


CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE



Date: September 16, 2025

To: Honorable Members of the City Council

From: Carol P. Parks, General Manager 
Emergency Management Department

Subject: CF#25-006-S35 **CITY PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES FOR RED FLAG WARNING DECLARATIONS**

I. Background

In accordance with motion [CF#25-006-S35](#) made by Councilmember Nithya Raman on January 14, 2025, the Emergency Management Department (EMD) submits this report, in collaboration with various organizations, including Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD), Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP), Department of Transportation (LADOT), Department of Building and Safety (LADBS), and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). This report covers: 1) the definition of a "Red Flag Warning" per the National Weather Service (NWS); 2) the definition of a "Red Flag Day" established by LAFD; 3) the City departments' protocols that go in effect during either a NWS Red Flag Warning or a LAFD-declared Red Flag Day; and 4) additional recommendations.

II. National Weather Service: Red Flag Warning

The NWS is the Los Angeles region's primary source of weather information. It issues weather forecasts and alerts to inform the public about weather events, including Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings.

The NWS issues a Red Flag Warning when specific regional criteria are met. For the NWS Los Angeles/Oxnard Office, a Red Flag Warning indicates that weather and fuel conditions are expected to meet the threshold for a particular fire weather zone within 48 hours. These conditions include low humidity, strong winds, dry fuels, or any combination of these factors. The criteria that trigger a Red Flag Warning for the Los Angeles region are defined as:

- Relative humidity of 15% or less **with either** sustained winds of 25 mph or greater and/or frequent gusts 35 mph or greater, lasting 6 hours or more; or
- Relative humidity of 10% or less **with either** sustained winds 15 mph or greater and/or frequent gusts 25 mph or greater, lasting 6 hours or more

Additionally, the NWS may issue a Fire Weather Watch up to 96 hours in advance of when these hazardous conditions are expected to develop.

In 2020, the NWS introduced the "Particularly Dangerous Situation (PDS)" designation for Red Flag Warnings of extreme severity. Until then, this designation was typically reserved for extremely severe weather events like tornadoes and flooding. According to the NWS, the threshold for a PDS Red Flag Warning is 3 hours or more of the following coinciding conditions:

- Relative humidity in the single digits along with sustained winds of 35 mph or greater and/or gusts of 60 mph or greater; and
- Live fuel moistures less than 60%; dead fuel moisture less than 7%

The NWS first issued a PDS Red Flag Warning in October and December of 2020. The PDS Red Flag Warning is considered a rare event, with an occurrence interval of 3-5 years. However, since November 2024, the NWS has issued five (5) PDS Red Flag Warnings for Los Angeles County.

III. Los Angeles Fire Department: Red Flag Day Parking Restrictions

The LAFD declares a Red Flag Day based on specific microclimates within the City of Los Angeles in coordination with NWS and other weather data calculations. While NWS issues Red Flag Warnings that may affect portions or the entire region, LAFD focuses on the conditions and impacts within City boundaries. A Red Flag Day is declared when:

- wind speeds reach 25 mph or greater; and
- humidity levels are 15% or less; or
- NWS declares a Red Flag Warning impacting the City of Los Angeles

When a Red Flag Day is declared by LAFD, according to Ordinance #177215, Red Flag Parking Restrictions are automatically activated in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ). These restrictions are critical for maintaining public safety, as vehicles left on narrow roads, sharp curves, hairpin turns, or key intersections can block emergency vehicle access and potentially trap residents during an evacuation. LADOT is responsible for posting and maintaining signs to alert the public of these restricted parking areas, while both LADOT and LAPD enforce compliance. Red Flag Parking restrictions are activated for 24-hour periods, from 8:00 AM to 8:00 AM the following day. These restrictions can be extended based on changing and incoming weather information.

Public notification is a critical component in ensuring residents in VHFHSZ are both aware and able to comply with the Red Flag Parking Restrictions. Information is shared through a variety of channels including the City's 3-1-1 operators, local media outlets, social media platforms, LAFD's website, and the dedicated Red Flag Day [website](#). In addition, residents can subscribe to opt-in alerts, which provide timely reminders whenever restrictions are in effect.

IV. Existing Protocols and Procedures: NWS Red Flag Warning or LAFD Red Flag Day

This section outlines the existing protocols and procedures that City departments follow during Red Flag weather conditions. Agencies such as EMD or LAHSA, activate their procedures once the NWS issues a Red Flag Warning, which generally occurs before LAFD declares a Red Flag Day. Other departments initiate protocols upon the issuance of a LAFD Red Flag Day. In some cases, NWS may also issue a Red Flag Warning without it reaching the threshold for LAFD to declare a Red Flag Day.

