

THE ORANGE COUNTY
REGISTER

\$2.50 | WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2025 | OCREGISTER.COM

SPECIAL SECTION INSIDE TODAY

2025: A year of
heartbreak, resilience



A firefighter douses hot spots on homes along Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu on Jan. 8. As the Jan. 7 anniversary of the Palisades and Eaton fires approaches, a 10-page special section inside explores the wildfires and their aftermath. **DAVID CRANE — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**

A look at Palisades and Eaton fires and their aftermath amid the holiday season

As 2025 comes to a close, a year that began with catastrophe is ending with a mix of grief, hope and reflection.

Today, as the Jan. 7 anniversary of the Palisades and Eaton fires approaches, the Southern California News Group publishes a 10-page special section that explores this moment as well as the arduous days and months that followed.

“Rising From the Ashes” chronicles a year of deep heartbreak, intense scrutiny and the emergence of strategies for recovery in the aftermath of the deadly fires that were unprecedented in Southern California history for their scope and financial ruin.

Through community voices and the work of our team of reporters and photographers, we offer a glimpse of our community a year later through the eyes of the people who endured the hardship and those who sought to save property and lives, all framed in the lens of a holiday season like none before it.

The section bears witness to sobering realities but also to the resilient communities’ sincere hopes in the coming months and years.

Special Section: **INSIDE**

RISING FROM THE ASHES

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LOS ANGELES COUNTY

A year of heartbreak, scrutiny and recovery after January’s deadly Eaton and Palisades fires



People walk along Christmas Tree Lane during the 105th annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony and Winterfest in Altadena on Dec. 6. **PHOTO BY TREVOR STAMP**

‘The holidays hit differently now’ for wildfire survivors

SOUTHLAND

Region
gets ready
for Rose
Parade

Impacts of wildfires will loom over event while forecast calls for rain

Staff and wire reports

When listing Southern California’s enduring traditions, you’ve got to start in Pasadena, that little city with the international brand.

The Rose Parade and Rose Bowl Game boast an affirming, though spectacular, sameness each year: the striking colors of a bazillion posy petals, a packed house jammed into a historic stadium to see the nation’s best in college football, and those telltale Chamber of Commerce skies on TV making deeply jealous all those viewers on a break from shoveling snow off their driveways.

But this year is different. It truly is.

See **GUIDE** on Page A5

Inside: Carole Cota Gelfuso, the 1966 Rose Queen, recalls meeting grand marshal Walt Disney and speaking on TV. **A5**

The second day of Bandfest at Pasadena City College brought two sets of performances by parade participants. **A6**

INLAND EMPIRE

Bodies of 3
hikers found
on Mt. Baldy

Teen died after fall; what killed others is not known

By **Ruby Gonzales**
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A teenager has died after a fall while hiking on Mount Baldy, and two other hikers were found dead nearby amid harsh weather conditions that have prevented authorities from recovering their bodies, officials said Tuesday.

About 11:30 a.m. Monday, rescuers with the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department and the Fontana sheriff’s station responded to a request to find an injured 19-year-old hiker who reportedly had fallen roughly 500 feet near Devil’s Backbone Trail, the Sheriff’s Department said in a news release.

See **HIKERS** on Page A4

YEAR IN REVIEW

Restaurant closures
that hit the hardest

Longtime favorites and eateries drawing rave reviews shuttered because of various situations

By **Brock Keeling**
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Orange County welcomed a wave of new restaurants in 2025, including Viet Nguyen’s Qua, Le Hut Dinette helmed by veteran chef Ryan Garlitos, Sara Lezama’s new Rye Goods in Costa Mesa and “Top Chef” champion Charbel Hayek’s Ilya. These debuts signaled a region springing back to life in majestic, destination-worthy fashion.

Despite the marquee openings, launching a successful eatery in 2025 remained a high-wire act. Industry data revealed that while customer demand has stabilized, the cost of doing business has hit historic highs. According to the National Restaurant Association, operations costs (specifically food and labor) have skyrocketed

roughly 35% over the last five years, squeezing profit margins to a razor-thin 3% to 5% for many full-service spots.

In Orange County, where commercial rent premiums and labor competition are fierce, operators faced a perfect storm of inflationary economic pressures. For many owners, a single slow quarter or a lease renewal hike proved the difference between survival and shuttering.

While the dining scene continues to evolve, this year’s losses were deeply felt. From decades-old stalwarts that awed generations of diners to relative newcomers that arrived boasting critical acclaim, here are a few of the closures that hit hardest in 2025.

See **CLOSURES** on Page A4

AIR QUALITY

Changes ordered for truck routes

Inland cities, counties must direct rigs away from homes, schools

By **Jeff Horseman**
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In the Inland Empire, big rigs are as common as the warehouses many of them serve.

It’s also not unusual to have 18-wheeled traffic congestion near freeways. Often, critics say, cargo vehicles also are seen near homes, schools and other places at risk from toxic truck exhaust.

A state law signed in 2024 includes a provision that tries to steer truck traffic away from those areas.

Now, Inland Empire cities — along with Riverside and San Bernardino counties — are facing a Thursday deadline to redraw authorized truck routes to comply with the law known as Assembly Bill 98.

It’s important work for public health, said Ana Gonzalez, executive director for the Jurupa



Truck traffic builds up Dec. 19 along Cedar Avenue near homes bordering Rialto and Bloomington, potentially exposing residents to harmful exhaust. **ANJALI SHARIF-PAUL — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**

Valley-based Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice.

“Diesel pollution has become one of the top polluters in our community,” she said. “In order for us to have a healthier community, we need to reroute some of these trucks to the freeways and

the larger arterial highways, away from communities, so people are not exposed to these emissions.”

Signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom two years ago, the law grew out of Sacramento-led efforts to regulate warehouse development.

See **TRUCKS** on Page A7

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FORECAST



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Inland: High 65/Low 55
Full weather report **A9**

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