



**January 13, 2025**

## Headlining This Week's Brief

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Climate and Natural Hazards  
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## Top Stories

### **Extreme Fire Danger Forecast Through Wednesday as Palisades and Eaton Fires Continue to Burn in Southern California**

The [Palisades Fire](#) and [Eaton Fire](#) have burned over 37,000 acres of Southern California, devastating the Pacific Palisades and portions of Pasadena amid a historic Santa Ana wind event. As of Monday, authorities have confirmed at least [24 fatalities](#).

The [National Weather Service](#) has issued another rare [Particularly Dangerous Situation \(PDS\) Red Flag Warning](#) for much of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties from 4 am Tuesday through noon Wednesday. The western San Gabriel Mountains, I-5 corridor, southern Ventura County Mountains, Santa Susana Mountains, Ventura Valleys, western Santa Monicas, northern San Fernando Valley, and Ventura County Coastal Plain are most at risk for extreme fire weather conditions. Wind gusts will reach 60-70 mph in the mountains and 50+ mph in the surrounding foothills. Gusts routinely exceeded 80 mph during peak conditions last week, though upcoming fire weather conditions would still be a major event on their own, not to mention that two large fire incidents remain.

Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) are likely to continue in wind-prone areas. Energy provider [Southern California Edison](#) is considering PSPS for nearly 500,000 customers. The National Weather Service has advised residents near foothills and mountains to review their fire evacuation plans, with most urged to be in the "Set" stage of readiness in case evacuation orders are issued. Lighter onshore winds and increased humidity will greatly lower fire weather concerns on Friday, though ongoing major incidents may require

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an extended period to be controlled fully. For more information, read AlertMedia's situation report on the [Los Angeles wildfires](#).

## **Heightened Security, Demonstration Activity Expected to Surround Trump's Inauguration**

The inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump is scheduled to take place next Monday and will feature heightened security and widespread demonstrations by opposing groups. Protest activity will begin in earnest on Saturday, January 18, with the People's March, organized by Women's March. Actions will take place nationwide, with around 50,000 [expected](#) to attend the main gathering in Washington, D.C. Demonstrations will continue through Inauguration Day, when pro-Palestine groups and a variety of civil society organizations will hold actions across the country, including in most major metropolitan areas. In addition to the demonstrations above, Trump plans to hold a Make America Great Again Victory Rally at Capitol One Arena on Sunday, January 19, while on Monday, civil rights organizations will hold events marking Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Day. For more information, read AlertMedia's situation report on the [presidential inauguration](#).

## **Second Notable Cold Blast Headed for Central and Eastern United States and Canada**

The first half of January has been exceptionally cold across the Central Plains, Ohio and Tennessee Valleys, the Southeast, and the Mid-Atlantic United States. Several climate districts have experienced one of the top 20 coldest starts to the year, with records dating back to 1893. Within the last week, a [major storm](#) is responsible for at least six deaths and thousands of flight cancellations, with impactful snow accumulations reported as far south as Nashville, Birmingham, and Atlanta.

Looking ahead, a brief spell of milder air is likely. Between late Wednesday and Friday (January 15 -17), daily high temperatures will commonly range five to 10 degrees above normal, with near 70F readings possible in North Texas. Highs in the upper 30s and 40s will reach Minnesota and Wisconsin by late week.

Southward displacement of the polar vortex will drive another Arctic blast into southern Canada and the central and eastern United States between Saturday and next Wednesday (January 18-22). Initially, the northern Rockies and western High Plains will be the target Saturday afternoon into Sunday, with temperatures dipping 30 to 40 degrees below normal over Montana, Wyoming, and eastern Colorado, into North Texas. Sunday night through Wednesday, extreme cold may moderate slightly, by widespread departures ranging 20 to 40 degrees below normal, and expand across Texas and the East U.S. A hard

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freeze is likely to reach the Gulf Coast and North Florida. At the same time, actual temperatures may dip below 0F across much of the Ohio Valley and interior Northeast. Demand for warming centers and calls for power and [water conservation](#) may occur. [U.S. natural gas futures](#) prices hit the highest levels since December 2022 earlier Monday due to the latest long-range forecasts.

