

M24-1228ms



San Diego Office  
591 Camino de la Reina, Suite 1025, San Diego, CA 92108  
(619) 771-3473 | singletonschreiber.com

November 7, 2024

**VIA PERSONAL SERVICE**

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
400 W. Civic Center Drive, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: Airport Fire 2024 (origin – Trabuco Canyon)  
Date of Incident: September 9, 2024

2024 NOV -7 PM 2:13  
CLERK OF THE BOARD  
COUNTY OF ORANGE  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

RECEIVED

HAND DELIVERED OVER THE COUNTER  
Date 11/7/24  
Initial AS

Dear Clerk,

We represent Ms. Desiree Morrison and family, The Morrison Family Trust dated June 11, 2024, Morrison Enterprise, and Ms. Tyra Evans and family in their claims against the County of Orange, California, for harm caused to them by the Airport Fire. As such, please find the relevant Government Claims forms for each of our clients as well as a draft complaint that will be filed against the County of Orange should the attached claims be denied or deemed denied.

Sincerely,

Paul Starita

Enclosures:

- (1) Claim form, spreadsheet, and complaint for Ms. Desiree Morrison and family, The Morrison Family Trust dated June 11, 2024, and Morrison Enterprise.
- (2) Claim form, spreadsheet, and complaint for Ms. Tyra Evans and family.

NOV 07 2024

M24-122525



**CLAIM FOR MONEY OR DAMAGES  
AGAINST THE COUNTY OF ORANGE  
(Pursuant to Govt. Code section 910 et seq.)**

Received by \_\_\_\_\_ via:  
 Mail  
 Over the Counter  
 Pony Mail  
 Other \*\*\* COB USE ONLY\*\*\*

**Completed and signed forms must be mailed or delivered to:** Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
400 W. Civic Center Drive, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Claims related to personal injury or damage to personal property must be presented within six (6) months from the date of loss. Claims related to any other loss must be presented not later than one (1) year from the date of loss. (See Government Code Section 911.2)  
Please answer all items fully and to the best of your ability. Failure to do so may be grounds for deeming your claim insufficient. If more space is needed, please attach additional pages.

**CLAIMANT INFORMATION**

1. Claimant's Name: Evans Family (see spreadsheet) 2. Date of Birth: See spreadsheet

3. Claimant's Address: 16645 Benjamin Cir., Lake Elsinore, CA 92530  
Street (or P.O. Box) City State Zip Code

4. Phone Number: 619-771-3473 (Singleton Schreiber)  
Home Work Other

5. Name and address where correspondence should be sent (if different from above):  
Singleton Schreiber 591 Camino de la Reina, Ste 1025, San Diego, CA 92108  
Name Street (or P.O. Box) City State Zip Code

**CLAIM INFORMATION**

6. Exact date (including year) of the accident/incident/loss: September 10, 2024

7. Exact location of the accident/incident/loss (Be as specific as possible; Example: On the southeast corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Broadway in the City of Santa Ana):  
16645 Benjamin Cir., Lake Elsinore, CA 92530

8. Describe the circumstances of how the accident/incident/loss occurred including the reason you believe the County of Orange is liable for your damages:

Orange County Public Works ignited the airport Fire when its equipment created a spark and when it let overgrown dry brush remain on the property. The Airport Fire burned nearly 24,000 acres and several structures, including my primary residence. The County's conduct amounts to inverse condemnation, negligence, trespass, private nuisance, public nuisance and dangerous condition of public property. See attached complaint.

HAND DELIVERED OVER THE COUNTER  
Initial: MS Date: 11/7/24

9. Jail Booking Number: N/A Police Agency/Report Number: N/A

10. Describe the damage/injury/loss incurred so far as is known as of the time of this claim:

Claimant suffered economic and non-economic damages, including but not limited to loss of personal property, general damages for personal injury (emotional distress, fear, annoyance, loss of quiet enjoyment), loss of use of personal property, and medical and incidental expenses, among others. See attached spreadsheet.

11. Name(s) of County employee(s) causing damage/injury/loss, if known: Specific County  
employee(s) names are unknown. Employees were part of Orange County Public Works.

12. License number of County vehicle (if applicable): N/A

13. Name, address and phone number of any and all witnesses known: Tyra J. Evans  
and Gerald Evans. They may be contacted through counsel, at Singleton Schreiber.

14. Any additional information that may assist us in evaluating your claim: Please find the attached spreadsheet listing each family member and/or household member and the harms suffered.  
Also, please find the attached draft complaint.

**DAMAGES CLAIMED**

15. a. If the amount claimed is less than \$10,000:

Amount claimed to present: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated amount of any prospective damage/injury/loss: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT CLAIMED: \$ 10,000,000.00

b. If the amount claimed exceeds \$10,000, would the case be a limited civil case (\$25,000 or less)?

