



A MIGRANT FAMILY rests in Barrett Junction, Calif., on Tuesday after a nine-hour hike from Mexico through mountainous terrain.

Photographs by ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

## Review of blaze calls out Caltrans lapses

Agency didn't enforce safety at its property where a fire shut down the 10 Freeway last year, report says.

BY RACHEL URANGA

Infrequent and haphazard inspections by Caltrans allowed for the conditions that caused the massive fire that shut down the 10 Freeway downtown last year, costing \$33 million, according to a new report from the agency's inspector general.

In the damning assessment, Bryan Beyer and his chief deputy, Diana Antony, laid out how the California Department of Transportation brushed off two major "warning signs" of the potential fire danger at property it leased under and adjacent to freeways.

The report also found the agency kept shoddy lease records, failed to complete annual inspections or collect rent and never took meaningful action after finding hazardous conditions at the site.

"Caltrans could have — and should have — done more to make this property safer for the motoring public who traveled above it," the report said. "Although we do not believe Caltrans was directly responsible for the November 2023 fire, it nevertheless could have played a larger role in its prevention."

Since the fire, Caltrans said, it has implemented new oversight measures and imposed stricter requirements for prospective tenants of so-called airspace properties, often located under freeway viaducts.

"Safety is Caltrans' top priority, and the department takes the results of this audit report seriously," said Edward Barrera, a Caltrans spokesperson, in an emailed statement.

[See Fire, A10]

# Tired, confused at the border

Shortly after President Biden's executive order to restrict asylum access took effect late Tuesday, 50 migrants completed a nine-hour trek through the mountains just north of Tecate, Mexico.

They lined up single file against the brush, in a dusty clearing steps from Highway 94, and waited for Border Patrol agents to pick them up. The migrants, a group including men, women and children from Cuba, Ecuador, China and Brazil, were exhausted, nearly out of food and water.

Many hadn't heard of the order, which raises the legal standard for asylum claims and blocks access for those crossing the border illegally when average arrests are higher than 2,500 a day.

Lucas Lu, 32, did know about it and worried he had arrived too late to seek asylum. The rule goes against American values, he said.

"It's not fair," he said, sitting with his legs crossed in the dirt. "We risked our lives to get here."

The Chinese former hotel manager had a back brace wrapped around his T-shirt and leaned on a walking stick. He said he had sustained a spinal injury while traveling

Migrants in California and Mexico have mixed emotions as Biden's executive order limiting asylum takes effect

BY ANDREA CASTILLO  
REPORTING FROM SAN DIEGO



ASYLUM SEEKERS wait to board Border Patrol vehicles late Tuesday, when agents began enforcing President Biden's order.

by boat in Panama. Getting to the southern border had taken him three months.

Lu said he was fleeing authoritarian repression in search of safety, dignity and the ability to speak freely without the threat of jail.

Just past 11 p.m. three sprinter vans and five other vehicles pulled up to the site.

"Gracias a Dios," one woman exclaimed in the dark. "Thank God."

The agents brought out trash bags and told the migrants to dump their food and water. One picked up Lu's walking stick and hurled it into the brush.

"None of this, OK?" he said.

They patted migrants down and loaded them into the vans. An additional 45 migrants were coming down the hill, one agent said, plus groups of 40 and 90 in other areas.

Before and after the order took effect at 9 p.m. Pacific time, the night appeared relatively quiet overall, with many of the crossing sites east of San Diego deserted.

After migrant arrivals rose, making San Diego the top sector across the border, arrests dipped again in recent weeks.

[See Migrants, A5]

### COLUMN ONE

## These millionaires want to be forever young

One 'guinea pig' spends \$120,000 a year in pursuit of fountain of youth

BY ANDREA CHANG

Peter Diamandis, a week away from turning 63, bounds out of a Starbucks on a recent morning with a cup of decaf, his daily medley of 70 supplement capsules in his pocket and, tucked under his left arm, a box of freshly deposited poop.

The serial entrepreneur is in the standard uniform of serial entrepreneurs: jeans, sneakers, fitted black T-shirt, Apple Watch, Oura Ring and puffer vest, the back of which says, "Life is short ... until you extend it."

"I woke up at 6. I meditated for 15 minutes. I took fecal samples — I hate to say that, unappetizing, sorry," Diamandis says as he makes his way up Wilshire Boulevard. "Went through my dental

[See Anti-aging, A7]



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

XPRIZE FOUNDER Peter Diamandis undergoes a plasma exchange in Santa Monica. He's a spokesman for the longevity industry and an investor.

## Expect better, faster alerts of megaquakes with system upgrade

GPS data will enable more timely warnings of Earth's movements that indicate temblors of large magnitude.

BY RONG-GONG LIN II

California's earthquake early-warning system is getting a seismic upgrade, one that will allow residents to receive more timely alerts about shaking from an incoming megaquake.

The upgrade, also available in Oregon and Washington, will provide features important for warnings about the "Big One."

The improvements could

mean that Californians, depending on where they are and where the quake begins, would receive an earlier, more accurate estimate of magnitude before the earth starts shaking — say from a magnitude 7.8 earthquake that begins on the San Andreas fault near the U.S.-Mexico border and ruptures the fault toward Los Angeles County.

The upgrade also would improve warnings for the Pacific Northwest and California's North Coast, which face the threat of tsunamis caused by quakes along the Cascadia subduction zone.

The U.S. Geological Survey and its nonprofit partner EarthScope announced the upgraded system on Wednesday.

For the most powerful earthquakes, the improvements "become very, very critical in helping us get to the answer quicker — in terms of how big that event is," said Robert de Groot, one of the operations team leaders of the USGS' ShakeAlert System.

[See Megaquakes, A10]

### New records for heat — and CO<sub>2</sub>

As officials sound the alarm, global carbon dioxide levels hit high mark. **PERSPECTIVES, A2**

### Plan advances for rent hike cap

County supervisors ask staff to draft a 3% rule for unincorporated areas. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

### Boeing launches Starliner, finally

Crewed capsule heads to the space station on a crucial mission for the firm. **BUSINESS, A6**

**Weather**  
Turning sunny.  
L.A. Basin: 77/60. **B6**

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