## Global Leaders Head to Swiss Alps for World Economic Forum

Several thousand political, business, and civil society leaders are expected to discuss geoeconomic uncertainty and other global issues at the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting, which kicks off next Monday in Switzerland's Davos. Technological advancements and the global energy transition are top themes on the conference agenda, with AI and climate change expected to be major talking points. This Wednesday, the WEF is scheduled to release its annual [Global Risks Report](#), a key resource for business leaders and policymakers. Significant security measures and resources will be in place for the WEF meeting. No specific threats against the annual meeting have been identified by the AlertMedia team; however, demonstrations are planned in Davos and Bern, and the visibility of the event and its prominent guest list make the summit an attractive target for threat actors. For more information, read AlertMedia's situation report on the [World Economic Forum](#).

## Climate and Natural Hazards

- **Tropical Cyclone Dikeledi Hits Madagascar, Mayotte, and Mozambique:** Category 1 hurricane equivalent conditions were felt over [northern Madagascar](#) Saturday. At least three people were killed and 15,000 displaced. The storm's outer fringes also hit [Mayotte](#), a French territory still reeling from the catastrophic effects of Cyclone Chido in December. Over the next 24 hours, significant impacts are likely across eastern Mozambique as minimal hurricane-equivalent winds and torrential rain move onshore. Localized rain amounts over 10 inches could result in life-threatening flash flooding and landslides.

## Worldwide

- **Uncertainty Remains in Venezuela Following Inauguration of Nicolás Maduro:** Nicolás Maduro was [sworn in](#) for a third term as Venezuela's president on Friday. The inauguration was met with a day of opposition [protests](#) that [resulted](#) in numerous arrests, including, briefly, of leader [María Corina Machado](#). The opposition [called](#) Maduro's inauguration a "coup d'état" and vowed to begin a "new stage" of resistance against him, suggesting further protest activity is

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likely. International [condemnation](#) followed, with countries like [Canada](#), the [United States](#), and the [United Kingdom](#) imposing additional sanctions on Maduro-linked officials.

- **Trudeau's Resignation Opens Political Landscape in Canada:** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [announced](#) his resignation last week. However, he will remain in office until a new Liberal Party leader is chosen. Parliament has been [prorogued](#) until March 24 to allow time for leadership selection without parliamentary pressure. Once Parliament resumes, opposition parties are expected to push for a no-confidence vote, potentially triggering an election that polls suggest could favor the Conservatives. The incoming leader will face significant challenges, including addressing U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's proposed tariffs on Canadian goods.
- **U.S. Sanctions Sudan's Rapid Support Forces Leader Over Alleged Genocide:** The U.S. [imposed](#) sanctions on the head of Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, after determining that he and allied militias committed acts of genocide, systematically targeting civilians based on ethnicity. The measures include barring Dagalo from entering the country and freezing his U.S. assets. They come as the RSF seeks to restore its image and assert legitimacy amid battlefield losses, including the key central city of [Wad Madani](#). The Sudan conflict, ongoing since April 2023, has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions.
- **Unrest Reported in Multiple African Countries:** Amid enduring political unrest in Chad, an [attack](#) occurred last week on the presidential palace in N'Djamena. The assailants were described as "disorganized and intoxicated" "local youths" who carried out a "[destabilisation attempt](#)." To the west, in Guinea, the junta [reached](#) the expiration of its transitional authority, prompting protests in the capital, Conakry. The military government has yet to establish clear timelines for long-delayed elections and last week [sentenced](#) opposition leader Aliou Bah to two years in prison. Finally, in Mozambique, opposition leader Venâncio Mondlane [returned](#) from self-imposed exile and called for a fresh round of protests against disputed election results.
- **Incoming U.S. Administration Seeks to End War in Ukraine in First 100 Days:** As the war in Ukraine approaches three years, the UN [accused](#) Russia of waging a war of attrition and pursuing a policy of mass destruction. Intense fighting continues in eastern Ukraine amid fears in Kyiv that the incoming U.S. administration will not financially back its defense, as President-elect Donald Trump has [threatened](#) to cut support. The Biden administration [pushed through](#) a \$500 million military aid package last week, likely the [last major package](#), as Trump's pick to be Ukraine's special peace envoy [said](#) they would end the war in 100 days. Recently, on the battlefield, Russia [claimed](#) to have taken Kurakhove, a town in the east near the strategic logistical hub of Pokrovsk. However, Ukraine reportedly [maintains control](#) over positions in the area.

