

# CALIFORNIA

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JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

**KAREN TAPIA** cools off herself and 7-month-old daughter, Jessalyn, with a fan in their South L.A. rental home that does not have air conditioning. She says it is hard to beat the heat.

## No A/C during an L.A. heat wave brings misery

About 20% of area households lack air conditioning as temperatures soar

BY BRITTNY MEJIA

As California experiences its most severe heat wave this year, expected to last through Friday, those without air conditioning are struggling to stay cool.

Karen Tapia, 22, doesn't have A/C in the four-bedroom rental home in South L.A. she shares with her parents, brothers and 7-month-old daughter. The owner, she said, doesn't want to have it installed.

Although state law and building codes require residential units to have heating to maintain temperatures of at least 70 degrees indoors during cold weather, there is no requirement for air conditioning or other cooling mechanisms to keep residents safe from extreme heat.

And extreme it is. The state's heat wave has shattered temperature records. It nearly broke California's overtaxed electric grid, pushing it to the brink of rolling blackouts but narrowly averting widespread power loss. Temperatures in the 100s set records across parts of Southern California. Humidity is aggravating the already grueling conditions.

Tapia's family relies on fans, bottles of water and cold showers. She takes her daughter to the grocery store to take advantage of the A/C there and keeps a fan on the baby when they're in the house.

This year, she said, feels hotter than it did when she was growing up. Back then, it seemed there was no need to spend days outside trying to escape the heat.

"We all hang out outside now," Tapia said of her family. "We try not to" [See Heat, B2]



NOAH BERGER Associated Press

**A RESTORATION** effort launched by the state focuses on beavers, whose dams can increase water storage and create natural firebreaks.

## Could the beaver become a climate fight superhero?

BY NATHAN SOLIS

As California grapples with drought, a record heat wave and persistent wildfires, one state agency is turning to the beaver in its battle against climate change.

The large rodents, according to researchers, are resourceful engineers capable of increasing water storage and creating natural firebreaks with their dams.

On Tuesday, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife posted its first job listing for its new beaver restoration unit. The senior environmental scientist will help develop methods for "nature-based restoration solutions involving beavers" and artificial beaver dams.

The scientist will also help update the state's policies on beavers, which

in recent decades have been deemed a nuisance rodent responsible for flooding farmlands.

But with streams and rivers heating up or evaporating and wildfires blazing across the state, California is willing to reconsider the beaver's role in the water cycle.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife is willing to bet at least \$3 million over the next two years, with the creation of five new jobs meant to oversee a restoration program specifically for the North American beaver. The department did not respond to requests for comment about funding for the new positions, but in a budget proposal to the California Legislature the agency called beavers an important keystone species that could be used to combat climate change.

"It might be odd, but beavers are" [See Beavers, B2]

## Weaknesses found before LAUSD hack

Recent cyberattack comes two years after report identified flaws in district's systems.

BY HOWARD BLUME

An internal report identified key vulnerabilities in the data systems of the Los Angeles Unified School District two years before hackers launched a major cyberattack that has disrupted operations this week in the nation's second-largest school system.

The report indicated that district staff agreed with its findings and committed to addressing them, but district officials did not clarify Wednesday which of the recommended actions were carried out.

The private data of more than 400,000 students could be at risk from the massive cyberattack that was identified late Saturday night. L.A. Unified overcame a com-

plete digital shutdown to open schools on schedule Tuesday, but disruptions to normal learning and some business operations occurred across the vast school system throughout the day.

Much of the district website remained inaccessible through Wednesday.

District officials said they did not know whether student information in the district's student management system — including assessments, grades, class schedules, disciplinary records and reports about disabilities — was accessed by the hackers. However, they said they believe that Social Security numbers, medical records and payroll information for employees remain secure.

The cybersecurity audit was published in September 2020 and conducted by outside consultants working with district technology staff under the supervision of the district inspector [See L.A. Unified, B5]

## Appeals court reverses itself on rifle sales

After tossing the state age limit on purchases of semiautomatics, the judges back new trial.

BY KEVIN RECTOR

In May, a federal appeals court ruled that California's ban on semiautomatic rifle sales to adults younger than 21 was unconstitutional. On Wednesday, that same court, the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, reversed itself, sending the case back to a lower court to be retried.

What happened between the two decisions was a groundbreaking ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court that did not just say limits against the carrying of firearms in states such as New York and California are unconstitutional.

In New York State Rifle & Pistol Assn. Inc. vs. Bruen, the high court also ruled

that many other restrictions on firearms that aren't deeply rooted in early American history would likewise violate the 2nd Amendment.

That history standard, California's attorneys argued in the case ruled on Wednesday, "dramatically changed the ground rules" for litigating gun laws, and therefore required the case to be reopened for the gathering of new evidence in the lower court, including from historical records.

