

VOISE Partner Call: California Wildfires

January 13, 2025

Transcript

Kysa George: Okay, we are at the top of the hour. Welcome everyone for joining us today, for our voice, partner call, our 1st operational voice partner call for the year and we're going to be focused on the Southern California wildfires. A little housekeeping.

Please make sure you're connected to computer audio to be able to hear the briefings. If you're unable to hear the audio through the computer, please connect the audio by dialing, and the phone number is on your screen. This is a regular call versus a webinar. So, I really need everyone to please make sure that your microphones are muted. We also we will have a Q&A pod, not a chat pod. So, that's where your questions or comments are going to go if you are not a speaker for today. We have a full agenda. Go ahead and provide your updates to include your organization, your contact, your actions being contact information, your actions that are being taken and your working state and our county locations, and the impacts from your work that you are all doing. Put those in the Q&A pod. We'd like to capture that information. And finally, if you need assistive services, we have closed captioning. Thank you to our closed captioner and our ASL support. To this end, I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to Zach Usher. He's our deputy director for our individual assistance division. Zach. The floor is yours. Thank you.

Zachary Usher: Great Kysa. Thank you for convening the the team, the the big team this morning or this afternoon, depending on where you're dialing in from. My name is Zach Usher. I serve as the Deputy Director for the Individual Assistance Division at Fema, and on behalf of the agency, I want to thank our incredible voluntary organization and faith-based organization partners who are here on this call, who, just as importantly, are responding to the devastating situation in Southern California. Even as we speak right now, your organizations are making a real difference in assisting survivors in their time of incredible and in many cases dire needs. Fema, as an agency, is committed to staying as long as it takes to help communities in Southern California recover, and a number of forms of Federal assistance, including programs managed by Fema, have been authorized by the President to help Jumpstart. The recovery process included in that is a major disaster, declaration for Los Angeles County, for the individual assistance program which can help to make grants for temporary housing repairs, assistance with serious and immediate needs and other forms of financial and other relief available to disaster survivors. We continue to deploy Fema staff across our program areas to the impacted communities. And we're working very closely with Fema region 9 office based out of Oakland, California, and our State of California counterparts to identify the forms of support that are needed for survivors and those who have suffered losses as a result of the ongoing wildfires. So, my message to this big team this morning this afternoon is, thank you thank you for what you've been doing since the onset of these fires. Thank you for what you continue to do and what you're going to do in the months, and I think what we all recognize is going to be years ahead as Southern California works through the recovery process from these fire events. So, with that I want to hand the microphone over to my colleague, Fema director of response operations. Jeremy Greenberg. Jeremy is going to join us to talk a little bit about some of the response operations activities happening as we continue to provide support for those impacted by these fires. So, with that, Jeremy, I'll hand it over to you, sir.

Jeremy Greenberg: Hey, Zack! Thanks, and and just teeing off of what Zach was talking about. I want to take a quick minute to to send our appreciation, express our appreciation for everything that your organizations are doing. I don't remember the exact month we were all together in the NRCC. Talking about how the voluntary organizations work together in disasters, I've been out on a couple of disasters where I've interacted with some of you in the field, and then, seeing the the amazing rollout for the California fires is just fantastic, so greatly appreciate the work that everyone's doing before we talk about the lifelines. Just want to want to hit on a couple of things. One as Zack mentioned, this is an ongoing activity, and while the Restoration recovery is front center. Certainly, the response is ongoing and unlike sort of tornadoes and hurricanes that come and then depart the area. Unfortunately, these wildfires are a continuous threat. So, I just want to take a minute and reinforce particularly to those that are either in Southern California or have teams working in Southern California. The weather forecast, Tuesday and Wednesday is a particularly dangerous situation. Basically, that's low humidity and high winds. You already have all these active fires that are burning on top of the low humidity. High wind conditions are going to set up another 24 to 36 h, so please communicate to your teams to follow the evacuation guidance of the local officials. As the voluntary organizations are in communities. You are trusted. People are looking to you for support. You can also amplify that safety message. So please reinforce to your teams that are there, we need them to be safe and communicate appropriately.

The second is on the rumor front. In every disaster there's misinformation that flies around. It's just the nature of where we are in society. Please keep your team safe and keep the those who you're supporting safe by following the guidance of verified and official notifications. We know that there's a lot of information out there regarding where and how to register for assistance what it means. If you're denied what it means. If you go to a voluntary organization as opposed to the Government, please just encourage people to use the official and verified forms of information to ensure that we're keeping those who need services at front and center and on the right track. So, with those couple of things in mind, I did want to just talk a little bit about the community lifelines.