## Cyber and Regulatory

- **Meta Drops Fact-Checking and Switches to Community Notes:** Meta [announced](#) several changes to its content moderation policies, including the partial removal of rules protecting the LGBTQ community and swapping its fact-checking program for a system of community notes that allows users to correct inaccurate posts. Tech watchdogs have criticized the move, stating it will allow misinformation and hateful rhetoric to spread on the platform. Additionally, Brazilian officials [noted](#) that tech companies must comply with local laws to operate in the country and have reached out to Meta to clarify whether the changes extend to Brazil.
- **FCC Introduces Cyber Trust Label:** The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has launched a new [labeling program](#)—the U.S. Cyber Trust Mark—to help American consumers identify and purchase secure internet-connected devices. By certifying devices with a [recognizable shield logo and scannable QR codes](#), the program raises awareness of security standards. It makes it easier for users to confirm whether a product meets cyber safety requirements. Major manufacturers and 11 companies designated as Cybersecurity Label Administrators (CLAs) are collaborating with the government to implement this initiative, ensuring more robust protection against hacking attempts that exploit vulnerabilities in [connected technologies](#).
- **India Proposes Digital Data Rules and Removes WhatsApp Payment Restrictions:** India [released](#) a draft version of the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules that would give citizens greater control over their data. The proposed rules would force data fiduciaries to allow users to manage their data, demand its deletion, and implement security measures to safeguard personal data. Additionally, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) [removed](#) restrictions on WhatsApp Pay, allowing all users in the country to access the payment service. The decision removes a previous cap of 100 million users set in 2022.
- **Federal Law to Ban TikTok on Sunday:** A federal law banning TikTok is set to go into effect on January 19 unless its Chinese parent company, ByteDance, sells the platform. The ban will [prevent](#) web-hosting companies from hosting TikTok, which would stop new users from downloading the app and current users from updating it. The law states that the application is a national security threat due to ByteDance's requirement to cooperate with Chinese intelligence operations. The company provided [arguments](#) to the Supreme Court on January 10 in an attempt to block the law, and President-elect Donald Trump has asked the justices to delay the law until he takes office.
- **UN Aviation Organization's Recruitment Database Breached and Other Notable Hacks:** Several notable hacks were reported over the past week. Threat actors [breached](#) the United

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Nations' International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) recruitment database, stealing over 40,000 documents. ICAO noted the data did not contain sensitive information on applicants and claimed additional security measures are in place to prevent future system breaches. In other hacking news, the Green Bay Packers sent breach notification letters to over 8,500 customers whose credit card information was [stolen](#) after the team's online Pro Shop was hacked in September. Finally, PowerSchool, a cloud-based student information system widely used by K-12 schools to manage various aspects of student data and academic

- records, [confirmed](#) that customer information, possibly containing personally identifiable information and other sensitive data, was stolen. The company stated that while it was not a ransomware incident, it had paid threat actors to delete stolen data.

