

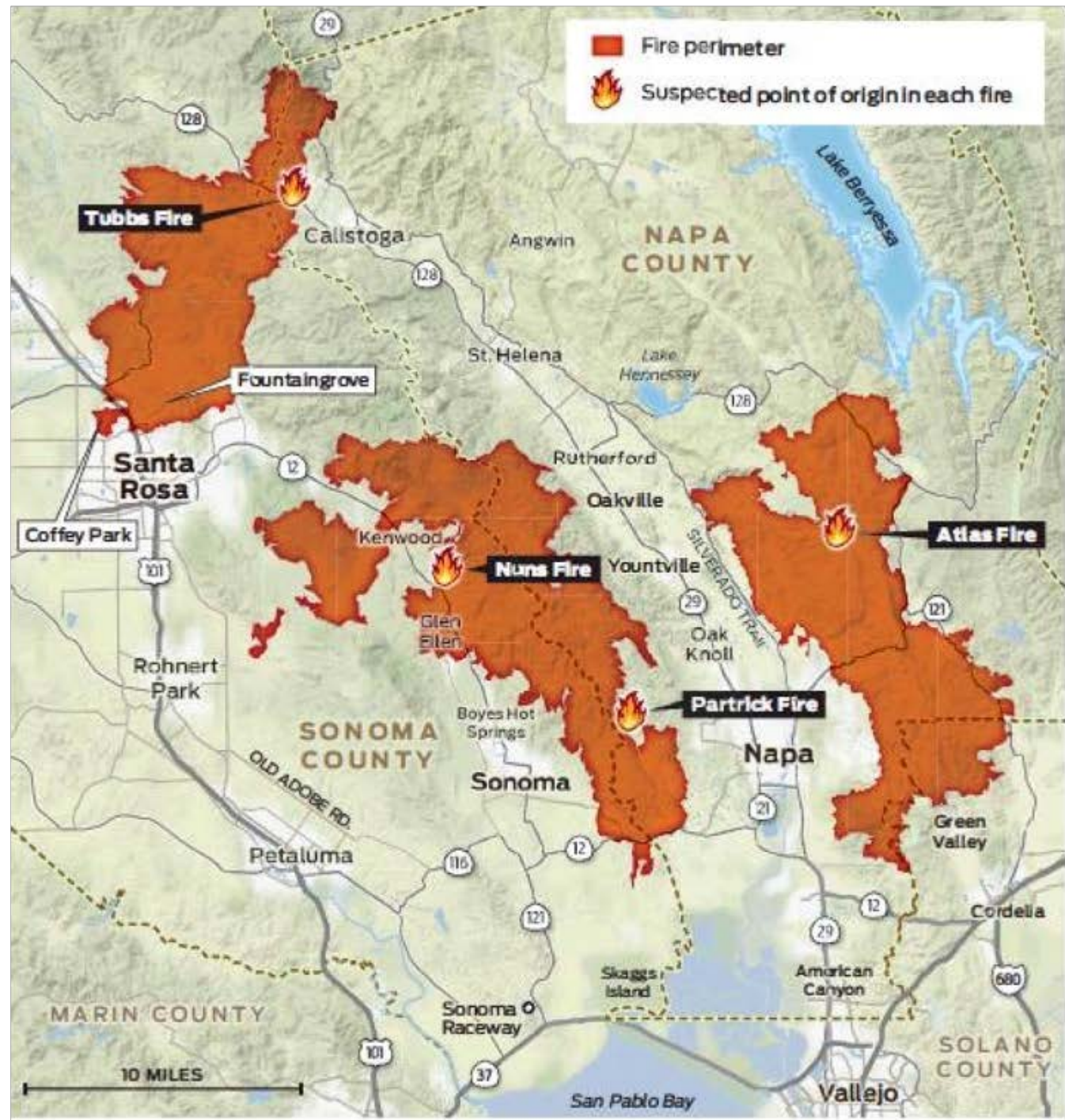
The North Bay Fires


October, 2017

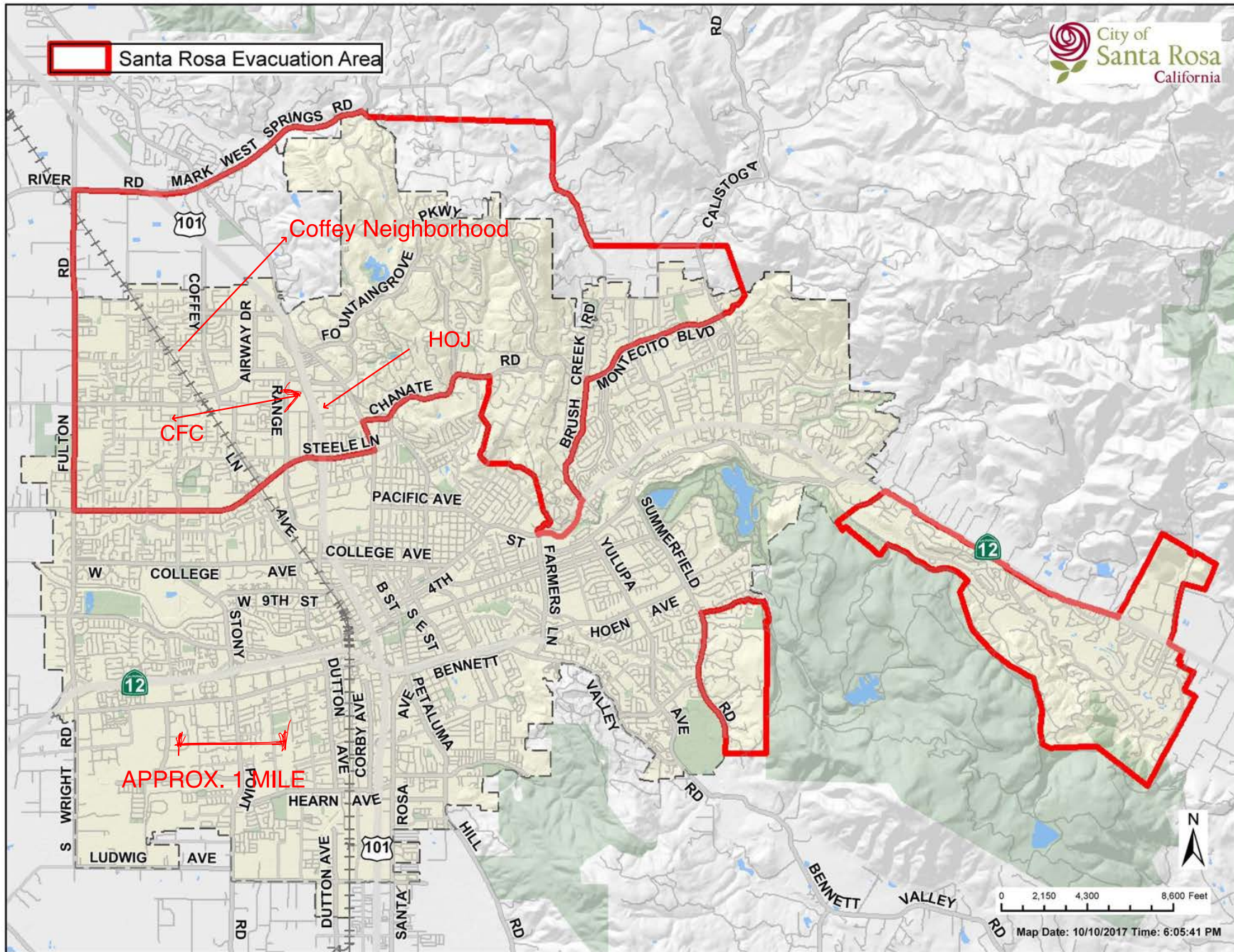
Overview of The Sonoma County fires

- The Tubbs fire, the most destructive wildfire in California history, destroyed over 6,000 homes and buildings
- The Nuns fire and the Pocket Fire (east Sonoma County) destroyed and damaged approx. 1,000 homes and structures (came w/in a few miles of the town plaza/Town of Sonoma);
- Approx. 100,000 people were displaced; over 4,000 people evacuated to shelters

