

# Salt Lake City Wildland Fire Assessment Briefing

Salt Lake City Fire Department

April 2025

## Los Angeles, CA Fire Review (Palisades/Eaton)

### Ignition

- Previous smoldering fire, arson, sparking power line?

### Spread

- 10 to 200 acres in 20 minutes/700 acres after 3.5 hours – 270 FF's on scene; multiple ember ignition sources, access routes clogged, water disruptions

### Impact

- 29 deaths (12 Palisades/17 Eaton)
- 38k acres, 16k structures, burned over 24 days
- 20 billion in insured losses/50 billion economic losses

### **Wildland Fire Triangle:** Factors that determine the size of severity of the incident

- Weather – hot (near drought), low humidity, Santa Anna winds 60-80mph/G to 90 continuous, traveling embers
- Topography – flat basin to increasing grade, canyons create wind tunnels & access/egress challenges
- Fuel – non-native grass, chaparral brush, sagebrush, buckwheat, *structures*  
+Mitigation – density, WUI public education, capable FD (training, experience), water supply challenges, public messaging, narrow egress lanes, interoperability, pre-staged units, political/media pressure

### **Similarities to L.A.**

- Heat, low humidity, occasional “Wasatch Wind” events (SLC Windstorm Sept, 2020)
- Flat basin to increasing grade, canyons create wind tunnels & access/egress challenges
- High grass, cheatgrass, gambel oak Brush, *structures*
- Large-footprint homes on benches adjacent to wildland/urban interface, ongoing WUI public education, capable FD (training), interoperability, pre-stage units on holidays

### **Differences to L.A.**

- High wind events in SLC are short lived, usually <12 hrs. Santa Ana's are 2-3 days duration
- Wildland fuels in LA do not experience winter leaf loss, dry winters decrease fire potential
- Implemented Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) for public messaging
- Wide/multiple egress routes (most cases) for public evacuation
- Ratio & proximity of homes to fire stations is different in SLC vs LA.

## Current Capabilities & Risk Assessment

**Personnel:** Wildland focused stations, 4-handed staffing

**Equipment:** Type III (1), Type VI (6), Water tender, additional reserves

**Training:** Red Card, advanced certs, annual WUI training & tactics

### **Public Education ([fire.slc.gov](http://fire.slc.gov))**

- Ready Set Go – neighborhood education and communication
- Fireworks education and signage
- Defensible Space assessments

### **Public Messaging**

- Crisis Communications Plan (CCP) – IPAWS (Integrated Public Alert & Warning System), JIC (Joint Information Center), social media, coordinate with Policy Group

### **Plans**

- Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)
- Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) – based on threats and hazards
- Evacuation Plans (routes & shelters)

### **SLC Vulnerable Areas**

1. Salt Lake City Watershed/City Creek Canyon
2. North Cove Estates
3. East Capitol Blvd
4. Northmont Way/18<sup>th</sup> Ave
5. Carrigan Canyon
6. This is the Place SP

## Improvement Opportunities

**Personnel** – National mid-size city ratio is 1.8-2 FF's per 1,000 residents. SLCFD is 1.6.

Key to reducing loss: high number of FF's with water to fire scene quickly.

**Wildland Urban Interface Coordinator** – Training, certifications, readiness for deployments, CWPP updates, SOP's

**Public Education** – Ready, Set, Go, Defensible space, evacuation routes, capability vs vulnerability

**Legislation** – HB48 mandates adoption of WUI Code – improves resilience through building codes and fees.