## Infrastructure and Supply Chain

- **U.S. Port Strike Averted:** A potentially crippling [strike by port workers](#) on the U.S. East and Gulf Coasts has been averted after the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX) reached a tentative six-year agreement. The deal, which still requires union ratification, covers 50,000 ILA members across 14 port authorities and averts a strike set to begin on January 16. Both sides hailed the agreement as a "win-win," emphasizing its protection of current jobs, creation of new positions, and modernization of ports to strengthen supply chains. The framework aims to enhance port safety and efficiency while supporting American consumers and businesses.
- **Businesses Prepare Supply Chains for China's Lunar New Year Celebrations:** Shipping company Maersk recently issued [guidance](#) for businesses on how to navigate the Chinese New Year holiday, also known as the Lunar New Year. The new year officially begins on January 29. However, official public holidays will be observed in China from January 28 to February 4, with some festivities occurring as early as January 22 and extending to February 12 and the Lantern Festival. Many Chinese factories may have already begun slowing operations in preparation for the holiday. During the festival period, many factories will close, and Chinese ports will see spikes in operations and freight rates on the days immediately preceding and following. Automotives, electronics, textiles, apparel, and toys are the industries likely to be most affected.
- **LA Fires Expected to be Costliest in U.S. History:** Analysts are [projecting](#) total economic losses from the ongoing Los Angeles-area wildfires to be anywhere between \$50 billion and \$150 billion, or up to 4% of the annual GDP of California. [Insured losses](#) are likely to exceed \$20 billion and further exacerbate the [precarious insurance landscape](#) in the state. Prior to last week's wildfires, insurers had already been withdrawing policies from the area, with [State Farm](#) opting not to renew around 72,000 homes and apartments last year, including thousands in Pacific

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Palisades. California had been [making efforts](#) to entice insurers to reenter the market and reduce reliance on the state-backed insurer of last resort, Fair Plan. Still, the latest fires may cause companies to reassess their plans. The fallout may not be limited to California, as increasing rates of natural disasters are [pushing homeowners' insurance rates](#) up across the country.

- **European Countries Bolstering Security Around Energy Infrastructure:** Following the severing of multiple undersea cables in the North Sea and other apparent attacks on energy infrastructure in Europe, many countries are making efforts to bolster their physical defenses. NATO is [sending](#) a fleet of around 10 ships to guard underwater energy and data cables in the Baltic Sea. Similarly, Lithuania is [increasing security](#) around its energy links with Poland ahead of a planned decoupling next month from a grid shared with Russia and Belarus. Lithuania's prime minister has said they've seen "clear and unambiguous attempts by opponents to disrupt this process." Meanwhile, Moldova's Prime Minister [accused](#) Russia of causing "instability in the region" as the country grapples with power outages.
- **Employers Prepare for Immigration Raids Ahead of Trump Presidency:** The incoming Trump administration is reportedly preparing a tranche of executive orders that will be [issued](#) on the first day of his term meant to signal that the U.S. is "closed to illegal immigration." As employers wait to see what exactly those measures entail, many are preparing for an [increase](#) in workplace raids and I-9 audits as government officials look to clamp down on unauthorized immigrant workers. The manufacturing, food processing, agricultural, construction, and hospitality industries are likely to be among those [targeted](#). Farm workers in California have already [reportedly](#) been targeted for a surprise raid by Border Patrol.
- **Other Stories the Global Intelligence Team Is Monitoring:** During his last remaining days in office, U.S. President Joe Biden put forward new sanctions and restrictions, introducing [new sanctions](#) on two major Russian oil producers and 183 vessels, as well as expansive new [export controls](#) on computer chips and other technology to hinder China's development of its artificial intelligence industry. For its part, China is [proposing](#) curbs on technology used in the production of electric vehicles. As President-elect Donald Trump prepares to take office, tariffs and trade restrictions are only expected to increase. The Trump team is reportedly preparing [universal tariffs](#), although they will be targeted only to cover "critical imports." Canada is [preparing](#) its own tariffs in response to a potential trade war.