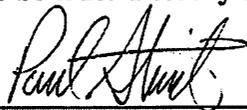
Check one: Yes  No

c. Basis of computation of the amount of damages (Please attach any estimates and/or receipts):

Damages are based on estimate of the total value of lost of personal and real property and other economic harm as well as non-economic harm.

**WARNING: IT IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE TO FILE A FALSE CLAIM  
(PENAL CODE § 72)**

I have read the matters and statements in the above claim and I know the same to be true of my own knowledge, except as to those matters stated upon information and belief and as to such matters, I believe the same to be true. I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.



Signature of Claimant/Claimant's Representative

11/07/2024

Date

**THIS CLAIM FORM MUST BE SIGNED!!**

<b>Claimant Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Claimant's Address</b>
Tyra J. Evans	9/23/1969	16645 Benjamin Circle Lake Elsinore, CA 92530

**Describe Injury**

Ms. Tyra Evans owned and maintained real and personal property that was damaged and/or destroyed by soot and ash from the Airport Fire including the primary residence, pool equipment, automobiles, and other personal property. Ms. Evans has incurred costs to inspect, clean, repair, and/or restore the property to its original condition, and was required to expend notable uncompensated time on recovery efforts.

Ms. Evans has been denied of the right to occupy, possess, and use the property, and has suffered from a substantial interference with the right to occupy, possess, and use the property without interference by representatives of Orange County. Ms. Evans has also suffered from substantial interference to her normal and usual activities, as well as an ongoing interference with the use and enjoyment of the property.

Ms. Evans suffered from poor air quality, smoke inhalation, emotional distress, and other non-economic damages due to the Airport Fire.

Ms. Evans also suffered personal income loss due to the Airport Fire.

Gerald Evans	12/18/1968	16645 Benjamin Circle Lake Elsinore, CA 92530
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Mr. Gerald Evans owned and maintained real and personal property that was damaged and/or destroyed by soot and ash from the Airport Fire including the primary residence, pool equipment, automobiles, and other personal property. Mr. Evans has incurred costs to inspect, clean, repair, and/or restore the property to its original condition, and was required to expend notable uncompensated time on recovery efforts.

Mr. Evans has been denied of the right to occupy, possess, and use the property, and has suffered from a substantial interference with the right to occupy, possess, and use the property without interference by representatives of Orange County. Mr. Evans has also suffered from substantial interference to his normal and usual activities, as well as an ongoing interference with the use and enjoyment of the property.

Mr. Evans suffered from poor air quality, smoke inhalation and other related personal injuries, emotional distress, and other non-economic damages due to the Airport Fire.

Ms. Evans also suffered personal income loss due to the Airport Fire.

1 SINGLETON SCHREIBER, LLP  
Gerald Singleton (SBN 208783)  
2 *gsingleton@singletonschreiber.com*  
John C. Lemon (SBN 175847)  
3 *jlemon@singletonschreiber.com*  
591 Camino de la Reina, Suite 1025  
4 San Diego, CA 92108  
Telephone: (619) 771-3473  
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7 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**  
8 **FOR THE COUNTY OF ORANGE**  
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Plaintiffs,

v.

COUNTY OF ORANGE, ORANGE COUNTY  
PUBLIC WORKS, AND DOES 1 THROUGH 100  
inclusive.

Case No.

**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiffs (hereinafter collectively referred to as "Plaintiffs") bring the following Complaint for damages against County of Orange ("County"), inclusive of Orange County Public Works department ("OCPW") and other as of yet unknown entities and individuals, Does 1 through 100 (collectively, the "Defendants"), as a result of the damages that Plaintiffs sustained in the wildfire known as the "Airport Fire."

**THE AIRPORT FIRE**

1. This Complaint arises from a wildfire that ignited on September 9, 2024, and has burned across two counties in Southern California called the Airport Fire.

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1           2.       Defendants caused the Airport Fire when they used steel machinery to move  
2 boulders during an excessive heat warning due to a triple-digit heat wave and dry conditions.  
3 Defendants, aware of the fire risk, were moving the boulders to block access to unmaintained  
4 vegetation susceptible to wildfires when its steel machinery sparked the blaze.



18                   Photo from The Orange County Register Article: 'Reckless and stupid,' 'incompetent':  
19                   OC work that started Airport fire questioned, blasted by Teri Sforza

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1 3. The Airport Fire ignited at approximately 1:21 p.m. on September 9, 2024, near  
2 Trabuco Canyon in Orange County, California. The fire quickly spread into Riverside County  
3 destroying structures, cabins, homes, and vegetation along the way. The following image depicts  
4 the Airport Fire perimeter.<sup>1</sup>



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15 4. To date, the Airport Fire burned 23,526 acres, injured 21 people, destroyed over  
16 160 structures, and damaged another 34 structures. The Airport Fire prompted numerous  
17 evacuations, forcing Plaintiffs and other Orange County and Riverside County residents to flee  
18 their homes.