Emergency Management Department

Trigger: In the event that the NWS declares a Red Flag Warning in the Los Angeles region.

Existing Protocols:

● Pre-Red Flag Coordination Timeline

- NWS indicates the potential for an upcoming Red Flag Warning, including a Particularly Dangerous Situation (PDS) Red Flag Warning.
- The EMD Duty Officer (DO) will inform EMD Management, the Mayor's Office of Public Safety, and the City's Adverse Weather Group that an Adverse Weather Coordination Call for fire weather conditions may occur.
- The EMD DO tasks Duty Team member(s) to assist with creating an agenda, scheduling a virtual coordination call, and inviting the adverse weather group, ideally at least 24 hours before the start of the Red Flag Warning period.
- EMD Duty Team member(s) develop a City Leadership Briefing to be distributed to elected officials and other City executive leaders.
- EMD Duty Team member(s), in coordination with the Mayor's Office and EMD Duty Officer, send a message to NotifyLA subscribers informing residents about the NWS weather forecasts, steps to prepare, and ways to stay informed.

● Red Flag Warning Coordination Timeline

- NWS declares an upcoming Red Flag Warning in the region.
- The EMD DO will confirm the scheduled Citywide Adverse Weather Coordination Call
 - EMD confirms with LAFD if they are declaring a "LAFD Red Flag Warning Parking Restriction"
- The EMD DO may designate several duty team members to be on-call during the duration of the Red Flag Warning event or activate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) if EMD, LAFD, and LAPD management deem necessary.
- The EMD DO requests an updated 24/7 point of contact from City departments that have a response role in the event of a wildfire during the Red Flag period.
- The EMD DO requests emPOWER data from the Public Health Liaison.
- EMD's Public Health Liaison coordinates with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health regarding air quality and smoke impacts. This liaison receives smoke advisories.

Los Angeles Fire Department

LAFD has established structured protocols to manage fire weather conditions and ensure operational readiness.

Existing Protocols:

- **Weather Monitoring & Planning (Daily Occurrence):**

- Daily weather conditions from NWS are monitored by Assistant Chief 4 (AC4). The department's weather subject matter expert, in collaboration with AC4, incorporate NWS data and local weather information to determine the need for a Tactics Meeting to discuss and approve an augmented resource deployment for extreme weather. The Metropolitan Fire Communication Battalion Chief (MFC BC) also monitors NWS data and coordinates Pre-Positioning Authorization Orders in conjunction with Cal OES, which provides staffing cost reimbursements to certain augmented resources. Once it is determined that current or predicted fire weather conditions meet resource pre-deployment and augmentation guidelines, a Tactics Meeting conference call is initiated.

- **Tactics Meeting (3:00PM)**

- Led by AC4, command staff, and weather subject matter experts (SMEs). Deployment decisions are guided by the updated All-Hazard Augmented Staffing & Pre-Deployment Decision Matrix (August 2025), which has been enhanced with more mandatory resource augmentations, rather than discretionary. Deployment plans are approved by the Deputy Department Commander (DDC). Considerations are made for PDS Red Flag conditions in resource augmentations beyond the Inclement Weather Matrix.

- **Approval & Notification (5:00PM)**

- Augmented deployment is communicated citywide via Official Notice and Fire Station Alert System. LAFD Chief of Staff makes notifications to Council Districts and EMD for Red Flag.

- **Operational Briefing (10:00AM the following day)**

- Ensures alignment of all pre-deployed and augmented resources for the 24-hour operational period.

- **Red Flag Protocols**

- A Red Flag Warning automatically activates the City's Red Flag Parking Enforcement Program.

- **State Support**

- LAFD pursues Cal OES Pre-Positioning Authorization Orders to secure reimbursable staffing support when predicted weather meets Cal OES established thresholds. LAFD's weather monitoring aligns with Regional and State resources.

Recommended Enhancements:

- **Expand Enforcement**
 - Increase DOT/LAPD and/or LAFD patrols during Red Flag and PDS events, coordinating with LAPD to ensure roadway access and evacuation routes.
- **Increase Penalties**
 - Review and strengthen fines for Red Flag parking violations to improve compliance and provide funding for preparedness measures.