## Health

- **Rise in Flu Cases Causes U.K. Hospitals to Declare Critical Incidents:** Multiple NHS trusts are [reporting](#) that high demand for emergency care is straining hospital resources amid [increased](#)

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cases of respiratory illnesses, particularly influenza. In early January, U.K. health officials [warned](#) that flu cases are “rising at a very concerning rate,” with hospitalizations almost triple the numbers seen in 2023. Hospital flu cases typically increase in the winter, but the surge in people seeking care has [overwhelmed](#) emergency departments at more than a dozen hospitals. Declaring a critical incident indicates that the hospital cannot function as normal and allows it to [prioritize](#) resources for the emergency department.

- **Human Deaths From Bird Flu Reported in U.S., Cambodia:** Louisiana [reported](#) the first H5-bird-flu-related human death in the U.S. last week. The patient, who had underlying health conditions and [exposure](#) to poultry and wild birds, was Louisiana’s only human case of bird flu. Cambodia also [reported](#) its first H5N1-related human death of 2025, and in California, health officials [reported](#) a presumptive bird flu case in a child who has since recovered. Officials in the state have [temporarily banned](#) all poultry and cattle exhibitions. H5N1 continues to primarily [affect](#) poultry farms and cattle herds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that 28 states are enrolled in its [National Milk Testing Strategy](#), launched a month ago to conduct H5N1 surveillance for dairy herds and the country’s milk supply.
- **CDC Advises Pregnant People to Reconsider Travel to Espírito Santo Amid Oropouche Outbreak:** Last month, the CDC [issued](#) a travel health notice recommending that pregnant individuals reconsider non-essential travel to Brazil’s Espírito Santo due to an increase in Oropouche cases. There have been multiple reports of fetal loss among people who contract Oropouche during early and late pregnancy, as well as reports of infants born with congenital abnormalities, including microcephaly. There is an ongoing outbreak of Oropouche in Espírito Santo in southeastern Brazil, and low numbers of cases continue to be [reported](#) in other countries in the Americas. Brazil reported over 5,000 infections in the first half of 2024. If pregnant people must travel to Espírito Santo, the CDC has [these prevention recommendations](#) that travelers should follow.
- **China Reports Decline of HMPV Cases, WHO Sees Normal Respiratory Infection Trends:** Health officials in northern China [reported](#) that the rate of human metapneumovirus (HMPV) infections is declining. The World Health Organization (WHO) released a [report](#) on respiratory infection trends in the Northern Hemisphere, noting that China is seeing levels of acute respiratory infections, including human metapneumovirus, that are “within the expected range for the winter season with no unusual outbreak patterns reported.” While there is significant viral activity in China—and many other places in the Northern Hemisphere—the new reports show that the situation is in line with typical patterns during the winter season.
- **France Reports First Case of New Mpox Variant, China Tracking Cluster Outbreak:** Last week, France became the fifth country in Europe to [detect](#) a case of mpox clade 1b. The patient



had not traveled to central Africa, where mpox has been [spreading](#) over the past year, but had contact with two people who had recently traveled there. Meanwhile, health officials in China [reported](#) a cluster outbreak of the mpox clade 1b last week, linking four cases to a patient who has a history of travel to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mpox clade 1 causes more severe illness and death than clade 2, and the mpox 1b subclade appears to spread more easily. Elsewhere, new mpox clade 1 cases have been [reported](#) in Pakistan and Oman. Sierra Leone [reported](#) its first case of mpox, though the variant has not been specified.