I know we did this when we were all together last time. I'm super excited to see that the agenda is broken out by those lifelines, and the reason for that is it just makes our lives collectively easier when we communicate in common language for those who have not seen this before. I will spend about 35 seconds and note that these are all the lines of effort that a community needs to bring stability from your law enforcement and safety and security to food, hydration and shelter which you're all intimately familiar with health and medical power and fuels, communications, transportation, hazardous materials, and waste water and wastewater systems. For those of you who have seen this before work with it before. It's relatively intuitive for those who haven't. Hopefully it is. And I know that the team has laid out the agenda and the updates broken out by lifelines again for those that are working in the field at Cal Oes Cal fire or in the RRCC. The regional response coordination center. This just makes our information flow that much better. We're able to identify the status of the lifelines, the impact. the actions that you're taking to support them. And then what limiting factors might be, particularly from the VOAD perspective. It's awesome to see the VOADs fill in those gaps and fill in those limiting factors. But we want to make sure that we're working in parallel with each other. We've seen it even on this set of fires where a need emerges, and everybody wants to rush to fill that need. And sometimes we duplicate effort. So, using the lifeline construct will just help mitigate some of that. With that, I know you've got a full agenda, Zach and team. Thanks again for having us on. We're going to jump over to a couple of other

operational calls that are going on, but always available through Zach and the team happy to answer any questions. If you have, if not, I'll turn back to you.

Kysa George: Thank you, Jeremy. I really appreciate your time today. Know that is extremely busy right now and thank you for joining us. And thank you, Zach, for providing an update as well. We really appreciate your leadership. And again, thank you for those who joined the call a couple minutes after our this started at the top of the hour. I wanted to reinstate. I'm Kysa George and will be facilitating today's call. Welcome, everyone. And for those who are actively working in the field, please, we want your updates. So put those in the Q&A box provide the name of your organization. Your contact information, please. the actions that your organization is taking and your working state and our county locations. And of course, the impacts from your work. We'd really like to stay on top of that and capture all of that information. Please continue to keep your mic on mute if you're not speaking and on the agenda. We have another one of our senior leaders that has joined us today. It's Colt Hagmaier. He's the assistant administrator for our fema recovery directorate. And thank you, Colt for joining us today.

Colt Hagmaier: Yeah. Good morning or good afternoon. Can you hear me? Okay. Awesome. I don't want to take a lot of time, and I apologize for being a few minutes late. I know everybody's incredibly busy supporting Los Angeles and supporting California and supporting disasters across as we are here. The one thing I really wanted to say is, thank you. Thank you not only for leaning in and recognizing that there are gaps that we need to work together to fill but also thank you for being patient. I know that you all, just like us want to get in there, and we want to get our hands dirty, and we want to start helping people right away. And in this type of situation, where the threat is ongoing, and the system is dynamic. It can be hard to be patient. It can be hard to have a strategic pause in the beginning. But let's take advantage of that opportunity to share information, to make sure that we understand what each of us can bring to the table and work together to make sure that we fill as many gaps as we can for the people of California, because they're going to need a lot of help when this is all said and done. And so, I just wanted to say, Thank you. Thank you for being a part of this mission and thank you for being patient while we wait for the circumstances to become a little bit more stable.

Kysa George: Thank you. Colt, appreciate that update. Thank you. All right. Next, we have in our agenda is Luka Lezhansky. He is our regional VAL out of Fema region 9 and very, very busy right now. But, Luka, I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to you, and I know you have another guest on the line from SBA. The floor is yours.

Luka Lezhansky, FEMA R9 VAL: Thank you, Kysa. Hello, everybody! My name is Luke Lezhansky. I'm the region. 9, Val. We are working very closely, intimately. You can say, with our counterparts over at Cal Oes. I've got Valerie Mehanovic, the California State, Val and Zachary Corbo, the private sector coordinator, and FEMA R9 VAL: communicating and coordinating with the county OEA, which is the emergency network of La or ENLA, and that name is going to come up a lot, and the long term recovery wing of the county of Oad, which is called the Los Angeles Regional Community Recovery Organization both of which cut their teeth on the 2018 Woolsey fire. So, this isn't their 1st go around, and, in fact, they will be rolling out many of the systems that they applied back. Then, in 2018, at a greater scale on this disaster, and of course, both of those entities are also receiving support. Enormous support from the county office of Emergency management. The city emergency management department as well as the California VOAD. And I know we've got Kevin Cox. The California VOAD. Chair is going to be speaking here in a bit as well on a greater detail. On that front

Cal Oes has opened up a donation's portal for corporate in-kind donations and financial contributions. We are still working out an apparatus for individual in-kind donations. So, stay tuned for more on that as well. and I know the Mayor of La announced that there was going to be a local assistance center slash disaster recovery center. We are still ironing out the kinks of just what that rollout is going to be like. So, we do not have that information to share at this moment, but it will be made available imminently. We have an office in Pasadena, so that will be serving as one of our areas. Sorry, one of our joint field offices down there, and it's going. We already have about 50 disaster survivor assistance cadre members on the ground. Our individual assistance leadership is on the ground as well and growing. and I want to take also this opportunity to turn the mic over to my counterpart at the Small Business Administration. The stalwart Sushil Kumar over for region 9. He and his agency are going to be playing an enormous role on this disaster, particularly many of you know that the Sba is coming in in lockstep with Fema. But I just want to give him the opportunity to talk about all the incredible work that they are rolling out, and they will continue rolling out in months and years to come. So Susheel, the floor is yours, sir.

