



Agenda Report

October 6, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: City Manager

SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION TERMINATING THE LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY ISSUED BY DECLARATION OF THE HEALTH OFFICER IN RESPONSE TO THE EATON FIRE EVENTS AND WINDSTORM CONDITIONS IN THE CITY OF PASADENA

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that this action proposed herein is not a "project" subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 21065 and within the meaning of Section 15378(b); and
2. Adopt a resolution terminating the Local Public Health Emergency issued by Declaration of the Health Officer in response to the Eaton fire events and windstorm conditions in the City of Pasadena.

BACKGROUND:

On January 7, 2025, Pasadena was struck by extraordinarily severe windstorms and destructive fires causing widespread damage to infrastructure, structures, and roads, and caused power outages, downed trees, road closures, and significant debris. In the days immediately following the windstorm and fires, there was widespread concern about risks to public health posed by the environmental impact of the Eaton Fire.

Dr. Parveen Kaur, in her capacity as Health Officer for the City of Pasadena, issued a declaration of local health emergency pursuant to California Health and Safety Code Section 101080 on January 15, 2025. The declaration focused on mitigating the potential public health impacts on the City by the windstorm and fires. The declaration of local health emergency was ratified by City Council on January 17, 2025.

On February 22, 2025, Dr. Kaur, in her capacity as Health Officer, issued an amended declaration of local health emergency to reflect changes in response needs for the Eaton Fire. The amended declaration focused public health efforts on reducing potential

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exposure to environmental contaminants in ash and particulate matter; ensuring the safe removal of toxic substances from private properties; and positioning the city to access available state and federal funding for public health protection efforts. The amended declaration of local health emergency was ratified by City Council on March 3, 2025.

In the time since, the Pasadena Public Health Department (PPHD) has continued to work in collaboration with county, state, and federal partners to collect and evaluate environmental data and provided public health guidance, when needed, to protect public health. Conditions in the Pasadena community have now reached a point where the most immediate public health threats posed by the Eaton Fire have subsided and ongoing public health response efforts can be absorbed within existing operations, ending the need for a local public health emergency declaration. A summary of Department efforts to date is provided below.

Early Emergency Response Efforts

Medical Support at the Evacuation Shelter

When the unprecedented wildfire struck the mountain range north of Pasadena the evening of January 7, the City of Pasadena immediately opened an Evacuation Shelter at the Pasadena Convention Center. Within three hours of the shelter opening, PPHD clinical staff began providing medical support to residents at the shelter including treatment for minor wounds and triaging more serious medical concerns. Within a few hours of the deployment of PPHD staff, the population at the Evacuation Shelter swelled to over 1,100 residents – including over 400 evacuees from long-term care facilities with high acuity medical needs.

The Evacuation Shelter was not intended or designed to be a medical shelter but with the influx of residents with acute medical needs, PPHD staff coordinated over 100 clinical volunteers and partnered with 17 medical providers, other government agencies, and academic institutions to provide basic medical care to evacuees. Within 48 hours of opening of the shelter, the Department coordinated the transfer of long-term care facility residents to appropriate medical facilities in the region. Staff are pleased to report that no lives were lost among long-term care facility residents as a result of the evacuations.

On January 9, the Department partnered with Kaiser Permanente and AltaMed to open onsite health clinics to provide health assessments, preventive care, medication dispensing, mental health assessment and counseling, and enrollment in health insurance services. On January 11, PPHD staff helped transition all shelter operations, including management of medical support services, to the American Red Cross.

Infection Prevention and Control at the Evacuation Shelter

With the transition of medical support services management to the American Red Cross, PPHD staff pivoted to coordinating infection prevention and control at the Evacuation Shelter. In congregate settings, such as evacuation shelters, the spread of illness is common and mitigation requires coordination and strong adherence to infection prevention protocols.

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The first cases of gastrointestinal illness were reported by evacuees on January 13 and a norovirus outbreak was confirmed the next day. By January 15, case numbers had increased to 18 and both evacuees and staff fell ill. On January 17, PPHD staff coordinated deployment of additional signage, supplemental handwashing stations, and disinfectants from the Environmental Protection Agency List G, which have been tested specifically for effectiveness with norovirus. On January 21, the Health Officer issued a Health Officer Order requiring evacuation shelter personnel to wear face masks to protect against the spread of illness. In addition, Department staff partnered with Pasadena Convention Center staff, medical providers, housekeeping services, and the American Red Cross to promote adherence to infection prevention protocols. The number of cases dropped to zero on January 22. While there were isolated cases through January 31, Department staff were able to knock down a potentially significant norovirus outbreak within nine days.