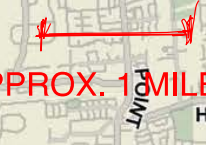
- The death toll from blazes in Northern California is 42 people, including 23 in Sonoma County, 8 in Mendocino, 7 in Napa and 4 in Yuba Counties
- Sonoma County lost 5% of its housing stock



 Santa Rosa Evacuation Area



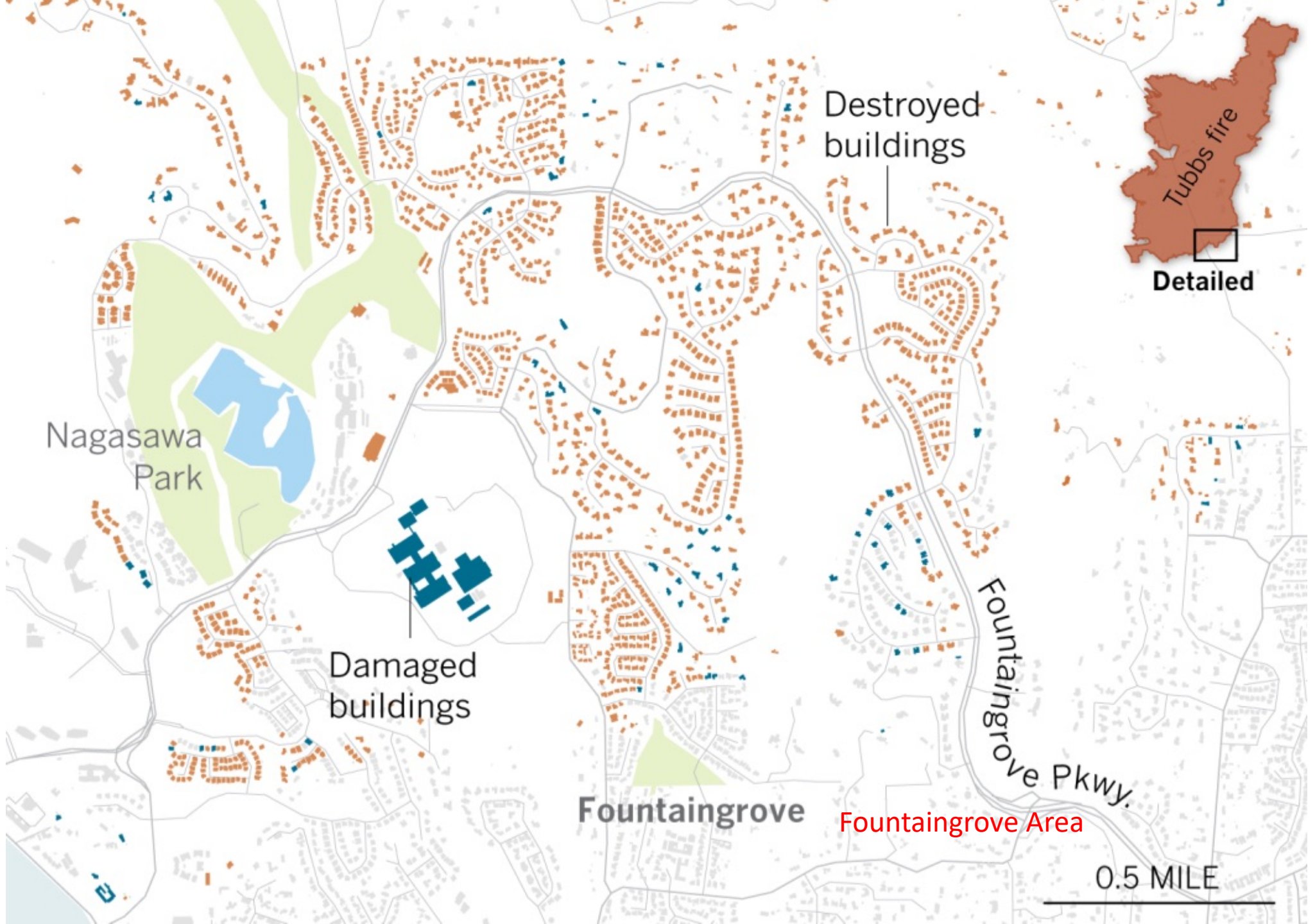
APPROX. 1 MILE



Coffey Neighborhood Before Fire









Fountaingrove Inn











Initial Response

- It is lonely at the top...
- Had to consider the possibility that the courthouses would be burned/affected
 - The fire was moving rapidly
 - Buildings across the street were flaming or had burned
- Had to determine the safety and/or losses of the judicial officers/staff
- Had to figure out how to communicate with managers to find out how our staff was affected
- Had to obtain up-to-date information as to the countywide emergency

Operation of the Court

- The initial response taken was to formally close the court
 - Obtained enabling orders from the CJ; issued orders as Acting PJ
 - Communicating these orders to the legal community and the public was challenging
 - Court web site functioning; someone needs to know how to modify it
 - Bar Association communicated orders
 - Public still showed up at court; created notices posted at entrances to court; found someone to translate into Spanish
 - Non-citizens were most concerned, mostly involving traffic matters and payments of fines

Continuing Issues...

- Not just danger of fire; environmental considerations
- Availability of staff; need to consider limited resources/triage of services
- Criminal matters: availability of DA/PD staff and private counsel
 - Where to hold hearings (arraignments, NTW trials; 1368 competency matters, etc.)
 - Availability of other necessary individuals (e.g., mental health examiners)
- Notice issues: placing noticed but not heard matters on calendar; addressing growing backup of cases; triage of in-court resources

- Needed to determine what to do with cases scheduled during court closure
