

LA firefighters battle Monster inferno as death toll rises to 16



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BBC News

Firefighters are racing against time to contain the deadly wildfires threatening Los Angeles, with the Palisades fire advancing toward the affluent Brentwood neighborhood. Aerial crews are deploying water and fire retardant to slow the spread of the inferno, which has expanded by 1,000 acres, menacing homes of celebrities like Arnold Schwarzenegger and LeBron James.

The fires have claimed 16 lives, according to the LA County Coroner's Office, with 11 fatalities

attributed to the Eaton fire and five to the Palisades blaze. High winds, forecasted to intensify over the weekend, risk worsening the crisis. The Palisades fire has already scorched nearly 23,000 acres and is only 11% contained, while the Eaton fire has burned 14,000 acres and is 15% contained.

The situation has prompted mass evacuations, with over 153,000 residents under mandatory orders and another 166,000 on high alert. The Getty Center, housing 125,000 priceless artworks, remains in the evacuation zone but has sustained no damage.

Officials face mounting criticism over resource shortages, particularly dry hydrants that hampered initial firefighting efforts. Los Angeles Fire Chief Kristin Crowley criticized budget cuts that sidelined over 100 fire apparatuses, complicating the emergency response. Governor Gavin Newsom has ordered an investigation into why a key reservoir was out of service during the disaster.

Despite support from neighboring states, Canada, and Mexico, containment efforts remain challenging. The wildfires, fueled by gusty Santa Ana winds, have devastated an area over twice the size of Manhattan, with no confirmed cause yet. Firefighters continue to battle the flames amid growing calls for accountability and urgent solutions