19 5. And in its wake, Plaintiffs returned to find their homes, all their personal  
20 belongings, and cherished possessions, completely destroyed.

21 6. Plaintiffs now sue for damages and all other available remedies arising from the  
22 harms caused by the Airport Fire.

### 23 JURISDICTION AND VENUE

24 7. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to California  
25 Code of Civil Procedure section 395(a) because, at all times relevant, Defendants have conducted  
26 significant business in the County of Orange, State of California, so as to render the exercise of  
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28 <sup>1</sup> See [Airport Fire | CAL FIRE](#).

1 jurisdiction over Defendants by California courts consistent with the traditional notions of fair play  
2 and substantial justice.

3 8. The claims asserted in this complaint arise out of acts, omissions, transactions, and  
4 conduct that occurred within the County of Orange, and therefore this action is properly venued in  
5 the Superior Court for the County of Orange.

6 9. The amount in controversy exceeds the jurisdictional minimum of this Court.

7 **PLAINTIFFS**

8 10. Plaintiffs (see attached claimant forms).

9 **DEFENDANTS**

10 11. Plaintiffs, upon information and belief, allege that Defendant County is, and was at  
11 all relevant times, a political subdivision and/or entity of the State of California. Orange County  
12 Public Works (OCPW) is a governmental agency in and for the County of Orange.

13 12. County provides services to approximately three million residents, including  
14 Plaintiffs. County owns, operates, and controls public property and infrastructure. County is  
15 comprised of several departments, including OCPW. The OCPW, in turn, is responsible for  
16 planning, constructing, operating, and maintaining the County's property and infrastructure: public  
17 roads, transportation systems, bridges, equipment maintenance, water, and vegetation  
18 management, among others.

19 13. County is a public entity pursuant to California Government Code section 811.2.

20 14. At all times relevant to this complaint, County is and was vested by law with  
21 authority to acquire property through the power of eminent domain pursuant to the provisions of  
22 California Constitution Article I, section 19 and California Code of Civil Procedure sections  
23 1230.010, 1235.190, 1240.040, et seq.

24 15. At all times mentioned herein, County planned, installed, operated, constructed,  
25 built, and maintained its infrastructure for the benefit of the general public, including but not  
26 limited to the use of heavy equipment to move boulders.

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1           16.    At all times mentioned herein, County provided pre-fire management and fire  
2 prevention services in Orange County, including but not limited to vegetation management of its  
3 State Responsibility Areas and open space lands and/or districts.

4           17.    The true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate, associate, or  
5 otherwise of the Defendants Does 1 through 100, inclusive, are unknown to Plaintiffs who sue said  
6 Defendants by such fictitious names pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure section 474. The term  
7 "Defendants" used throughout this complaint refers collectively to the County, including OCPW,  
8 and Does 1 through 100, and each of them.

9           18.    Plaintiffs are informed and believe that Defendants, and/or each of them, were the  
10 servants, employees, partners, aiders and abettors, co-conspirators, and/or joint venturers of each of  
11 the other Defendants and were operating within the purpose and scope of said agency, service,  
12 employment, partnership, enterprise, conspiracy, and/or joint venture; and each of Defendants has  
13 ratified and approved the acts of each of the remaining Defendants.

14           19.    Plaintiffs are informed and believe that Defendants install, own, maintain,  
15 construct, manage, build, and/or operate infrastructure for the benefit of the general public,  
16 including but not limited to the use of heavy equipment to move boulders.

17           20.    Plaintiffs are informed and believe that Defendants perform pre-fire management  
18 and fire prevention services, including but not limited to vegetation management for the benefit of  
19 the general public.

20           21.    Plaintiffs further allege that Defendants are in some manner responsible for the acts  
21 and occurrences set forth in this Complaint. Plaintiffs may amend or seek to amend this Complaint  
22 to allege the true names, capacities, and responsibility of these Doe Defendants once they are  
23 ascertained, and to add additional facts and/or legal theories. Plaintiffs make all allegations  
24 contained in this Complaint against all Defendants, including Does 1 through 100 pursuant to  
25 Code of Civil Procedure section 474. Some or all of the Doe Defendants may be residents of the  
26 State of California. At all times mentioned herein, Defendants, and/or each of them, are  
27 responsible in some manner for the conduct alleged herein, including, without limitation,  
28 furnishing the means and or acting in capacities that create agency, respondent superior, co-

1 venturer, and/or predecessor- or successor-in-interest relationships with the Defendants. The Doe  
2 Defendants are private individuals, associations, partnerships, corporations, or otherwise that  
3 actively assisted and participated in the negligent and wrongful conduct alleged herein in ways  
4 that are currently unknown to Plaintiffs.