Returning the case to a lower court for reconsideration — known as a remand — "will allow the parties to present a full historical record under the standard announced in Bruen," the state argued in a court filing in July.

It also argued the Bruen decision was more narrow than some have suggested, and that California's law restricting sales of semiauto-

[See Court, B4]

## Parents step up calls for cool schools

Protesters in L.A. urge more green space, climate-friendly campuses



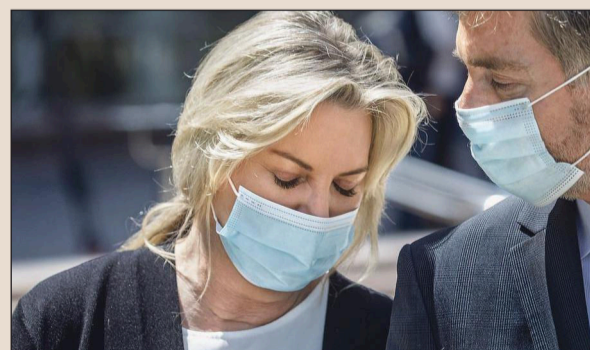
GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

**ANTONIETA GARCIA** shields herself from the sun at a protest at Lorena Street Elementary School in Boyle Heights on Wednesday.

BY ALEJANDRA REYES-VELARDE

At 95 degrees, it was too hot for children to go outside to play at Lorena Street Elementary School in Boyle Heights on Wednesday morning. So frustrated parents took their place instead, standing outside the schoolyard as part of their ongoing demands that L.A. Unified act more quickly to protect children from heat by creating more climate-friendly campuses.

Reclaim Our Schools Los Angeles — a coalition of organizations that includes United Teachers Los Angeles and represents parents and community members — said the teachers union's Beyond Recovery bargaining platform, which includes green space demands, was presented to the district in May. UTLA is bargaining over [See Parents, B2]



MEL MELCON Los Angeles Times

**REBECCA GROSSMAN**, shown in April, is accused of striking two boys in Westlake Village.

### Charges stand against driver

Judge upholds murder counts against socialite Rebecca Grossman in deaths of two boys. B3

### Wildfire defies containment

Blaze near Hemet has burned about 10,000 acres as evacuation orders expand. B3

### Sheriff's deputy held in killings

Alameda County rookie surrenders about 12 hours after a double homicide in Dublin. B4

### Capitol Journal

George Skelton's column does not appear today.

**Lottery** ..... B2  
**Weather** ..... B6



# No A/C leaves L.A. residents vulnerable

[Heat, from B1] talk to each other too much, because it's like any little thing gets us so irritated."

On Sunday night, around 11, it was 83 degrees, but the family sat outside because it felt cooler than in the house. With the baby in mind, they lighted a candle made for warding off mosquitoes.

"We just try to survive," Tapia said, "because it's really hot — especially right now."

The percentage of households without air conditioning ranges across the state. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Housing Survey showed that 53% of households in the San Francisco metro area didn't have A/C. In the L.A. metro area, it was about 20% of households. But to the far north, in Samoa, Calif., residents probably don't worry about keeping cool, as a weather phenomenon holds temperatures down.

Meanwhile, in Southern California, there are data showing which households don't have A/C. In a USC study, researchers analyzed 2015-16 electricity use by more than 180,000 households to see where people didn't have air conditioning and how those neighborhoods may be affected as climate change fuels more extreme heat waves.

They found that, across most of Southern California, people living in areas with higher poverty levels are less likely to have air conditioning.

"Generally, poorer neighborhoods had much less A/C penetration than richer



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

**KAREN TAPIA** says her family is spending more time outside because of how hot her rental home is.

neighborhoods," said Kelly Sanders, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at USC and co-author of the study. "A lot of the poorer neighborhoods in Southern California tend to be pretty densely populated, and they tend not to have a lot of green space, and that exacerbates what we refer to as the urban heat is-

land." Assembly Bill 2597 by Assemblymember Richard Bloom (D-Santa Monica), would have required residential units to maintain adequate cooling and make lack of cooling a standard condition for human habitation of rentals. It would have allowed renters to file code enforcement

complaints if their landlord failed to provide cooling. But, according to Bloom's chief of staff, the bill never made it out of committee. Cameron Pfister, his girlfriend and their 3-year-old pug, Benny, have lived in a studio apartment in Hollywood for a little more than a year and never thought they needed A/C until last week.

"It's never been as hot as it is right now," Pfister said. When temperatures started to rise, the couple purchased an A/C unit from Home Depot. They returned it the next day because it drew too much power, and their electricity went out. The three spent more time in the car with the A/C on to keep the dog from panting in

## Parents demand green schools

[Parents, from B1] its next full contract with the district.