Fiscal Impact:

- Provide additional discretionary funding for augmented resource staffing. Total anticipated cost of full Red Flag augmented deployment per day = \$764,819.16. Some of these costs may be offset by Cal OES Prepositioning Authorization Order reimbursements under qualifying events. These costs only represent field resources, not potential overhead staffing for Field Incident Management Teams, EOC/DOC Incident Management Teams, or administrative staff work.
- Additional costs anticipated for DOT and LAPD staffing to support expanded enforcement operations.

Los Angeles Police Department

Trigger: In the event that LAFD declares a Red Flag Day.

Existing Protocols:

- When made aware of reports of a declared Red Flag Day, the Watch Commander of the Department Operations Center, shall contact the Floor Captain, Metropolitan Fire Communications, Los Angeles Fire Department, or contact Los Angeles Fire Department Dispatch to verify the declaration.
- Upon notification by the Los Angeles Fire Department of a Red Flag Day, the Department Operations Center shall ensure that a Red Flag Day broadcast is made through the Communications Division.
- Geographical Areas with an urban/wildland interface should utilize their Red Flag Alert Single Purpose Operations Plan, if included in their Standing Plans.
- The Department Operations Center shall specifically notify all Traffic Divisions of potential need for Motor Strike Teams and determine the number of Motor Strike Teams available for deployment in the event of a major brushfire.
- The Department Operations Center shall notify the Office of Operations that a Red Flag Day condition exists. The Office of Operations will notify the Department's Homeless Coordinator to assist with the notification of persons within the affected Red Flag Alert areas that might need resources and services to be coordinated.

Department of Recreation and Parks

Trigger: In the event that LAFD declares a Red Flag Day.

Existing Protocols:

- Any park property can be authorized to be closed by the General Manager, Chief Park Ranger, or RAP's Duty Officer due to a potential hazard or is deemed unsafe.
 - When a park is closed, the public is notified via social media, website updates, and posted signs.

Deployed Resources:

- During Red Flag Day conditions, maintenance operates as normal and additionally works with LAFD to mirror their priorities if staffing allows. Priorities can include coordinating the evacuation of Persons Experiencing Homelessness (PEH) in high-fire zones and increasing the amount of equipment deployed in the field.
 - Deployed Equipment and Resources include:
 - 6 - 3 Yard Dump Trucks
 - 3 - 5 Yard Dump Trucks
 - 3 - Compact Track Loaders
 - 4 - Crew Cab Trucks
 - 1 - Pickup Truck
 - 1 - Peterbilt Semi
 - 3 - Park Maintenance Supervisors
 - 2 - Equipment Operators
 - 5 - Senior Gardeners
 - 13 - Gardener Caretakers
- Park Rangers
 - The Park Ranger Division currently has a procedure to monitor the fire weather for the City of Los Angeles as posted by LAFD on <https://lafdweather.blogspot.com/>
 - Whenever the fire weather rating is forecasted to be "Very High", the following actions are taken:
 - The Park Ranger Division staffs one engine with three personnel
 - The Park Ranger Division stages a water tender at the Griffith Park Ranger Station and another at the Hansen Dam Park Ranger Station
 - Operators assigned to patrol respond to the station and then respond in the water tender, if required
 - The Park Ranger Division has (9) brush patrols and deploys as many as staffing permits
 - Whenever the fire weather is predicted to be Extreme or Red Flag, the following actions are taken:
 - The Park Ranger Division staffs two fire engines:
 - One Type III engine with 625 gallons of water and off-road capability
 - One Type V engine with 400 gallons of water and off-road capability

Department of Recreation and Parks

- Two 2000-gallon water tenders are staged individually at the Griffith Park and Hansen Dam Park Ranger Stations.
- The Park Ranger Division staffs as many of the 10 brush patrols, as possible:
 - The Park Ranger Division resources are deployed in areas where the most fires have been reported or where the threat is most imminent based on fire weather forecasts.
 - Park Ranger supervisors regularly contact LAFD regarding our fire deployment, equipment status, and availability.
- Park signs are posted in the picnic areas, normally about open flames, and are enforced by maintenance and park rangers
- Existing -The costs vary depending on existing staffing levels and additional staffing needed. On average, 3 additional personnel are placed on overtime when the fire danger is Very High or above. The costs are approximately \$2,500 a day.