Susheel Kumar, Small Business Administration: Thank you, sir, much appreciated. Good to see some familiar faces on the call. Luka, real pleasure working with you and my FEMA counterparts. Aaron, good to see you too again. We've worked together before. My name is Susheel Kumar, and I'm the Regional Recovery Coordinator for Region 9, for most folks on this call, about 597 of them. We are the largest source of funds for privately damaged properties post disaster. I've listened into many a press conference where folks have pointed out the insurance – and lack thereof or shortage – as being a reason to get in the way of rebuilding. We provide that level of gap funding. So, our program is for the uninsured and the underinsured. We went through some various changes, and to add to Luka's statements – I was a lead PIO for the Woolsey Fire back in 2018. We served the constituents fairly well and there's a lot of work to be done on this particular disaster. Our loan amounts for renters are \$100,000, including personal property. Automobiles are part of that mixed interest. Rates for renters are as low as a fixed 2.5 6 3% homeowners can borrow up to \$500,000 for damages their property. Remember, again, we will lend money based on the damages minus any insurance proceeds that you're able to get. So hypothetically, if your insurance proceeds are 500,000, and the damages are 750 – and that's net – of all deductibles, we will potentially cover on a cash flow basis the remaining \$250,000.

We also have monies available for economic injury, for those businesses that have been obliterated by the fire, for those businesses that are shut down and don't have any physical damages – a combination of 2 million dollars. That's at a fixed interest rate of 4%.

Nonprofits don't pay taxes, but they certainly have an operating income. We can also lend money to those nonprofits, including churches for a fixed 30 year term for all the constituents at a fixed interest rate of 3.6 2 5%

Without further ado, the only last piece that I want to share with you is we have a team of dedicated PIOs on the ground. We're opening up 2 centers. One is at the Pasadena Community College. I will ask the question of Mr. Ahmed or Miss Ahmed, send me the email address where I need to forward the press release to. And with that, I turn it back to my esteemed colleague, Luka. Thank you for the opportunity, and Kysa, thanks for the opportunity to work with you and your fabulous organization.

Have a good evening. Oh, good evening. Time's running together. Have a good morning.

Luka Lezhansky, FEMA R9 VAL: Thank you so much, Susheel. And Kysa, over to you.

Kysa George: Thank you, Luka. Thank you, Susheel. Stay safe out there and thank you for all the work, the hard work you're doing and really appreciate the solid update. Thanks so much.

All right. Next, we are going to hear from our voluntary organizations active in disaster. Amelia Mendizabal, she's the director of programs from National VOAD, and then Kevin Cox is the chair of the California VOAD. Go ahead. The floor is yours. Thank you, Amelia.

Amelia Mendizabal, National VOAD: Thank you, Kysa. Can y'all hear me.

Kysa George: Yes, I can.

Amelia Mendizabal, National VOAD: Perfect. So yes, thank you so much for the opportunity to be on this call today and to FEMA for hosting this call. And just what a start to 2025 unfortunately. At HQ, we have been in direct contact with Kevin Cox, who we'll hear from shortly with California VOAD along with his board as they support ENLA, who is leading this coordination. ENLA has been holding coordination calls since last week for their members and Kevin and California VOAD actually held a call last week for National VOAD and our partners as well. As we continue to focus on how to best support during this disaster, and to really disseminate information as coordinated as possible, our network has been working in many different areas, including feeding, sheltering, communications, logistics, transportation and medical support to name a few. And I really will hand it over to Kevin since he has been supporting since last week, and will be able to share detailed information. But I really wanted to thank you all from the HQ office. We didn't think we would use catastrophic so soon after Helene and at the beginning in January 2025. But here we are, and we just want to thank our members and partners and those on this call for the dedication and the long hours ahead. Please take care of yourselves and each other. Thank you, Kysa.

Kysa George: All right. Thank you, Amelia. Kevin Cox is from California VOAD, are you on the line? Is Kevin Cox on the on the line on this call?

Luka Lezhansky, FEMA R9 VAL: I think he might not have been able to hop on this morning.

Kysa George: Oh okay, if I missed that, sorry about that. Okay, thank you so much. All right. Appreciate all that you do at National VOAD, Amelia and thank you for the update. All right. Now we are going to move into what Jeremy Greenberg referred to as the community lifeline updates. We're going to hear from our national partners. So I'm going to turn it over to the 1st lifeline food hydration and sheltering. We're going to hear from Denise Everhart, the Division Disaster Executive with the American Red Cross National Headquarters. Denise, the floor is yours. Thank you.

Denise Everhart, American Red Cross: Thank you. Good morning once again. You know our hearts go out to the people of Los Angeles. This has been a horrific tragedy.

The American Red Cross is here in Los Angeles every day. We have a regional office. We're out in the communities, so we are working closely with our partners. Even as the windstorm was coming in, we knew there was high wildfire risk, and so we were working hand in hand to help our city and our county partners with the idea of opening evacuation centers. Most of those initially were open by city and county entities with Red Cross support, and then they transitioned into overnight shelters over the course of the next 3 days. A lot of those shelters did transfer into Red Cross shelters, as of last night we had 8 shelters open, with a total population of 756 residents.

We've been working with our other voluntary partners on providing feeding in those shelters and dealing with unsolicited donations management. The LA Community has had an outpouring of support. We've had a nonstop stream of people driving up with food that they've cooked, and materials from their homes that they have brought to our shelters. We're trying to get our arms around that and working with the entire VOAD partnership to really kind of manage that part so that we can focus on the sheltering of the people affected from the fires.