5 **COMPLIANCE WITH GOVERNMENT CODE**

6 22. On or around September 30, 2024, prior to the filing of Plaintiffs' complaint,  
7 presented a claim on behalf of themselves to Defendant County of Orange and OCPW pursuant to  
8 Government Code section 910, et seq. Defendant County of Orange and OCPW failed to act on  
9 Plaintiffs' claim within 45 days after it was presented, thus it was deemed rejected pursuant to  
10 Government Code section 912.4.

11 **FACTS**

12 **A. County's knowledge of drought conditions, wildfire risks and actions are below the**  
13 **standard of care**

14 23. County owns, operates, and controls property and infrastructure, including public  
15 roads, canyons, parks, and other property. County controls and maintains the County's  
16 infrastructure, including public roads, bridges, open space conservation districts, and equipment.  
17 County, through OCPW and OCFA, also performs vegetation management, fire prevention, and  
18 fire suppression or reduction efforts.

19 24. Orange County had been under an Excessive Heat Warning, which means high fire  
20 danger due to extreme temperatures and low humidity.<sup>2</sup> The Excessive Heat Warning began on  
21 September 4, 2024 and lasted through September 10, 2024.  
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27 <sup>2</sup> The Orange County Register 'Reckless and stupid,' 'incompetent': OC work that started Airport fire  
28 questioned, blasted by Teri Sforza; <https://www.ocregister.com/2024/09/12/reckless-and-stupid-incompetent-oc-work-that-started-airport-fire-questioned-blasted/>

1           25.     Orange County experienced two wet winters that fueled growth in the wildlands.  
2 Followed by an Excessive Heat Warning, this overgrown foliage becomes quite dry, brittle and  
3 receptive to ignition.<sup>3</sup>

4           26.     County knew or should have known about the significant risk of wildfires in the  
5 area posed by the ongoing and immediate climate, weather, and drought conditions in and around,  
6 its service territory, including but not limited to Trabuco Canyon (“Canyon”) in Orange County,  
7 California, and the substantially elevated risk of fire ignition resulting from these known and  
8 foreseeable conditions. Defendants knew, prior to the Airport Fire’s ignition, that hot, dry weather  
9 conditions create an elevated risk of wildfires and that Southern California, including Orange  
10 County, faced record highs throughout 2024.<sup>4</sup> Defendants also knew that surrounding counties,  
11 like Riverside County, faced significant drought having recorded the driest August over the past  
12 130 years.<sup>5</sup>

13           27.     According to CAL FIRE’s Hazard Severity Zones in Orange County, the Airport  
14 Fire’s general area of origin was located in a red zone; also referred to as a “Very High Fire  
15 Hazard Severity Zone” (“Red Zone”).<sup>6</sup> This classification put Defendants on notice to use  
16 heightened safety measures and increased precautions when operating their equipment.  
17 Additionally, CAL FIRE continuously updates its Fire Hazard Severity Zone Viewer. This viewer  
18 has the Airport Fire’s General Area of Origin labeled with an overlay as “VHFHSZ” standing for  
19 Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.<sup>7</sup> The following screenshot was taken of CAL FIRE’s Fire  
20 Hazard Severity Viewer, and the red dot depicts the Airport Fire’s general area of origin in the  
21 VHFHSZ zone:

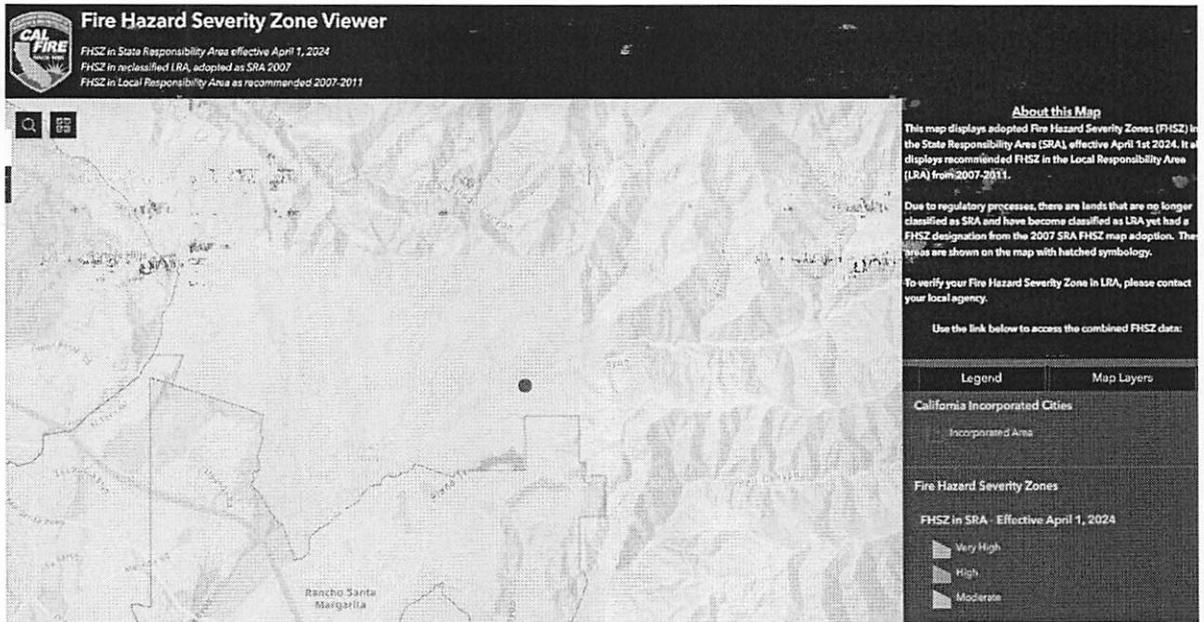
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24 <sup>3</sup> *Id.* quoting Alex Tardy of the National Weather Service