Recommended Actions:

- The ordinance below should be modified to address the fire danger rating rather than the dates listed in the ordinance.
 - 63.44 P LAMC (New Subsec. P. Added by Ord. No. 179,129, Eff. 8/28/07.) Within the limit of any park designated by this subsection as being in a high fire hazard zone and between April 1 and November 1 of each year:
 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Code, no person shall light, ignite, set fire to, or burn any substance, or maintain an open flame of any kind for any purpose, including but not limited to cooking and barbecuing, except in areas specifically designated and posted to allow open flames.
 2. The Department shall post and maintain “No Open Flame” signs in conspicuous locations. These signs shall clearly and conspicuously recite the phrase “NO OPEN FLAMES BETWEEN APRIL 1 AND NOVEMBER 1” and shall cite this subdivision of Section [63.44](#) of the Los Angeles Municipal Code. The General Manager of the Department shall be authorized when fire hazardous conditions are present, to extend the period during which open flames are prohibited in parks designated by this subdivision; provided, if open flames are not permitted before April 1st or after November 1st, the Department shall modify the signs required by this subdivision to provide notice of the dates that open flames are prohibited.
 - The above section creates an undue burden on Recreation and Parks to adjust signs based on arbitrary dates.

Department of Building and Safety

Existing Protocols:

- The Department of Building and Safety does not have an existing protocol when NWS or LAFD issues a Red Flag Warning/Day. However, the Hillside Construction Regulations

(HCR) require that all grading and hauling operations be discontinued during Red Flag Days as determined by the Los Angeles Fire Department. Grading operations involve an excavator digging into the ground while another machine distributes the excavated soil to achieve the desired grade level. Conversely, hauling activities entail placing the excavated material onto a truck, which then transports it off-site to a designated location. If the Department receives complaints from the public regarding these violations, a correction to stop grading and hauling operations work will be issued.

Department of Transportation

Trigger: In the event that LAFD declares Red Flag Day parking restrictions.

Existing Protocols:

- **The following are LADOT's policies and procedures for enforcing Red Flag Day violations:**
 - The Los Angeles Fire Department must declare Red Flag Day Restriction enforcement for the City, and official notification to LADOT must be received via the Communication Center before enforcement of the posted areas can begin. Although news media may broadcast a "Red Flag Restrictions is in effect", LADOT will not enforce parking restrictions unless it receives written notification from LAFD.
- **Notification Procedures and Enforcement:**
 - Red Flag Day Restrictions declared by LAFD.
 - Written notification via email and fax to all Area Captains and Communication Lieutenant regarding Red Flag Day enforcement.
 - Additional verification can be viewed on the LAFD website at www.lafd.org/redflag/.
 - Contact LAFD Captains and request priority enforcement locations.
 - Notify Roll Calls of Red Flag Day Restriction enforcement.
 - Broadcast requests for the enforcement of vehicles parked in violation of posted Red Flag restrictions received from citizens in LAFD priority enforcement areas.
 - Only enforce designated Red Flag (LAMC 80.072(b)) posted areas dispatched via Communications and assigned by a supervisor.
- All vehicles owned by private citizens engaged in filming activities, construction, or other City-related purposes must comply with Red Flag Parking Restrictions without exemptions.

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

Trigger: In the event that NWS declares a Red Flag Warning in the Los Angeles region.

Existing Protocols:

- **Outreach Protocol for Fire Risk**
 - **Purpose:** These protocols prioritize the safety of individuals and the surrounding community. By working together, everyone can reduce fire risks and protect their

environment.

- **Activation Triggers:** Notification by NWS and LA City to LAHSA's Access and Engagement team of when the threshold is 95 degrees or higher (for two consecutive days) is reached to provide the following resources:
 - Community Collaboration and Resources
 - Homeless Engagement Teams (HET) will partner with local fire departments and community organizations to strengthen fire safety education efforts.
 - Continue to collaborate with LAFD PEH Liaison on continued education.
 - Safety & Fire Risk Education
 - Fire Safety Do's:
 - Example: Do use fire-resistant materials when possible; Do store flammable items away from open flames and heat sources, etc.
 - Fire Safety Don'ts:
 - Example: Don't discard lit cigarettes, matches, or any objects near flammable materials; Don't use fire for warmth or cooking in areas not designated for such activity; Don't store flammable items near living spaces, etc.
 - Distribution of fire safety and risk educational flyers below:
 - [Heat relief and outreach](#)
 - [Homeless encampment survey factsheet](#)
- **Flags for Outreach**
 - Reporting Concerns with Flammable Items:
 - *HET members' responsibility:*
 - Any member of HET who identifies concerns related to flammable materials must immediately notify their supervisor.
 - Concerns may include, but are not limited to, discarded items like aerosol cans, improperly stored cooking materials, or illegal fires. Routine checks of high-risk areas (e.g., near shelters or gathering spots) to ensure that fire safety protocols are being followed.
 - *Supervisor Action:*
 - Upon receiving notification of the concern, the supervisor will contact the LAPD Homeless Coordination Division for assistance in verifying and addressing any potential fire hazards.
 - If flammable materials are identified in areas where individuals are sheltered, appropriate measures (such as removal or safe storage) will be taken to reduce fire risk.
 - LAHSA will deploy teams to VHFHSZ identified by LAFD.
- **Ongoing Outreach by HET:**
 - Continued Outreach and Education:
 - The HET will regularly engage with PEH to provide continuous education on fire safety. This will include distributing materials like brochures, offering verbal safety reminders, and providing direct demonstrations where possible.
 - Outreach efforts should focus on fostering a sense of community