We have a lot of folks in our shelters who are those socially vulnerable folks who are affected not only from wildfire evacuations, but also from the fear and the smoke effects that are being caused from these wildfires. These fires sprung up fast and they caused a lot of fear. There have been a lot of emergency alerts that have gone out, so we are seeing a lot of fear and a lot of disaster mental health and a lot of disaster spiritual care needs in our shelters. There are strong partnerships with voluntary agencies and public agencies in the LA area, and so we are leaning on our partners to provide extra support in our shelters to people.

There is a large medical need in our shelters. Once again, we're relying on partners in addition to Red Cross resources to provide that level of service for prescription refill needs and any type of access and functional needs. Cal OES has what they call fast teams. Those are functional and access support teams. Those are volunteers the state has that come through our shelters and help us identify needs. And so we're all working as a whole community to make sure that those shelters are really supporting the survivors.

But if you think about the number of evacuations, and you think about the wider area, 756 is just a small portion of the people that are evacuated. So we are looking to make sure that we're getting the word out that Red Cross shelters are open. There is space. It is a safe place to go. The only thing that we ask of people when they come to our shelters is the name of the head of household, how many people in the household, if they have any pets, and if they have any access and functional needs. We don't ask for ID. We don't ask citizenship questions. It's a safe place to come. We do have pet services at all of our shelters to accommodate pets. We're working also once again with our partners on pet services. I was just looking at the report. I'm always fascinated by the other small animals portion of our reports on our shelters. So the shelters are set up, we're trying to get the word out there that shelters are open, there is shelter space available. We're also ready to open other shelters with our partners because there are these red flag warnings. So the fire risk is not over.

As we look at our services out in the community and in the field, we're going to be moving into doing some financial assistance later this week to make sure that we're getting out in the community and letting people know about our services, but also other agency services to make sure people know what's out there – FEMA information, other voluntary agency information, SBA information –we'll be getting that information out. We're going to continue to work on with partners and serve those partners and make sure that we're working together.

We've had about 10,000 new volunteers sign up in the LA Area – we call those event-based volunteers – sign up to serve with the Red Cross. We're rapidly working on doing shift work for them, so we do have a workforce that we'll be able to use over the next weeks and months. We brought 350 something people. I lost the number. Sorry, my phone locked up – 350 something people assigned to this job, Red Crossers. So we do have a good staffing pattern set up as of this point.

In time, we have had a lot of requests for reunification come in to our 1-800-Red Cross or through our website. And we're working with Cal OES and with law enforcement. Our team is working on tracking that information and closing those cases, but also working with law enforcement. We're about a 3rd of the way through. But that is another thing that is out there, and we'll be working on funeral assistance and funeral transportation assistance for the families in the wake of this disaster. That's it for the Red Cross. I got the note to stop talking.

Kysa George: Oh, thank you so much, Denise. Really appreciate your report out. I know the American Red Cross is incredibly engaged into the efforts in this wildfire activity. So really appreciate you joining us today. Thank you.

All right. Next have Megan Foley. She's Emergency Disaster Services Director from the Salvation Army. Megan, the floor is yours.

Meghan Foley, The Salvation Army: Thanks so much for the invite Kaisa. I'm pleased to announce that I am the new Emergency Disaster Services Director here at National Headquarters for the Salvation Army, and I am very excited to connect with all of you as we continue to work together, so please do not hesitate to reach out.

Our current, you know, food, water, shelter, lifeline numbers from this weekend are that the Salvation Army has served 1,711 meals, 2,154 drinks, 2,135 snacks, and we have provided emotional and spiritual care to 425 individuals.

As Denise was talking about the American Red Cross shelters, the Salvation Army is one of many partners that you will find in those evacuation shelters. So in those 8 evacuation shelters being managed by the American Red Cross, currently, the Salvation Army is feeding evacuees at all 8 of those shelters. We are also feeding utility workers as part of our mission to support the hard work of first responders and other workers who are on the front lines of a disaster like a wildfire.

Thirdly, you will find the Salvation Army at the Family Assistance Center in Pasadena, where we are also providing emotional and spiritual care. And if there's another place where you want to find the Salvation Army, again, please don't hesitate to reach out so that we can talk about what that could look like. That's our report, Kysa. Thank you again for the invite.

Kysa George: Thank you so much, Megan, for joining us and keep up the great work. Thank you. Thank you for all that you are doing.

All right. Next we have a report out on the Health and Medical Community Lifeline. Deborah Boudreaux, she's the CEO of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation. Deborah, the floor is yours.

Debra Boudreaux, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation: Yes thank you, everyone. Thank you to the Red Cross, national partners, and Salvation Army, Megan. Deborah Boudreaux from Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, National VOAD member. And also, we are in Los Angeles so we are pretty much at site.

Currently, we work with CVS, County Health Department, and Southern California Nurse and Medical Association members. We have provided close to 12,095 [missed words] 3,000 goggles. And then currently, the smoke respiratory situation is quite extensive. So our medical team – City International Medical Association – the members have been receiving a lot of referrals.