Now, as the region faces the worst heat wave of the year, parents and environmental advocates are renewing their plea with a sense of urgency.

"LAUSD has a greening index that tells us this school is one with the highest need," said the executive director of the coalition, Arelia Valdivia, adding that only 5% of the Lorena campus offers green space. "On days like today, [children] are kept inside because it's too hot, or they're left outside to deal with the heat."

Reclaim Our Schools has called for improvements including: reducing pavement at 10 additional schools each year through 2040 beyond the district's existing commitments, making all schools 50% green space, using electric-powered school



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

**ONLY 5%** of the Lorena Street Elementary campus in Boyle Heights is green space, according to the executive director of Reclaim Our Schools Los Angeles, a coalition of parents, teachers and community members.

buses and installing electric vehicle chargers at every school.

School playgrounds are often the hottest areas in a community because of the large swaths of asphalt and school design that makes for a hotter environment, experts say.

Research has shown that heat and lack of green space can affect children's attendance and educational performance.

Parents have also expressed concerns during this heat wave about a lack of cool, drinkable water at schools. Kids have told their parents the water from campus fountains is too hot or tastes metallic, and some teachers have relied on water bottle donations to keep students hydrated.

"This is an all-hands-on-deck effort," the district said in response. "We appreciate

the advocacy and partnership by community organizations and we encourage our local, state and federal elected officials to prioritize greening infrastructure investments in schools and our communities and develop climate change solutions for California."

The LAUSD Board of Education has adopted resolutions to support climate literacy, greening and other sustainable efforts and pointed to its greening index and greening projects or funds, such as the \$50 million allocated to replace bungalows with outdoor learning spaces, the district said.

In addition, the school bus fleet will be upgraded with 11 new electric buses equipped with Wi-Fi.

"It is nice that LAUSD is taking some first steps, but we are in a climate crisis and

they are woefully behind in addressing it," Valdivia said in response to the district's statement. "They lack a comprehensive plan and have no excuse for fully rejecting the thoughtful plan we proposed."

Valdivia said the school district has long ignored parents' requests for immediate shade relief and put the burden of greening campuses on parents and schools. Parents said efforts to build at their children's schools are often delayed by years or rejected.

Maura Howe, a member of Reclaim Our Schools, said that when her children were younger, parents were advocating for green space at one school in Palms and proposed a play yard remodel that included shade structures and trees.

"A decade passed before it was finally completed," far

too long for children to be suffering in the heat, she said. "As the saying goes, the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The next best time is now."

Parent advocate Aleigh Lewis of Angelenos for Green Schools said campuses in underserved neighborhoods need the most improvements because they are in community "heat islands" that are lacking in park space and shade.

"Green schoolyards not only mitigate heat and clean the air; they are also incredible sites for learning and creativity," Lewis said. "Not to mention, they can even be more cost-effective than asphalt. These are solutions that the district has known about, yet their response continues to be pave and repave. This is not a solution. This will only make the problem worse."

## State turns to beavers in climate fight

[Beavers, from B1] an untapped, creative climate solving hero that helps prevent the loss of biodiversity facing California," the Department of Fish and Wildlife wrote in its May proposal.

Kate Lundquist, Water Institute co-director at the nonprofit Occidental Arts and Ecology Center in Sonoma County, called the state's commitment to this beaver program an important shift in how California views the animal.

"There's been a real watershed moment as we like to say, both literally and figuratively," Lundquist told The Times, owing the quote to her colleagues in the beaver research community. "We feel really excited and hopeful and inspired, and ready to get muddy and start working with the beaver out there in the field, in our communities and wherever they are on the Califor-

nia landscape." For years, Lundquist and other "beaver believers," as they call themselves, have petitioned the state to integrate beaver restoration into conservation strategies.

From the 1920s through the 1950s, California's Division of Fish and Game, the precursor to the Department of Fish and Wildlife, actively exported beavers to other parts of the state and country to build dams in eroded areas where they could help evenly distribute water.

The budget for the new program promises restoration and relocation efforts.

This opens the possibility for beavers to be reintroduced into watersheds where they once flourished. In places where a beaver population is a nuisance for farmland or fishing, researchers could explore alternatives to getting rid of

the dams and beavers, which does not always guarantee that they won't come back, Lundquist said.

Alternative strategies are underutilized or simply not considered, said Lundquist, who added that landowners could save time and money they spend trying to unblock beaver dams.

In a 2020 study, researchers showed that beaver-dammed corridors were relatively unharmed by wildfires compared with other areas without beaver damming.

Emily Fairfax, study co-author and assistant professor of environmental science and resource management at Cal State Channel Islands, highlighted the differences between two corridors in a drone video posted on social media, which shows one landscape scarred by a recent wildfire in Northern California, while another section of the undeveloped

land remains a lush wetland. "The differences in burn severity, air temperature, humidity, and soil moisture between the beaver complex and the adjacent landscape were huge," Fairfax said.