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

responsibility, emphasizing that fire safety is not only about individual well-being but also about protecting the broader environment and the safety of others.

- Feedback and Improvement: HET members will gather feedback from PEH and the community to assess the effectiveness of the outreach efforts. Regular meetings will be scheduled to discuss challenges, successes, and areas for improvement in the fire safety education campaign.
- **Resource Distribution and Linkage to Interim Housing Resources**
 - Distribution of resources: cooling towels, electrolytes, hand-held fans, water, and N95 masks.
 - Transportation to cooling centers and referrals to interim housing sites.

Recommended Actions:

- LAHSA is developing a detailed protocol for an Interim Housing evacuation site in case of a fire emergency, including a timeline for notifying the Council Districts.

V. Additional Recommendations

The following are additional recommendations to strengthen wildfire preparedness. While departments, such as EMD, are proactively developing new protocols to address identified gaps, other actions require policy modifications or further review:

1. Update Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)'s Adverse Weather and Brush Fire Annexes

The City's EOP, specifically the Adverse Weather and Brush Fire Annexes, currently do not include a threshold for PDS Red Flag Warning. Since the NWS introduced this in 2020, and the City experienced its first PDS Red Flag Warning in early October/December 2020, these annexes have yet to be updated to reflect this category. Currently, EMD is in the process of updating all of the EOP annexes which will be completed in the first quarter of 2026. These upcoming revisions will incorporate the actions taken during the January 2025 fires to ensure guidance for future PDS declarations. Recommendations for updates include:

- Public Notification - Continue collaboration with the Mayor's Office and LAFD to issue a NotifyLA alert to residents providing information about the PDS and Red Flag Day parking restrictions (when declared by LAFD).
- EOC Activation - Activate the EOC to Level 3 at a minimum before the NWS PDS Red Flag Warning declaration goes into effect, and place EOC responders from other City departments on-call, establishing staffing plans to support both potential day and night EOC shifts.
- Additional Outside Stakeholder Input - EMD will continue to work with the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management to obtain updates from Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) or Mountains Recreation and

Conservation Authority (MRCA). While EMD established direct contact with SMMC and MRCA, it's important to note that these organizations also collaborate directly with LAFD.

2. Explore Regulatory Framework for Outdoor Activity Restrictions

For spaces outside of parks managed by RAP, there are no formal ordinances or requirements to prohibit outdoor activities such as barbecuing, which pose a fire risk during Red Flag Warnings. While LAFD often issues guidance to cease such activities, this remains only a recommendation that cannot be enforced.

3. Examine Authority Over Construction Activities

LADBS does not have the authority to halt construction activities in hillside or VHFHSZ areas when a Red Flag Day is declared by LAFD. While they can issue orders to stop grading, they cannot mandate a complete suspension of construction operations, some of which may generate sparks or pose other fire ignition risks in those locations.

4. Expand Heavy Tow Truck Inventory

If heavy construction equipment is parked in a parking restricted area during an LAFD-declared Red Flag Day, LADOT cannot issue a standard parking citation, as most of this equipment does not have a registered license plate. In such cases, LADOT must coordinate with LAPD to determine whether the equipment can be impounded. This process can be time-consuming and requires significant coordination, as the LAPD's Official Police Garage has a limited number of tow trucks capable of handling heavy equipment.

VI. January 2025 Fires and Windstorm After Action Report

In summary, this report provides an overview of existing protocols and preliminary recommendations to enhance the City's wildfire preparedness. While these initial findings are an important step toward improved readiness, a more comprehensive analysis will be included in the January 2025 Fires and Windstorm After Action Report (AAR). The AAR will identify gaps, evaluate lessons learned, and outline an improvement plan to further strengthen the City's capability to respond to future wildfire incidents.