For the first 3 days, we were at the Pasadena Civic Center, the shelter site. Our doctor tried to coordinate, working with the city, while at the same time assisting some seniors who lost their glasses. So at the site, we provided those kinds of vision and prescription refill support while working with their medical providers directly. We are very grateful to the site. We also provide spiritual care because of the panic, the anxieties. So when we do that, we also do some mass care social services – provide water, clothing, and shoes. So this project continues to move on. We join in the daily call.

Currently, the mega, mega, ad hoc donation site is in Santa Anita Park. Yesterday, more than 5,000 people showed up at the site. Very grateful CVS has a team to provide blood pressure and then to handle some emergencies. So we continue working with our local partners and working with the EOC, POC, and to make sure the community is safe and sound, and we are very grateful that everybody can work together as a team. Back to Kysa, thank you.

Kysa George: Thank you, Deborah, and thank you for joining us. I really appreciate everything – all the hard work and the great work that the Tzu Chi foundation is doing.

All right. Next, we have the Transportation Lifeline. Lexi Nobles is the Manager of Humanitarian Programs of the American Logistics Aid Network, otherwise known as ALAN. Lexi, the floor is yours.

Lexi Nobles, ALAN: Thank you, Kysa. Hello, everyone. ALAN is actively responding to the fires, and we are connecting unmet logistics needs to sources with that logistics capacity. We are additionally providing quick response guides on facility setup and pallet packing for organizations that don't typically handle donations. We are also sharing resources to help businesses and nonprofits with their logistics decision making via our disaster microsite and our Supply Chain Intelligence Center, which can be accessed on our website. We are hosting a call focused on the logistics and transportation for nonprofits to collaborate on current and anticipated logistics needs this afternoon at 3:30 ET or 12:30 PT if anyone would like to attend please let me know. I know this was a short report but thank you for the opportunity.

Kysa George: Thank you so much, Lexi. Appreciate you joining us and thank you for all that ALAN does and is doing. Next, we have a report out on Communications Lifeline. Heather Black is the Vice President of 211 System Strategy with United Way Worldwide. Heather, the floor is yours. Thank you.

Heather Black, United Way Worldwide: Thank you so much. 211 is the national number designated for health and human services. 211 plays a role in disaster response serving as a non-emergency number activated during times of disaster to ensure that people are connected to resources like sheltering and mass feeding locations. Many of the partners here would be the types of referrals that we would make to individuals. And it's the beauty of the 211 dialing code that allows us to get people connected to that information and help to offset volume that would normally go to 911 when they need to be left for real emergency calls.

In Los Angeles we have 211 LA, which is a large independent 211 operated by a nonprofit organization formed for the purpose of operating that 211. They have a very strong relationship with the county and receive a significant amount of their funding from the county.

They were activated as part of the coordinated response to the fire disaster a little after 10 pm on January 7th. Since that activation, 211 LA has experienced an 81% increase in their contact volume compared to typical volume during the same time period.

Our role at United Way is to help coordinate, to help them handle that significant surge capacity and surge volume. What we've done is provide coordination support from other 211s across the national network. As of today, 211s from Ohio, Connecticut, Nebraska, New Jersey, and Michigan are all now helping by dedicating staff to help with 211 calls in LA related to the disaster. So that is the power of 211. We will continue to provide additional surge capacity to our colleagues in LA. You have likely heard, or maybe seen, some of the viral media attention of the partnership between 211 and Airbnb.

They are continuing to serve as an entry point for those individuals seeking to access the benefit that Airbnb is offering of free sheltering for those individuals who need who may not be able to function well in a sheltering environment. So 211 is the location of people are calling or using the website to provide their information to be screened for eligibility. To date, I believe they've handled over 30,000 calls and emails related to individuals seeking to access the Airbnb program. And that concludes my report. Thank you.

Kysa George: Thank you so much. Heather. Appreciate the report out and the update. Thank you to United Way Worldwide and everything that you all are doing. Next, we have John Crowley, head of US Partnerships with Map Action. But before I get to you, John, I'm going to take a quick pause, because Kevin Cox just joined us again. He is the chair of the California VOAD, Kevin.

Kevin Cox, California VOAD: Good morning, everyone. My apologies for being late, we had one email that said Pacific Standard Time and that's what I put into my calendar, so I apologize for that. We just got off a coordinating call with our California VOAD Executive team. We have assigned each of our team members to oversee separate components of recovery and the response.

We are seeing an enormous amount of national partners wanting to come and serve, and we are so thankful and blessed that we have so many good partners across country, as we know, in our VOAD movement. The local VOAD is the lead when it comes to working through disasters here in California. And so what we've done, and I don't know if Lauren had a chance to brief you yet, but what California VOAD is doing - and, by the way, we are the California VOAD now, we are not Northern California or Southern California, we are the California VOAD with 2 regions. We are working daily with Lauren and her board.

What they've asked us to do is that all state and national partners flow through us so that we can help manage. We are gathering contact information and a response plan will be built here in the next day or two. We are trying to stay in step with our friends at ENLA. They are doing a terrific job, but ENLA is managing only the ENLA partners of LA County. So all the other stuff is flowing through our office.