## Demonstrations and Industrial Action

- **Protests Persist in South Korea Amid Political Turmoil:** Demonstrations [continue](#) regularly in South Korea as the country's political infrastructure remains fractured following President Yoon Suk-yeol's martial law declaration in December. Protests have been largely peaceful thus far, but activism on both sides of the Yoon support spectrum remains strong, with hundreds of thousands [hitting the streets](#) of the capital, Seoul, this past weekend. More activity is expected to occur in the coming days as Yoon's impeachment trial is [set to begin](#) Tuesday, and another arrest attempt is [reportedly](#) looming. A previous move to detain him led to protests and a [showdown](#) between investigators and his security personnel.
- **Indian Farmer Groups Call for Nationwide Action on Republic Day:** Major farming groups in India are [planning](#) nationwide demonstrations on the country's Republic Day, January 26. The call to action comes as the health of Jagjit Singh Dallewal, a key agricultural leader, continues to deteriorate amid a [hunger strike](#) aimed at pressuring the government into concessions, including a minimum price guarantee for crops. Farmers have [maintained protests](#) on the border between Punjab and Haryana since they were halted by authorities attempting to march on the capital almost a year ago. Tensions have mounted recently over Dallewal's health situation and the [suicides of two protesting farmers](#).
- **Supporters of Former Bolivian President Arrive in La Paz:** Evo Morales supporters are set to arrive in the Bolivian capital today after a multi-day march from the town of Patacamaya. They are joined by unions and other groups protesting the current government and the country's [worst economic crisis](#) in decades. Thus far, reports of violence connected to the march have been limited, with police [claiming](#) participants attacked them at one point; however, clashes remain possible, as authorities have [shut down](#) Plaza Murillo, the group's destination in La Paz. Demonstration activity around the capital is expected to continue into tomorrow, with the southern labor unions of El Alto [leading](#) a march to Plaza Murillo early in the morning. The protests, reflective of the present political tensions in the country, are the first major gatherings in an election year that is sure to feature further unrest.

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- **Austria, Germany Likely to See Further Protests Against Far-Right Parties:** Activists opposed to far-right parties in Austria and Germany came out in force this weekend as political shake-ups consume both countries. In Germany, thousands traveled to the town of Riesa to **protest** an Alternative for Germany (AfD) convention that saw the formal nomination of Alice Weidel as their candidate for February's snap elections. Meanwhile, across the border, in the Austrian capital of Vienna, tens of thousands gathered Saturday evening to **demonstrate** against the Freedom Party (FPÖ), **tasked** with forming a government after months of political stalemate. Both countries are likely to see increased protest activity in the coming weeks over the prospect of these parties potentially taking power.
- **Other Activity the Global Intelligence Team Is Watching:** While widespread demonstration activity is planned in the U.S. in connection with the Trump inauguration, protests are also expected in various urban areas across the globe, including in Amsterdam's Museum Square on Sunday, Hachmannplatz in Hamburg on Saturday, and at the U.S. Consulate in Sydney, Australia, next Tuesday. Outside Trump-related demonstrations, in the U.S., Georgia will be the site of two notable actions in the coming days, including a march on the University of Georgia campus on Wednesday against a faculty member who organizers say is a Neo-Nazi and "Mass Mobilization + Day of Resistance" by activists with the Stop Cop City movement in Atlanta on Saturday.

## Upcoming Events

- January 13-February 26: Maha Kumbh Mela (Prayagraj, India)
- January 14: Impeachment Trial for Yoon Suk-yeol Begins (South Korea)
- January 15: Presidential Swearing-in Ceremony (Mozambique)
- January 15-17: Global Peace Summit (Bangkok, Thailand)
- January 16: Parliamentary Elections (Vanuatu)
- January 20: Presidential Inauguration (United States)
- January 20-24: World Economic Forum (Davos, Switzerland)
- January 21-23: International Armoured Vehicles Conference (Farnborough, United Kingdom)
- January 26: Australia Day (Australia)
- January 26: Republic Day (India)
- January 26: Presidential Election (Belarus)
- January 28: Spring Festival Eve (China)
- January 29: Lunar New Year (China, Taiwan)
- January 30-February 2: Lunar New Year Holiday (Taiwan)
- January 30-February 4: Golden Week (China)
- February 5: Kashmir Day (Pakistan)
- January 20-24: World Economic Forum (Davos Switzerland)