

Rapidly spreading wildfire in Malibu, California, forces evacuations

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The Franklin wildfire in Malibu, California, west of Los Angeles, ignited on December 9 and has rapidly spread under strong Santa Ana winds. As of December 11, the fire has scorched over 4,000 acres, primarily in the Malibu area, and continues to threaten homes, businesses, and natural habitats. Pepperdine University was forced to enact a shelter-in-place protocol, with smaller spot fires erupting on campus. Despite firefighters' continuing efforts, the fire is only 7 percent contained due to difficult terrain and persistent winds.

The affected areas include Malibu's hillside communities, portions of the Pacific Coast Highway, and nearby residential zones. Mandatory evacuation orders have displaced hundreds of residents, while power outages are affecting much of Malibu and adjacent areas. Emergency services have reported structural damages, but a full assessment is pending as containment efforts continue. A red flag warning, indicating extreme fire danger, remains in effect, and conditions are expected to worsen in the coming days as dry winds persist.

Over 1,500 firefighters have been deployed, aided by aerial water drops and ground-based suppression tactics. However, the rugged landscape and wind-driven embers are complicating operations. The lack of sufficient resources—a consequence of systemic underfunding—has further hindered progress, as the fire continues to expand.

Despite California's frequent wildfires, the Franklin blaze highlights the political root of the problem, which expresses itself in a lack of measures to prevent or mitigate these disasters which are being fueled and exacerbated by capitalist-induced climate change. Decades of budget cuts have left firefighting departments underfunded and under-resourced. Preventative measures like controlled burns, brush clearing, and investment in modern firefighting technologies are persistently sidelined. The state's firefighting budget remains insufficient in addressing the sheer scale and frequency of wildfires as the effects of climate change worsen.

Moreover, local communities, including the wealthy

enclave of Malibu, remain vulnerable due to inadequate infrastructure and planning. Many evacuation routes are outdated and insufficient to handle mass displacements. Despite repeated disasters, urban planning continues to prioritize high-value real estate over sustainable, fire-resistant designs. This negligence puts lives at risk and underscores capitalist priorities that value profit over human safety.

The intensification of wildfires in California is undeniably linked to the accelerating climate crisis. Rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, and erratic weather patterns create the perfect conditions for wildfires to ignite and spread uncontrollably. The Franklin fire, driven by fierce Santa Ana winds, is yet another example of how these climate-driven factors escalate the frequency and severity of these events.

Despite overwhelming scientific evidence, the Franklin wildfire is a stark reminder of the bankruptcy of a national strategy as well as the utter failure of international climate agreements. Agreements such as the Paris Climate Accord have proven worse than toothless, allowing corporations and nations to continue polluting with impunity. Wealthy nations and multinational corporations exploit loopholes, allowing them to maintain high levels of emissions while shifting the burden onto developing countries.

The United States, one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, has failed to enact meaningful policies to reduce its environmental impact. Instead, the federal government has often undermined global efforts, prioritizing corporate profits over environmental sustainability.

The incoming Trump administration's disdain for science and environmental regulation will only exacerbate the crisis. By dismissing climate science, which he has publicly ridicules as a "hoax," and rolling back climate policies, President-election Donald Trump has signaled his commitment to profit-driven destruction.

Under Trump's first presidency, critical agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) faced significant budget cuts, crippling their ability to enforce regulations and

combat pollution. This deliberate erosion of environmental oversight ensures that events like the Franklin wildfire will become increasingly frequent and devastating.

While Republicans openly deny the science, the Democratic Party is equally culpable in perpetuating systemic failures. Despite their control of California's legislature and governorship, Democrats have allowed critical resources to be diverted away from essential services, including fire prevention and firefighting. Budgetary decisions at the state level have consistently prioritized short-term economic interests over long-term safety and sustainability.

Governor Gavin Newsom is a clear example of this. In 2020, Newsom reduced a planned \$1 billion wildfire prevention program to less than half, citing insufficient readiness by CAL FIRE to implement projects. This funding delay postponed many prescribed burns and fuel reduction initiatives, critical for mitigating wildfire risks.

In more recent budgets, the state allocated resources for wildfire response and prevention, such as \$2.6 billion through 2028 and additional support for aerial firefighting technology. However, prevention efforts lag behind and reflect a reduction of earlier goals, such as treating 500,000 acres per year, which was postponed from 2023 to 2025?, a retreat from a 2018 executive order by then-Governor Jerry Brown.

Even as wildfires grow in frequency and severity, the Democrats have failed to implement meaningful measures to address the crisis. Controlled burns, infrastructure improvements, and investments in fire personnel have been delayed or underfunded, leaving communities vulnerable to predictable disasters. Their complicity in maintaining a profit-driven system that prioritizes the corporate interests of the wealthy over working class Californians underscores their shared responsibility for the current crisis.

The Franklin wildfire is not an isolated incident, but part of a broader systemic crisis rooted in capitalism's inherent contradictions. The prioritization of profit over social need and the environment ensures that disasters like these will continue to devastate communities. While residents of wealthy enclaves like Malibu may have the resources to recover, working class and marginalized communities bear the brunt of these crises. From inadequate housing to limited access to resources, growing social inequality exacerbates the human toll of wildfires and other climate-related disasters.

The response to the Franklin fire also highlights the inadequacies of capitalist governance. While Pepperdine University's shelter-in-place protocol demonstrated a degree of preparedness, it is an exception rather than the norm that only the wealthy can afford. Most communities lack the

resources and planning to effectively respond to such emergencies, leaving residents vulnerable and unprotected. This disparity underscores the broader failures of a system that prioritizes individual responsibility over collective action. A notable example was the 2018 Camp Fire that destroyed the Northern California town of Paradise.

Addressing the crisis of wildfires and climate change requires a fundamental systemic shift. First and foremost, social resources must be invested in robust infrastructure and preventative measures to mitigate the impact of wildfires are necessary. This includes essential funding for firefighting departments, modern equipment, and comprehensive urban planning that prioritizes sustainability and safety.

Secondly, a global response to climate change is crucial. This means rejecting market-based solutions and implementing policies based on science and genuine international coordination.

Finally, the fight against climate change must be linked to broader struggles for revolutionary social and economic change. The same capitalist system that drives environmental destruction also perpetuates war, inequality and exploitation. A sustainable future requires a socialist transformation of society that prioritizes the needs of humanity and the planet over the profits of an oligarchy.

The Franklin wildfire is a grim reminder of the failures of the profit system to protect people and the environment. As communities in Malibu and beyond grapple with the devastation, it is clear that piecemeal solutions and half-measures are utterly insufficient. Only through highly conscious political and collective action in the fight for socialism and a rejection of the profit system can workers prevent future tragedies and combat climate change.



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