What we're trying to do right now is - ash is a very challenging component in the State of California. Sifting is not permitted, but personal property recovery is. We only have 2 partners that are approved partners in that component, and those are Samaritan's Purse and the Southern Baptist.

We've had great conversation. This is a very large fire for the affected communities, and capacity to be able to manage volunteers, and having additional organizations come and serve is desperately needed. But they must be trained and coordinated in the response. Working in step with us.

It's at the county, but it's my assumption is that the State will take over cleanup. It's been approved. It just has not been announced to us. The details are coming in the next couple days. I want you to know that our local partners down in Southern California and LA are just working triple time. They're doing a

wonderful job. We want to recognize the good work that they're all doing. But we also want to remember they're very tired.

If you are trying to coordinate your calls to them, remember that they are boots on the ground, and they will not have the ability to either email you or call you back. So feel free to reach out to myself

through an email. And I'll put that in the chat for you because we want to make sure that you realize we want you. We need you. We just need to coordinate through ENLA. I feel like we are several days behind in the process, but we want to respect ENLA and their processes, ensuring that their plan is what we are using at that local level.

Each of you have your strengths. Volunteers will be needed. There's going to be 2 types of volunteer services that are provided. There's the affiliated, and then there's the spontaneous. LA Works is managing spontaneous volunteers. This is my first experience with them, but I hear they are a wonderful organization that does a terrific job.

We do not accept volunteer paperwork being done through LA Works. What we are going to do is allow LA Works to attach some of their volunteers to the two organizations that are responding that way. They get the orientation, and when they get out on the ground they're overseen. Because in California, unfortunately, as you all know, insurance companies look for every reason why they should bail.

And so a lot of the insurance companies have told their clients if you add a footprint, you may be disqualified from your insurance claim, so we have to respect that. It's a real pain, looters come in and get into the ash, and they steal that personal property. We want to ease that burden on those families and ensure that we're doing our very best.

As soon as phase one is done, which is the hazards, then our partners will be able to get in EPA. Elliott County is very strict, but we also know that this is getting state, national and international attention, and it is our assumption that EPA will be on the ground as well ensuring things are being done.

The reason why we're only using the 2 organizations at this time is because they are the most skilled, and they follow the EPA guidelines for cleanup.

And again, as I mentioned, capacity could be a problem. So we may be looking for additional experienced partners. We are aware of some partners that have potentially offered. We want you to know, because we have so much experience in this area, that some partners will not be accepted because we know just how they operate. I don't want to slam anybody don't want to spread any negativity, but we are going to make sure that this is a seamless process, and that we make sure that we're doing everything correctly and in step with the State guidelines.

The Salvation Army has been doing feeding and has been doing a terrific job, as well as the Red Cross with sheltering. But we sometimes we forget about the faith-based organizations. We held a call on Thursday last week, and we have multiple faith-based organizations that are providing resources.

What we've done is put a form out to collect the data from the churches of all the needed information, so that we can publish what those resources are. We make sure to vet them before we do so, to make sure they are qualified to provide that assistance. We love faith-based communities. We love all the partners that jump in to assist but, as we all know, there's a right way and a wrong way, and we want to

make sure that we are not violating the client in the way that making them ineligible for certain assistance by throwing stuff at them.

We have been educating the churches to not throw money at projects right now. We have federal dollars and some state dollars that are flowing. We have a lot of partners that are providing financial resources. We're encouraging the churches to assist their congregates. We have been reported that there's 5 churches that have burned thus far. But one of the church claims that not only did the pastor lose his home, but they are claiming that 100% of their congregation has lost their homes as well. That's an issue. And we want to ensure that our faith-based partners are working directly with a lot of those churches. We want them to make sure they're taking care of their parishioners, but at the same time hold back some of that money so that can go on the back end of the recovery process. So we know that there'll be some funding there. We all know that there's a lot of generosity of donors that want to give cash.

Unfortunately, our experience is a lot of those give, and they go in a lot of different directions, and then, when it comes time for recovery, most of that money spent, we know there's an enormous amount of finances that are on the front end. But there's triple the amount of money that's needed on the back end, and there's never enough.

The other problem that we have is that ourselves, Hope Crisis Response Network and Mennonite Disaster Services, and just recently, Samaritan's Purse. We are the only ones in the disaster world that have a contractor's license to build in California. So California is very, very strict with the contractors. Licensing board. What we are encouraging, those that are wanting to serve in those areas, please reach out to us. We'll coordinate under those licenses when the time is right. But please do not let us know what you're doing. We want to encourage all of the partners. If you have a partner in LA County, work through them right now. We are asking our national partners to please be patient with us, because this is a very fluid. The information will be coming out - we will be issuing a statement on volunteers, the cleanup, the donations management, and how and when the appropriate time for you to serve.

There's so much more that can be discussed. But I'm going to go ahead and end with that, because there's much more that you need to cover. But please know, I'll put my email in the chat. Our secretary will reach back out to you with the information that you're asking about, and we will make sure that we will stay on top of the emails within a 24 hour period.

We are also asking our national partners when it comes to any of you are joining in the calls, beginning today, ENLA has requested that only ELNA partners report out. I know many of you partners want to speak. You want to share what you have available that will be done through the California VOAD, and that you will reach out to us. So, beginning today, only the ENLA partners will have a speaking role, everybody else it will be a listening session. So when you have resources that you want to offer please email me, you'll see that in the text, and we'll connect you to the right person that is managing that component in a report.