25 <sup>4</sup> See Powerful heat wave hits Southern California starting Tuesday, but how hot will it be? - ABC7 Los Angeles; Triple-digit heat wave continues to broil Southern California - Los Angeles Times (latimes.com).

26 <sup>5</sup> See Riverside County Conditions | Drought.gov.

27 <sup>6</sup> See Fire Hazard Severity Zone Viewer | CAL FIRE Hub (arcgis.com).

28 <sup>7</sup> *Id.*



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28. Despite the known risks, Defendants allowed the Canyon to become overgrown and filled with dry brush. Given the high fire danger this overgrown dry brush presented, County operated steel machinery to move, crush, and/or place boulders—creating the foreseeable risk of sparking—in a forested canyon. Defendants had a duty to properly maintain its infrastructure and equipment to ensure its safe operation by adequately planning, constructing, and operating its systems and services. However, Defendants violated these duties by using its machinery in a manner that posed a significant risk of and in fact, did cause a wildfire.

29. Defendants were aware that its operations, including but not limited to the use of heavy machinery to move, crush, and/or place boulders, is an inherently dangerous and ultrahazardous activity given its proximity to forested areas filled with dry brush and the significant threat of wildfire. Indeed, Defendants were placing the boulders to prevent access to vegetation susceptible to wildfires. Defendants are required to exercise an increased level of care commensurate with and proportionate to the increased risk of danger associated with their conduct. The conditions and circumstances existing at the time of the Airport Fire’s ignition were reasonably foreseeable by Defendants.

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**COUNTY'S EQUIPMENT IGNITES THE AIRPORT FIRE**

30. On September 9, 2024, during the Excessive Heat Warning and high fire danger, County employees operated County equipment to move and place large boulders as barriers on Trabuco Creek Road. The boulders were to act as a fire prevention barrier to part of the canyon filled with dry brush. During this work, the employees noticed smoke from their equipment and called 911.



A burnt truck sits on Trabuco Creek Road in Trabuco Canyon, CA, on Wednesday, Sept. 11, 2024. (Photo by Jeff Gritchen, Orange County Register/SCNG)

31. Plaintiffs are informed and believe, consistent with the OCEA Deputy Chief's comments, that the Airport Fire was caused by County's machinery and/or failure to maintain public property in a safe condition.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Airport Fire in Orange County's Trabuco Canyon area spreads to more than 23,000 acres, homes destroyed near Lake Elsinore - ABC7 Los Angeles.

1 32. First, Defendants were present and utilized heavy machinery to move, crush,  
2 and/or place boulders to create a barrier restricting access to vegetation. The County's conduct  
3 occurred in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone where there was an increased risk of wildfire  
4 due to hot machinery and boulders connecting with one another.

5 33. Second, and in the alternative, Defendants negligently, recklessly, and willfully  
6 failed to properly, safely, and prudently inspect, repair, maintain, and operate the machinery  
7 within its infrastructure, ultimately leading to the catastrophic Airport Fire.

8 34. Third, and in the alternative, Defendants negligently, recklessly, and willfully  
9 failed to properly, safely, and prudently maintain its property in a safe condition by failing to  
10 comply with vegetation management and other fire prevention policies, regulations, and  
11 requirements.

12 35. The conditions and circumstances surrounding the ignition of the Airport Fire,  
13 including the nature of Defendants' services, dry conditions, and a prolonged heatwave were  
14 foreseeable by any reasonably prudent person and, therefore, were certainly foreseeable to  
15 Defendants—which have a special knowledge and expertise as to their services.

16 36. The Airport Fire was not the result of an "act of God" or other *force majeure*. This  
17 wildfire was started Defendants' machinery, which was intentionally used to move, crush, and/or  
18 place boulders—boulders that would create a spark when contact was initiated with the  
19 machinery.

