY, DAVID HANSEN, GEOFF GRANT, LEE MINTZ

As Altadena waited, fire officials faced chaos

Command post scrambled to respond to the erratic fury of Eaton blaze

BY TERRY CASTLEMAN AND GRACE TOOHEY

As flames exploded from the parched hillsides of Eaton Canyon on Jan. 7, fire agencies faced a crisis far beyond their worst reckoning.

In just a few hours, hurricane-force winds would stoke three major Los Angeles-area wildfires like a hellish bellows, and perilous flight conditions would ground all aircraft — hampering emergency commanders' ability to track the

fire's chaotic movement. On the streets of Altadena, thick black smoke was limiting visibility to several feet in some areas, and howling winds lofted embers over the heads of firefighters.

It was in this difficult environment that a group of

emergency officials established a mobile command center to coordinate the fight against the Eaton fire and help get residents out of harm's way. In the course of three hours, the center was moved twice as officials [See Command, A8]

TARIFFS HEIGHTEN TRADE WORRIES

Trump's sweeping levies on goods from Mexico, Canada and China raise fears about consumer costs.

BY KATE LINTHICUM AND DON LEE

WASHINGTON — President Trump slapped sweeping tariffs on goods from Mexico, Canada and China on Saturday, sending shock waves through the global supply chain and sparking fears of a disruptive trade war that could dramatically raise costs for U.S. consumers.

Trump signed executive orders placing duties of 25% on imports from Mexico and Canada, except for a 10% rate on Canadian energy products. He imposed a 10% tax on all imports from China.

The White House said the tariffs would go into effect Tuesday and could be raised if the targeted countries retaliate with tariffs of their own, as they have threatened.

In a post on Truth Social, the president said he was taxing imports from those countries because he blames them for the flow of undocumented immigrants and drugs into the United States.

The three nations are America's top trading partners, supplying the U.S. with food, medicine, oil, cars, timber and electronics.

The tariffs against Canada and Mexico upend a trade pact that dates back three decades and is the linchpin of many tightly integrated industries across North America. Trump himself signed the newest version of the trade accord during his first term, praising the 2020 [See Tariffs, A9]

Prosecutors in Jan. 6 cases fired

Trump administration also demands names of FBI agents for potential removal. NATION, A4

Trump edict has colleges on alert

Order on antisemitism and his threat to expel some students raise concern. CALIFORNIA, B1

Brunch prices may increase

Restaurants that rely on eggs face a costly shortage caused by bird flu. WEEKEND, L2

Weather

Partly sunny. L.A. Basin: 71/50. B10

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