Another key to preventing the spread of illness at the Evacuation Shelter was the issuance of Isolation and Quarantine protocols for influenza and COVID-19 by the Health Officer. Staff created isolation and quarantine dormitories where residents were isolated from other evacuees, provided dedicated restrooms, and 24/7 medical support. PPHD staff also isolated evacuees at motels including providing transportation, food deliveries, medication deliveries, and social support.

Emergency Support

PPHD staff expedited inspections and approval of health permits for food service operations at the Evacuation Shelter and school campuses to support displaced educational services. In addition, staff expedited animal display permits to support well-being at the Evacuation Shelter. Regrettably, several unpermitted food vendors were attracted to the Evacuation Shelter. Department staff enforced state law to reduce the potential of foodborne illness in the Evacuation Shelter.

Point of Distribution (POD) at 450 N. Lake Avenue

In partnership with the Pasadena Water and Power Department and Los Angeles County Public Works, PPHD staff coordinated a Point of Distribution site at 450 N. Lake Avenue from January 15 through January 19. In total, the Department distributed over 147,000 N95 masks, 1,000 booties, and 130 Direct Relief kits in addition to 5,823 cases of bottled water and 845 cases of sparkling water.

Reducing Potential Exposure to Wildfire-Related Contaminants

Testing of City Facilities

Department staff worked in partnership with the City of Pasadena Safety Office to conduct testing at nine City facilities including: the Pasadena Public Health Department, Hastings Library, Victory Park, Santa Catalina Library, Jefferson Library, La Pintoresca Library, Jackie Robinson Community Center, Villa Parke Community Center, and Washington Park Community House. The testing was completed the week ending February 22, and found no asbestos and all lead measurements to be below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Dust Lead Action Level (DLAL) of 5 micrograms of lead per square foot (mg/ft²), a strict standard established to protect children in homes and childcare centers.

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The testing confirmed city facilities were safe for city staff and operations serving the public.

Soil Testing at City Parks

PPHD staff worked in partnership with the City of Pasadena Safety Office to conduct soil sampling the week of April 26, at six City parks including Alice's Dog Park, Allendale Park, Hamilton Park, Robinson Park, Washington Park, and Victory Park. The lead levels for all the parks sampled were below the California screening threshold and results for other heavy metal levels were below state thresholds. The results confirmed that lead and heavy metals in park soil were not concerns to human health.

Air Quality Monitoring

On April 7, Department staff deployed a professional air quality sensor at 1845 N. Fair Oaks, as part of a collaborative air monitoring effort led by the California Institute of Technology (CalTech), joining the Post-fire airborne Hazard Observation Environmental Network for Integrated Xposure-monitoring (PHOENIX) network composed of 25 QuantAQ Modulair-PM air quality sensors. The sensors provide real-time estimates of particulate matter concentrations, help monitor air quality in the community, and assess the effectiveness of fugitive dust control measures. The data gathered through the network is available to community members who can use the data to monitor trends in air quality on a web-based user-friendly map.

On April 25, the Department coordinated the deployment of nine PurpleAir FLEX air quality sensors at city facilities across neighborhoods north of the 210 Freeway. PurpleAir provides a network of sensors with data presented on a web-based user-friendly map. The sensors provide real-time access to air quality data measuring particulate matter (PM) to help residents monitor air quality in their neighborhood.

Blood Lead Level Testing

PPHD staff have been promoting access to free blood lead level testing offered through Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) and reviewing test result data to assess the risk of lead poisoning to Pasadena residents after the wildfire. Since the launch of the free blood lead testing initiative in wildfire-impacted areas, LACDPH has offered free blood lead level testing at community events and through their partnership with Quest Diagnostics. Of the 1,807 individuals tested through September 2, all but nine test results have been below the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) blood lead reference value (BLRV) of 3.5 micrograms per deciliter, indicating no elevated blood lead levels among the vast majority of those tested. The nine individuals with slightly elevated blood lead levels are all adults. Community members interested in accessing free blood lead testing can ask their doctor for a blood lead test or request an appointment at Quest Diagnostics by calling 1-800-LA-4-LEAD.

Soil Testing

PPHD staff have also promoted access to the LACDPH Eaton Fire Soil Testing Program offering free lead testing of residential soil from properties within the burn scare, downwind of, and just outside the Eaton Fire area. The collection and analysis of soil samples began in May 2025 and is expected to run through December 2025. As of September 3, a total of

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1,518 properties have been sampled. Approximately a quarter of the sampled properties in zip codes 91103 and 91104 exceeded the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) screening threshold of 200 parts per million (ppm). Only 5% of sampled properties in 91107 exceeded the screening threshold.