20 37. As a result of the Airport Fire, Plaintiffs suffered substantial harm, including  
21 damage to and/or destruction of real and personal property, lost business income, and evacuation  
22 expenses. The harms caused by the Defendants are extensive and ongoing.

23  
24 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

25 **INVERSE CONDEMNATION**

26 **By Plaintiffs for Inverse Condemnation Against County**

27 38. Plaintiffs incorporate and reallege each of the paragraphs above as though fully set  
28 forth herein.

1           39.    On September 9, 2024, Plaintiffs are the owners of real and/or personal property  
2 located within Riverside County that was damaged, destroyed, or affected by the Airport Fire,  
3 which ignited in Orange County.

4           40.    Prior to and on September 9, 2024, County, controlled, operated, maintained,  
5 constructed, used and/or serviced equipment, infrastructure, and public property within Orange  
6 County, including performing fire hardening, fire suppression, fire prevention, and vegetation  
7 management in and around the Airport Fire's location or origin. County's conduct was for the  
8 benefit of the general public.

9           41.    On September 9, 2024, County was aware of the inherent dangers and risks  
10 associated with allowing dry brush to become overgrown during extreme fire conditions. County  
11 was also aware of the inherent dangers and risks associated with the use of heavy, steel machinery  
12 to move, crush, and/or place boulders in a Red Zone. Indeed, the boulders were being moved,  
13 crushed, and/or placed to block access to this overgrown dry brush that was susceptible to  
14 wildfires for the benefit of the general public.

15           42.    This inherent risk was realized on September 9, 2024, when the steel machinery  
16 and boulders connected, created a spark that ignited the dry brush in the Canyon causing the  
17 Airport Fire and resulted in the taking and/or damaging of Plaintiffs' real and/or personal property.

18           43.    This taking was legally and substantially caused by County's actions and inactions  
19 in constructing, installing, operating, controlling, using, servicing, and/or maintaining its property,  
20 equipment, and infrastructure, including the placement of boulders with steel machinery.

21           44.    Plaintiffs have not been adequately compensated, if at all, for this taking.

22           45.    Pursuant to Article 1, Section 19 of the California Constitution, Plaintiffs seek just  
23 compensation for this taking, according to individual proof at trial.

24           46.    Plaintiffs further seek, pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure section 1036, to recover  
25 all litigation costs, expense, and interest with regard to the compensation of damage to their  
26 property, including attorneys' fees, expert fees, consulting fees, and litigation costs.

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1 **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**

2 **NEGLIGENCE**

3 **By Plaintiffs for Negligence Against County**

4 47. Plaintiffs hereby re-allege and incorporate by reference each and every allegation  
5 contained above as though the same were set forth herein in full.

6 48. Under Government Code section 820, public employees are liable for torts like  
7 private people. Under Government Code section 815.2, public entities are liable for torts of public  
8 employees done in the course and scope of their employment.

9 49. County employees acting within the course and scope of their employment in  
10 controlling, operating, and maintaining County equipment, property, and infrastructure were  
11 under a duty codified in Civil Code section 1714(a), which states, in pertinent part:

12 Everyone is responsible, not only for the result of his or her willful  
13 acts, but also for an injury occasioned to another by his or her want  
14 of ordinary care or skill in the management of his or her property or  
15 person, except so far as the latter has, willfully or by want of ordinary  
care, brought the injury upon himself or herself.

16 50. County and its employees have a nondelegable duty to apply a level of care  
17 commensurate with and proportionate to the danger of constructing, controlling, operating, and  
18 maintaining its property and infrastructure, inclusive of its equipment, services performed, and  
19 vegetation management.

20 51. County and its employees have a nondelegable duty of vigilant oversight in the  
21 maintenance, repair, operation, installation, management, and supervision, appropriate to the  
22 changing conditions and circumstances of their property, infrastructure, equipment, and services.

23 52. County and its employees have a nondelegable duty to maintain its property in a  
24 safe condition, including performing vegetation management, fire suppression, fire hardening, and  
25 fire prevention activities.

26 53. County and its employees have special knowledge and expertise far beyond that of a  
27 layperson, that they were obligated and required to use in the construction, use, operation, repair,  
28 and maintenance of their infrastructure, property, equipment, and services to assure safety under

1 the local conditions of the service area, including but not limited to, the equipment used, the  
2 activity untaken, and operation of equipment, all of which were prone to ignite sparks in the  
3 service area given local conditions, including unprecedented heatwaves, dry conditions, and  
4 susceptible vegetation, which was left unmaintained.

5 54. County and its employees breached their duties in negligently controlling,  
6 operating, and maintaining County equipment and infrastructure in a manner that was foreseeable  
7 to start a fire. County employees failed to utilize appropriate fire safety methods to prevent County  
8 equipment from igniting dry brush in the Canyon.