 - Crim: cited to appear; obtaining jurisdiction
 - Trial backlog
 - NTW cases
- Must address backlog created by resource diversion
- Employee benefits when impacted: important to staff; paychecks need to be provided

Anticipating Emergencies

- Determine how to communicate to staff and court management
- Obtain assistance from JC staff/Chief Justice:
 - Legal advice re: emergency powers of PJ
 - Ability to extend deadlines (e.g., filing, prelims, criminal hearings, civil deadlines)
 - Facilities oversight and environmental testing
- How to communicate and work with DA/PD and private counsel re: *their* staffing issues
- Determine when/where to hold court hearings (e.g., arraignments, *ex parte hearings*, both civil and criminal)

Lessons learned...

- People are inherently good
- Statutory authority to adjust time sensitive matters in emergencies is limited
 - Unclear as to matters such as preliminary hearings, arraignments
 - Limited by availability of justice partners
- The assistance of the CJ, and JC staff, is essential
- Communicate and work with DA/PD and private counsel re: *their* staffing issues and emergency coordination *before* facing an emergency
- Determine when/where to hold court hearings in emergency (e.g., arraignments, *ex parte hearings*, both civil and criminal)

Special thanks...

- Chief Justice and Martin Hoshino
- Jody Patel and management at the Judicial Council
- Special thanks to JC legal: their advice and support got me through this nightmare
- At the Sonoma court:
 - CEO Arlene Junior
 - Judicial officers (lost homes; evacuated; all others)
 - 2 Supervising Judges and 1 other who lost homes
 - Commissioner (now Judge) Jennifer Dollard (evacuated, interviewed, sworn in)
 - Others such as Juvenile Court PJ Ken Gness (waiting to evacuate)
 - Many others facing possibility of evacuation and loss of homes; dedicated to providing justice to the public
 - ALL JUDICIAL OFFICER HANDS WERE ON DECK