Kysa George: Kevin. Hold on, for those who aren't aren't familiar with that acronym ENLA. Can you clarify that, please?

Kevin Cox, California VOAD: Which acronym.

Kysa George: ENLA

Kevin Cox, California VOAD: Oh, Emergency Network of Los Angeles County! They are the Los Angeles County, VOAD. Please forgive me. All of our other VOADs in the State have the county name with the VOAD. But, ENLA, they do the emergency network, and we love them. They're doing a great job, and we want to support them in every way possible.

Kysa George: I tell you what, Kevin, I really appreciate you joining us. This is really good information. I'm going to move on to our other speakers. But before, if we do have a couple minutes before the final closing remarks, just stand by. If you've got anything else that's really important, like a minute's worth of updates, but we'll see how far we get. We've got about 12 min left.

So I'm going to go ahead, though, and move to our next speaker in the Communications Lifeline. Thank you, Kevin. John Crowley. He's the head of US Partnerships with MapAction. John, floor is yours.

John Crowley, MapAction: Thanks, Kysa. Thank you. Thank you for having us. And I just want to thank Kevin and everyone here for all that's being done.

A little about us. For about 2 decades MapAction has deployed both volunteer and professional GIS experts to support emergency response. We're both a US non-profit and a UK charity. We're really the designated mapping team for many of the UN operations that occur and in the early response we specialize in supporting search and rescue. We build common operational pictures; and we map what is being, who is doing what where? We also provide surge mapping support to other NGOs.

With so many organizations activating for this response and so much spontaneous volunteer activity, we're eager to apply our who, what, where methodology to LA. We're exploring how to map what organizations are arriving and operating, where, and what services they're delivering over what proposed time period.

We're also looking at how we could translate some of the growing numbers of community generated spontaneous geospatial information sites into official GIS workflows. We could deploy a small team to LA to support those that are working. This would be for either the county, the State, or for voluntary associations, and we would look to see if we could use our normal methodology of applying maps for a daily update so everyone's aware of changes over time. We're hoping this readout will give us a chance to lead a discussion on who might host this activity, and how we could best build a shared picture of who's doing what, where, and arriving.

Our footprint's relatively light. We typically send one to two people to the field and then use our remote team of volunteers worldwide to be able to connect in additional information resources. I'll put my contact information in the chat. Thank you.

Kysa George: Thank you so much. I appreciate, John, that update. Just a reminder, we have a Q&A box. We don't have a chat. So for those who can't access the Q&A or for your questions, we're going to seek to work on getting those questions answered. And this is being closed captioned, so we will share those within the next couple days after the call.

All right. Next, we have our Safety and Security Lifeline – Nick Merslak, Director of Mission Support with Team Rubicon. Nick, the floor is yours. Thank you.

Nick Mrzlak, Team Rubicon: Hello, everyone! And Kysa, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the call. My name is Nick Mrzlach, Director of Mission Support for Team Rubicon. I'm coming to you from

our LA headquarters. Team Rubicon is a veteran led humanitarian organization that helps global communities before, during, and after disaster. Like I said, I am in LA right now. Some of our staff and volunteers have been affected by the fire, but we're continuing on. Team Rubicon has a long history of fire mitigation work in California.

Right now, we have our volunteers working in support of partner organizations at PODs or points of distribution, in Riverside and Malibu. Our plans this week with the partners we're working with are there's a request for assistance with the logistics hub down in Long Beach and some hasty mitigation work in the unaffected areas that are unimpacted by the fire directly right now, but are in the hazard areas that are still potentials for the coming events. We also have requests for staff augmentation at some of the smaller EOCs in the area doing decompression work for some of the folks that are there and some requests for expedient home repair that includes smoke remediation. Those are the things that we're focusing on in the coming days, weeks, and months to come.

Other than that. We're getting all the same requests as everyone else. We're referring everybody to ca.gov/lafires, and I think that's really it. So Kysa, back to you.

Kysa George: Thank you so much, Nick, for that operational update and appreciate everything that Team Rubicon does.

All right. Our next update is from our DHS Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. I've got Nicole Wood. She's the Director. Nicole, the floor is yours.

Nicole Wood, DHS Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships: Thank you so much, Kysa, and thank you to each of you. I really want to just start from a posture of gratitude, as with our other colleagues, I wanted to say thank you. It has been in true form. Our partners on this call that you've heard from, and many of you who've joined us today, as well as other faith-based and community-based organizations, and the private sector have been reaching out to us, seeking to help and support families, places of worship, and entire communities who've been devastated. The reality is we cannot do what we do without you. Partnerships is really where we do our best work. Faith and community leaders alone are trusted messengers, they're cultural key holders, and they have this long staying power in the community. This is why we value partnering with you. So just again, I want to say thank you.