Her findings show that beavers benefit streams and other wildlife, including fish.

Researchers and advocates understand that while the state is just dipping its toes into the water with the beavers, the new program from the Department of Fish and Wildlife makes sense given the last few years of wildfires in California.

"It feels like the fires and drought have really pushed the issue," Fairfax said. "Now we see that people are willing to look at beavers. Because the state has spent so much funding on wildfire prevention measures and seen little results. Now they're asking, 'What haven't we tried?'"

the stuffy apartment.

But as Labor Day neared, and with temps expected to soar, they decided to use a gift card and stay in an El Segundo hotel for a night.

"I know some people definitely don't have the resources to be able to just go do that kind of thing on a whim," Pfister said. "We're pretty grateful."

The three are in the process of moving back home to Phoenix, he said, "where pretty much every single apartment or house has air conditioning."

When Hazziel Vidrio's A/C broke over the weekend, he set a metal bowl filled with ice in front of a fan for some relief. The cubes quickly melted in the 102-degree heat. His family members each had an ice pack, and they put a towel over one for their two cats to lie on.

"I was very skeptical of all these tricks I found online," Vidrio said, "but it helped."

As it grew progressively hotter in their Simi Valley home Saturday afternoon, Vidrio's sister took her kids — including a 3-year-old — to the cooling center at the Simi Valley Public Library. Vidrio stayed behind and began searching for a hotel room, before someone agreed to come that night to fix the A/C. ("He saved our lives," Vidrio said.)

Even after the A/C was fixed, they tried to cut back on its use — out of fear that it could break again. Vidrio put his queen-size sheets in the freezer and slept on them later that night.

It cooled him down, at least for a while.

## Sewage prompts beach closure

County will test water before reopening area near Torrance after 5,000-gallon spill.

BY JONAH VALDEZ

A secluded stretch of beach near Torrance and Rancho Palos Verdes was closed Wednesday morning after 5,000 gallons of sewage spilled into nearby Malaga Creek, officials said.

Lifeguards with the Los Angeles County Fire Department mounted boats and walked along RAT Beach, just south of Torrance Beach, warning people to stay out of the water, said KealinoHopono Barnes, a spokesperson for the department.

RAT Beach is short for "Right After Torrance" Beach or "Redondo and Torrance Beach," according to the L.A. County website.

The county's Department of Public Health was expected to test the water before reopening the beach, Barnes said.

The spill occurred Tuesday evening when a main sewer line in Rancho Palos Verdes became backed up, possibly because of tree roots, said Liz Odenhal, spokesperson for L.A. County Supervisor Janice Hahn's office. The sewage poured into streets, drained into nearby Malaga Creek, which snakes along homes, schools and a golf course, then finally spilled out into the cove of RAT Beach.

"I am getting more information about this incident and why we had another sewage spill impact our beautiful coastline," Hahn said in a tweet Wednesday.

The county's coastlines have recently seen a number of sewage spills, typically caused by failing infrastructure and equipment.

Last summer, 17 million gallons of sewage were discharged from the Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant and into Santa Monica Bay. Though the plant blamed the spill on wood and concrete illegally dumped into the sewer system, a report this year pointed instead to equipment failures, ignored alarms and insufficient staffing.

On New Year's Eve, a 60-year-old pipe burst, spilling 6 million to 7 million gallons of sewage onto Carson streets before going into the ocean, prompting beach closures in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

### Lottery results

For Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022

#### Mega Millions

Mega number is bold

6-17-46-59-68—Mega 2

Jackpot: \$191 million

#### California winners per category:

	No. of winners	Amount of prize(s)
5 + Mega	0	—
5	0	—
4 + Mega	2	\$9,377
4	35	\$603
3 + Mega	105	\$228
3	2,599	\$11
2 + Mega	2,314	\$10
1 + Mega	18,687	\$4
Mega only	45,915	\$2

Winning jackpot ticket(s) sold in other states: None

For Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2022

#### SuperLotto Plus

Mega number is bold

24-25-28-39-44—Mega 26

Jackpot: \$22 million

#### Powerball

Powerball number is bold

3-16-30-33-36—Powerball 20

Jackpot: \$170 million

Fantasy Five: 12-17-25-29-32

Daily Four: 2-1-9-8

Daily Three (midday): 3-1-4

Daily Three (evening): 8-4-1

#### Daily Derby:

(12) Lucky Charms

(4) Big Ben

(5) California Classic

Race time: 1:48.20

#### Results on the internet:

www.latimes.com/lottery

General information:

(800) 568-8379

(Results not available at this number)