9 55. It was foreseeable that a massive wildfire would destroy personal and real property,  
10 force residents in the fire area to evacuate, and prevent customers of businesses located within the  
11 fire area from patronizing those businesses. Notwithstanding the above, County employees failed to  
12 take reasonable precautions to protect adjoining property owners against the foreseeable risk of  
13 harm created by their activities. The Airport Fire was a direct and legal result of the negligence,  
14 carelessness, recklessness, and/or unlawfulness of County employees who breached their respective  
15 duties owed to Plaintiffs, and each of them, including but not limited to: (1) failing to comply with  
16 the applicable statutory, regulatory, and/or professional standards of care; (2) failing to take  
17 necessary precautions given conditions and circumstances in service area; (3) failing to construct,  
18 monitor, operate, and/or maintain its machinery in a manner that avoids the potential to ignite a  
19 fire; (4) failing to implement procedures based upon service conditions, including procedures for  
20 using machinery to move objects prone to ignite fires; (5) failing to adequately maintain vegetation  
21 in public property; (6) failing to properly train and supervise employees and agents responsible for  
22 maintenance, inspection, and operation of the machinery, services provided, and vegetation  
23 management; and/or (7) violating Health and Safety Code section 13007 by allowing fire to be set  
24 to the property of another.

25 56. As a direct and legal result of County and its employees' actions and/or omissions,  
26 Plaintiffs suffered damages, which were clearly and certainly caused by the Airport Fire, including  
27 the cost to repair and replace the damaged and/or destroyed real and personal property, personal  
28

1 injuries, evacuation expenses, medical expenses, lost wages, emotional distress, and other  
2 damages

3 57. Public policy supports finding a duty of care in this circumstance due to County  
4 and its employees' violation of California Civil Code sections 3479 and 3480.

5 **THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION**

6 **By Plaintiffs For Trespass Against County and Does 1-100**

7 58. Plaintiffs incorporate and re-allege each of the paragraphs above as though fully set  
8 forth herein at length.

9 59. At all times relevant herein, Plaintiffs were the owners and/or lawful occupants of  
10 real property damaged or destroyed by the Airport Fire.

11 60. Defendants, including County, had a duty to use reasonable care not to enter,  
12 intrude on, or invade Plaintiffs' real properties. Defendants, including County through the acts of  
13 its employees as established above, negligently allowed the Airport Fire to ignite and/or spread out  
14 of control, causing injury to Plaintiffs. The spread of a negligently caused fire to wrongfully  
15 occupy land of another constitutes a trespass.

16 61. Plaintiffs did not grant permission for Defendants to cause the Airport Fire to their  
17 property.

18 62. As a direct, proximate and substantial cause of the trespass, Plaintiffs have suffered  
19 and will continue to suffer damages, including but not limited to damage to property, discomfort,  
20 annoyance, and emotional distress in an amount to be proven at trial.

21 63. As a further direct and proximate result of the conduct of Defendants, Plaintiffs have  
22 hired and retained counsel to recover compensation for loss and damage and are entitled to recover  
23 all attorney's fees, expert fees, consultant fees, and litigation costs and expenses, as allowed under  
24 California Code of Civil Procedure section 1029.1.

25 64. As a further direct and proximate result of the conduct of Defendants, Plaintiffs seek  
26 the reasonable cost of repair or restoration of their property to its original condition and/or loss of  
27 use damages, as allowed by California Civil Code section 3334.

28 65. Defendants' conduct was willful and wanton, and with a conscious disregard for the

1 disastrous consequences that Defendants knew would occur as a result of their dangerous conduct.  
2 Accordingly, Defendants acted with malice towards Plaintiffs, which is an appropriate predicate fact  
3 for an award of exemplary damages in an amount according to proof.

4 **FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

5 **By Plaintiffs For Private Nuisance Against County and Does 1-100**

6 66. Plaintiffs incorporate and re-allege by this reference each of the paragraphs set forth  
7 as though fully set forth herein.

8 67. Plaintiffs own and/or occupy real property in the fire area. At all times relevant  
9 herein, Plaintiffs had a right to occupy, enjoy, and/or use their property without interference by  
10 Defendants.

11 68. Defendants' actions, conduct, omissions, negligence, trespass, and failure to act  
12 resulted in a fire and foreseeable obstruction to the free use of Plaintiffs' property, invaded the right  
13 of Plaintiffs to use their property, and interfered with Plaintiffs' enjoyment of their property, causing  
14 Plaintiffs unreasonable harm and substantial actual damages constituting a nuisance pursuant to  
15 *Civil Code* § 3479.