Our colleagues hosting this call, alongside the Voluntary Agency Liaisons and our office, the DHS Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, we have been working with many of our national faith and community based organizations to not just collaborate, but to also communicate and amplify crucial messaging for individuals who have been in need and could be impacted. We are also connecting people to some of those resources on the ground. If our office can be a resource to you, please feel free to connect with us. We are at partnerships@fema.dhs.gov. We've had a long disaster season, I know, in 2024, and so we are kicking off a new year. We encourage each of you serving on the front lines to please stay safe, please practice self-care, and to check on each other, and do so often as your well-being matters as much as those whom you are serving.

So on behalf of all of us and my Federal colleagues, we just again want to extend our gratitude to each of you, and our thoughts are with those who have been impacted in California. Kysa, we'll turn it back over to you.

Kysa George: Thank you so much, Nicole. Always appreciate and just really value our partnership with you in the office. So thank you for joining us today. Before we get to closing remarks, Kevin, is there anything else you want to add? We've got about 4, actually 3 minutes left. Kevin, are you still on? Anything else that's burning that folks need to know on this call?

Kevin Cox, California VOAD: Yeah, thank you very much. And just a quick thank you to our national partners at the headquarters. They've done a terrific job staying in communication and working with us.

I want Nick, if you would, I could not get access to putting my email in. It's Kevin@Hc.rn.info. Nick, we've been talking quite a bit. We have a good partnership with Team Rubicon and want to talk to you further about some of the additional things that need to happen. We would like to try to help coordinate you all to take on the some of those tasks. So if you would do that for me also, my phone number is (707) 350-2151. Let's have a conversation this morning because we are in the midst of setting up some things.

Also, I need you all to know, we don't like to use the word self deploy. It's something that we're being taught. You know, we've always used that. Don't self deploy. Don't self deploy. You heard me earlier. If you have a local, please work through them. If you please, contact us, because there's many services that I've heard just in the short time that I was here that are so valuable that are needed like the volunteer services and things. I think what I would like to do if it is permitted – I'll reach out to Monica and maybe what we can do is send out an email to this group to have a coordination call for some of the additional resources that we are doing. We are very experienced, as you all know, in California, with large fires. You know our organization. We've done 83 here since 2015. So we're well used to coordinating. California, especially the Southern California, is very political, and we don't do politics. We worry about fire survivors. We take care of survivors first and we let all the other powers take care of the politics stuff. We want to stay out of that. We want to be mindful that we are here to support our ENLA partner. We want to make sure that those services that are needed not only flow properly, but also that we are doing good communication because a lot of you are doing tremendous work on the ground. I cannot emphasize enough what great work Red Cross and Salvation Army are doing along with several others. But at the same time, I want to make sure that you get plugged in where you're needed. All hands on deck for this one.

There's the Palisades, which is the very, very wealthy, and where a lot of the movie stars live, to all the way over to the Eaton Fire, which is an area that has severe impact and it's a lower income base. And so we have several – I think there's like 5 different fires that we're supporting – and we'd like to get into a scenario where we're doing a grid. So with that, what I would like to ask is – and I'll work with Monica – maybe we can coordinate another call, and we'll do that with our friend Bethany at National Headquarters as well. And in the next 2 days we will have that plan in place, and then we'll be able to gather and get those assignments in place that are so desperately needed. So I'm gonna allow time if there's any quick questions that they have, I'd be glad to do so.

Kysa George: Yeah, unfortunately, we're out of time, which leads me to Victoria Crouse. Vickie, she's our Branch Chief for our MCVCS, Individual Assistance, that is, Mass Care, Voluntary Coordination and Community Services. I'm going to go ahead and give you the floor for closing remarks.

But before I do, really quick, I just want to let Kevin know that we'll work with Luka to get you what you need and we are supporting you. Thanks so much. I know you're super super busy. But go ahead, Vickie, take it away and go ahead and close out this call. Thank you.

Victoria Crouse, FEMA: Thanks so much, Kysa. I know everybody's schedules are jam packed right now, so I'll keep these super super brief. Echoing what Nicole said, just a couple of minutes ago – just want to extend my gratitude to each of you. For the dedication that you show every day serving survivors in the communities that have been impacted. You like those of us here at FEMA, you know, we get great joy out of serving. It's extremely fulfilling, but it is not without sacrifice. So I just want to acknowledge that and say thank you to you, and also thank you to your support structures that allow you to do this good work every single day. We know that your family and your friends, and those around you also sacrifice as well to make sure that this work can continue. So the VALs, the Voluntary Agency Liaisons, will drop their contact information here into the chat if you should have any questions, or you have additional updates that you want to send.

And then 2 last flags before we wrap it up here. One, of course, we will hold additional operational voice calls as needed. So, thanks for making mention of that, Kevin, the VALs would be happy to support that. And then our next non-operational VOISE Call is scheduled for February. So stay tuned for that invitation. Thank you. And back to you, Kysa, for anything else that you need to do to close this out.

Kysa George: Well, thank you all for joining our very first VOISE Call for 2025. It's a very active one. Stay tuned. If we do plan to have another one, we will send out the updates again. Our VOISE Call in February is going to be on VOAD Wireless partnerships and disaster communications. Thanks all again. Reach out to Fema-val@fema.dhs.gov, and we will work to get your questions answered. We'll send out some transcripts after this call. It is 1 min over, so I'm going to go ahead and drop this call. Thanks all for joining and stay safe out there and thank you for all the great work. Appreciate it.