

JPL Evacuation due to L.A. January 2025 Fire Operational Consequences

JPL's campus at Pasadena is situated right where the Eaton Fire was projected to burn, and so its on-site fire department worked to not only protect the lab itself but also help contain one flank of the fire. The lab has been able to support local firefighting efforts, too, with the watering station atop one of its hills. Firefighting helicopters have regularly landed at JPL to refill with water to dump on the fire, but "We have had people in our mission operations center 24/7, 365, since 1963, and this is the first time we pulled out of that building," JPL director Laurie Leshin said. Following their contingency plan, they moved DSN operations up to their backup site at [NASA's Goldstone Deep Space Communications Complex](#) in central California. [1]

More than 100 additional people, including JPL director Laurie Leshin, are experiencing long-term displacement after their neighborhoods and the surrounding infrastructure were destroyed. About 20% of the lab's workforce evacuated from their homes, and many have not yet returned home. [1]

JPL currently runs or contributes to 40 active missions. All communications and data relayed to and from the missions run through the Deep Space Network (DSN), which JPL runs on-site in its mission operations center. That, too, needed to be evacuated. [1]



It might be interesting for the SpaceOps community to learn how JPL coped in detail with the operational problems. SpaceOps associated JPL personnel answered JSOC editor's questions in an e-mail interview.

The evacuation of the DSN network was moved to Goldstone, a process that is exercised on a yearly basis and worked without problems.

Q: Had JPL local personnel to be moved to Goldstone also?

A: *A few personnel were moved to Goldstone, for about one day.*

Q: How long could they stay and are there accommodations for the additional personnel?

A: *They could stay as long as they needed – but only one day was needed, and there are on-site accommodations as well as hotels in the nearby city of Barstow.*

Nothing is known about the mission operations and control of all the ongoing missions handled at JPL.

A: *Many missions have long running sequence files that meant they could ride out the one day evacuation. Some missions had their data stored at the DSN and replayed after the evacuation ended.*

Reference

[1] EOS Science News <https://eos.org/articles/jet-propulsion-laboratory-reopens-as-fire-recovery-continues#:~:text=JPL's%20campus%20did%20not%20sustain,is%20fully%20staffed%20once%20again.>