16 69. As a direct and proximate result of the conduct of Defendants, Plaintiffs seek the  
17 reasonable cost of repair or restoration of their property to its original condition and/or loss-of-use  
18 damages, as allowed under *Civil Code* section 3334.

19 **FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

20 **By Plaintiffs For Public Nuisance Against County and Does 1-100**

21 70. Defendants owed a duty to the public, including Plaintiffs, to conduct their business  
22 in a manner that did not cause harm to the public welfare.

23 71. Defendants in maintaining public property in a dangerous condition and, by its  
24 employees acting and/or failing to act, as alleged herein above, created a condition that was harmful  
25 to the health of the public, including Plaintiffs, and created a fire which damaged and interfered with  
26 the quiet use and enjoyment of their property. This interference is both substantial and unreasonable.

27 72. Plaintiffs do not consent, expressly or impliedly, to the wrongful conduct of  
28 Defendants.

1        73.    The Airport Fire which was created by Defendants affected a substantial number of  
2 people at the same time within the general public, including Plaintiffs, and constituted a public  
3 nuisance under Civil Code sections 3479 and 3480 and Public Resources Code sections 4170 and  
4 4171.

5        74.    The damaging effects of Defendants' creation of a fire hazard and the resulting  
6 Airport Fire are ongoing and affect the public at large.

7        75.    As a direct and legal result of the Defendants' conduct, Plaintiffs have suffered harm  
8 that is different from the type of harm suffered by the general public. Specifically, Plaintiffs have  
9 lost the occupancy, possession, use, and/or enjoyment of their land, real, and/or personal property,  
10 including, but not limited to a diminution of value of their real property; an impairment of the ability  
11 to sell their property; property exposed to chemical retardant agents dropped from airborne  
12 firefighting aircraft; and lingering smell of smoke, soot, ash and dust in the air.

13        76.    As a further direct and legal result of the conduct of Defendants, Plaintiffs have  
14 suffered, and will continue to suffer, discomfort, anxiety, fear, worry, annoyance, and/or stress  
15 attendant to the interference with the occupancy, possession, use and/or enjoyment of their property.

16        77.    A reasonable, ordinary person would be annoyed or disturbed by the conditions  
17 caused by Defendants, and the resulting Airport Fire.

18        78.    Defendants' conduct is unreasonable and the seriousness of the harm to the public,  
19 including Plaintiffs, outweighs the social utility of Defendants' conduct. There is little to no social  
20 utility associated with causing wildfires to destroy the property of the Plaintiffs.

21        79.    The unreasonable conduct of Defendants is a direct and legal cause of the harm,  
22 injury, and/or damage to the public, including Plaintiffs.

23        80.    Defendants have failed to maintain its property, equipment, or infrastructure in a safe  
24 condition. Defendants failed to comply with its fire hardening and vegetation management policies,  
25 failed to trim and/or remove vegetation on public property, and/or remediate the potential for  
26 harmful contact between Defendants' equipment and boulders thereby creating a spark, and  
27 Defendants' failure to do so exposed every member of the public to a foreseeable danger of personal  
28 injury, death, and/or a loss or destruction of real and personal property.



1 and damages.

2 89. As a direct and legal result of the wrongful acts and/or omissions of Defendants,  
3 Plaintiffs suffered, and continues to suffer, the injuries and damages as set forth above.

4 90. As a further direct and legal result of the wrongful acts and/or omissions of  
5 Defendants, Plaintiffs seek the recovery of punitive and exemplary damages against Defendants as  
6 set forth above.

7 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

8 Plaintiffs pray for judgment against the County and Does 1 through 100, and each of them  
9 as follows:

- 10 1. For monetary damages in an amount to be proven at trial, which exceeds the  
11 jurisdictional minimum of this Court;
- 12 2. Loss of the use, benefit, goodwill, and enjoyment of Plaintiffs' real and/or  
13 personal property;
- 14 3. Loss of wages, earning capacity, goodwill, and/or business profits or proceeds  
15 and/or any related displacement expenses;
- 16 4. Out of pocket costs;
- 17 5. Damage to real and personal property;
- 18 6. Past and future medical expenses and incidental expenses;
- 19 7. General damages for personal injury, emotional distress, fear, annoyance,  
20 disturbance, inconvenience, mental anguish, and loss of quiet enjoyment of  
21 property;
- 22 8. For prejudgment interest in accordance with California Civil Code section 3287  
23 and the California Constitution;
- 24 9. For attorneys' fees and cost of suit to the extent allowed by California law,  
25 including California Code of Civil Procedure sections 1021.9 and 1036; and
- 26 10. For such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

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**JURY TRIAL DEMAND**

Plaintiffs hereby demand a jury trial on all causes of action for which a jury is available under the law.

SINGLETON SCHREIBER, LLP

Dated: November 7, 2024

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Starita

Attorneys for Plaintiffs