	91103 (n=67)	91104 (n=300)	91107 (n=77)
Less than 80 ppm (CA Screening Threshold)	16.42%	27.33%	61.04%
81 - 200 ppm (EPA Screening Threshold)	55.22%	47.33%	33.77%
201 - 1000 ppm	26.87%	24.33%	5.19%
More than 1000 ppm	1.49%	1.00%	0.00%

Monitoring Environmental Data

PPHD staff represented the City of Pasadena on four LACDPH regional committees including the Los Angeles Wildfire Recovery Health & Social Services Task Force; Environmental Health Impacts Subcommittee; Soils Workgroup; and Air Monitoring Workgroup. In addition, Department staff regularly monitor and review air quality, soil, and water quality data on the Los Angeles County Post-Fire Assessment data dashboard to assess potential threats to public health in Pasadena.

Environmental data collected and reported by the City of Pasadena and other public agencies provided a more detailed understanding of the impacts of the Eaton Fire on the environment. Water quality monitoring results continue to confirm safe drinking water quality for the entire Pasadena Water and Power service area. The available air quality and soil testing data indicate that wildfire impacts on Pasadena properties vary significantly from no risk to elevated risk, demonstrate that proximity to the burn zone is not a predictor for more severe impacts, and that environmental results from one property is not a reliable indicator of environmental impacts for adjacent properties. While environmental test results for some properties exceeded thresholds for one or more contaminants, there was no consistent pattern across the Pasadena community. The Pasadena Public Health Department encourages residents to continue monitoring air quality for their neighborhoods, to participate in the Los Angeles County free soil sampling program, and to engage environmental testing professionals if they have specific concerns about their property.

Safe Removal of Toxic Substances from Private Properties

In her capacity as Health Officer, Dr. Kaur issued a health officer order on January 22, 2025, to ensure fire debris removal activities complied with local, state, and federal laws and regulations. As residents were allowed to return to their fire damaged properties, the order offered additional enforcement measures to ensure the safe removal, transport, and disposal of fire debris. The order helped protect the Pasadena community against potential exposure to hazardous substances during the fire debris removal process.

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Positioning the City to Access Funding for Public Health Protection Efforts

The declaration of a local health emergency was also designed to support City of Pasadena requests for state and federal assistance to expedite recovery activities and support eligibility for state and federal reimbursement for expenses incurred by the City.

CONCLUSION:

The Pasadena Public Health Department will continue to work with regional and state public health partners to collect and interpret data to provide public health guidance to the Pasadena community. The Department recognizes there are ongoing community concerns related to soil testing and air quality. PPHD staff will continue to assess potential risks to the community and when necessary, share public health guidance.

Staff encourages all community members to take standard precautions and to look for signs of wildfire impacts on their property that would indicate the need for additional precautions and to engage an environmental professional for assessment or testing if they have specific concerns. Department staff will remain vigilant, review emerging data, and maintain partnerships to protect community health.

The recommendation to terminate the local health emergency reflects the assessment of staff that current public health response efforts can be absorbed within existing department operations. To be clear, the recommended termination of the local health emergency is not a recommendation to end the City of Pasadena Eaton Fire emergency response.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The proposed action is consistent with the City Council's strategic planning goal to ensure public safety and take the next steps in the public health response to the impacts of the Eaton Fire.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

CEQA excludes, from environmental review, actions that are not "projects" as defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 21065 and within the meaning of Section 15378(b). Sections 21065 and 15378(b) define a project as an action which may cause either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. Section 15378 excludes from the definition of "project" organizational or administrative governmental activities that do not result in physical changes to the environment. The actions proposed herein, adopting a resolution terminating the Local Public Health Emergency, is an organizational or administrative governmental activity that does not result in physical changes to the environment, and therefore is not a "project" as defined by CEQA. Since the action is not a project subject to CEQA, no environmental document is required.

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FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact as the ongoing needs of the public health response to the Eaton Fire can be absorbed within existing department operations. Staff have recorded emergency response activities and are pursuing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reimbursement of eligible costs. No additional program costs or impacts to city programs are anticipated by terminating the local public health emergency.

Respectfully submitted,



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Approved by:


MIGUEL MARQUEZ
City Manager

Concurred by:


Nallely Procopio
Emergency Services Manager

Attachment: City Council Resolution