

ABC7 -CORE ISSUES
3rd Quarter 2023

CORE ISSUES

ABC7 gave significant coverage to the following issues and concerns arising in the third quarter of 2023:

1. Crime/Punishment and Public Safety
2. Community
3. Weather and Wildfires
4. Strikes and Labor Relations

The station's coverage of these core issues is detailed in the next section of this report.

CRIME/PUNISHMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY

***Eyewitness News.* Air Dates: Jul 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Aug 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Sep 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.**

Total Coverage: 2 Days 5 Hours 29 Minutes

ABC7 Eyewitness News devoted significant airtime to topics of crime/punishment and public safety during the third quarter of 2023. Viewers were informed of the increase in smash-and-grab robberies and organized retail thefts occurring across the nation, especially in Southern California. Viewers also learned of another Southland mass shooting, this time in Trabuco Canyon, California.

Eyewitness News covered the troubling increase in retail thefts and smash-and-grab robberies in and around the Los Angeles area during the third quarter of 2023. These incidents involve organized groups of individuals entering high-end stores and stealing large amounts of merchandise valued at tens of thousands, and in some cases, hundreds of thousands of dollars. They also caused significant damage to the stores in the process.

ABC7 reported on the Nordstrom robbery in the Westfield Topanga Mall, where as many as thirty individuals, both men and women, stormed the store and snatched luxury items, leaving the store in disarray. Similar robberies occurred at a Gucci store in Westfield Century City Mall, a Gucci store at South Coast Plaza in Orange County, and an Yves Saint Laurent store at the Americana at Brand in Glendale. More than \$300,000 in merchandise had been stolen in that incident alone.

On *Eyewitness Newsmakers*, KABC anchor Marc Brown spoke to Los Angeles Police Department Chief Michel Moore about what his department was doing to stop the organized retail thefts. In this thirty-minute program, they discussed the controversial zero-bail policy, the LAPD's severe staffing shortage, as well as the department's attrition issue. Moore had said that in a typical year, 450 to 500 people retire from the force, but that now that number is closer to 700. Also, between 200 and 250 LAPD employees leave for other agencies on an annual basis. In another episode, Marc talked to LA County District Attorney George Gascón, where they discussed what could be done to cut down on the dangerous and costly retail thefts. Gascón had said that his office was committed to prosecuting these crimes to the fullest and that they try to obtain the highest bail possible in certain circumstances. Despite that, overcrowding in the jail system can mean people who commit crimes like retail theft are quickly released and sometimes re-offend.

ABC7 viewers learned that the LAPD had set up the Organized Retail Crime Task Force, which includes personnel from various local law enforcement agencies and aims to prevent these incidents from happening by targeting the groups of people involved in these organized retail thefts. It had made twenty arrests between August 21 and September 10, 2023. Additionally, California Governor Gavin Newsom's office had announced a \$267 million effort to combat these crimes. The funding would be distributed to multiple jurisdictions throughout California, with the aim of increasing police presence, making more arrests, and prosecuting offenders more severely. The Board of State and Community Corrections unanimously approved the funding, which will primarily go to law enforcement agencies and district attorney offices. Both the LAPD and The LA County Sheriff's Department are set to receive nearly \$16 million of the funding.

CRIME/PUNISHMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY (continued)

Eyewitness News also had extensive coverage of the mass shooting that occurred on August 23, 2023, at Cook's Corner bar in Trabuco Canyon, California, where four people (including the gunman) were killed and six others were wounded.

The mass shooting was the focus of KABC's eleven o'clock newscast that evening, with reporters Leanne Suter, Jory Rand, and Chris Cristi providing live updates from the command post and from the crime scene. The perpetrator, 59-year-old ex-Ventura police officer John Snowling, had traveled from Ohio amid an ongoing dispute over divorcing his wife, Marie Snowling. He had gone to Cook's Corner looking for Marie, found and shot her, and then opened fire on other people, resulting in three deaths and five other injuries. John Snowling was killed in a shootout with deputies. Marie Snowling survived.

One of the first videos *Eyewitness News* obtained on the night of the mass shooting was from Betty Fruichantie, an eyewitness who had captured video footage of the aftermath of the shooting. She had described the gunman as a "wild man" and had revealed that she had met Marie about a year ago. Betty had been sitting at a table with Marie when the shooting started and had witnessed the gunman shoot an innocent girl before turning towards their table. Betty had managed to escape unharmed by running into the bathroom.

ABC7's audience were informed of the identities of the three victims killed in the mass shooting. They were John Leehey, Tonya Clark, and Glen Sprowl Junior. Glen Sprowl Junior was described as a beloved father who made a split-second decision to try and stop the gunman, leaving behind three children. A GoFundMe page had been set up for him as his family organized a celebration of life service.

Viewers also learned about the various efforts to raise money for the victims. The M Street band had been playing at Cook's Corner the night of the shooting. Two of the band members, Ed Means and Dave Stretch, were among those injured by the gunman. A little over a week after the shooting, the band hosted a benefit concert held at the Old World Biergarten in Huntington Beach to raise money for the victims' families. Another fundraiser, the "Cook's Corner Strong Auction," organized by several Orange County businesses and nonprofits, raised a little over \$13,000 to also help the victims. Their goal was \$15,000. All proceeds will go to the victim's families, the restaurant, and its staff.

COMMUNITY

***Eyewitness News.* Air Dates: Jul 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Aug 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Sep 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.**

Total Coverage: 1 Day 21 Hours 23 Minutes

ABC7 Eyewitness News covered the community happenings that affected the station's viewing area in the third quarter of 2023. Topics of interest for Angelenos included singer Taylor Swift's tour stop in Los Angeles and its impact on the city and the economy, and the El Segundo Little League team winning the 2023 Little League World Series champions.

Eyewitness News devoted airtime to Taylor Swift as her "Eras Tour" stopped in Los Angeles for six sold-out concerts at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, in August 2023. The tour has been highly successful, with sold-out shows in multiple cities across the country. It has impacted various aspects, including the economy, ticket sales, and fan experiences.

Swift's concerts have had a revitalizing effect on the local tourism industry, with the economic impact of the tour going beyond just direct spending on tickets. Prior to the LA concerts, other cities that had hosted her tour experienced a boost in hotel sales and an increase in tourism. It is estimated that the six nights of the "Eras Tour" in LA created approximately 3,300 jobs and generated \$160 million in local earnings and close to \$40 million in tax revenue. These figures include employment opportunities in various sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and retail. Concertgoers, many of whom traveled from out of town, also spent money on food and drink, accommodations, merchandise, and other tourist activities in the region. According to a report by the Center for Jobs and the Economy, these concerts were estimated to have resulted in a \$320 million boost to LA County's GDP. The tour is estimated to have a substantial economic effect on the cities included as venues, with some estimates ranging up to as much as \$5 billion total.

ABC7 viewers were informed on how best to navigate the concert experience through the station's recurring segment, "7 On Your Side." The segment aims to help viewers save money, make informed decisions, and navigate various aspects of their lives. In this instance, "7 On Your Side" provided a concert check list with information such as how LA Metro had added late-night services and free shuttle rides to SoFi Stadium for the concerts. It had also given attendees tips such as downloading the digital ticket or any parking passes onto the phone's mobile wallet in case internet service was lost. It had also cautioned attendees to be prepared for long merchandise lines and had suggested bringing comfortable shoes, water, sunscreen, shade, and even a lawn chair.

ABC7 highlighted Swift's achievements during the tour, including breaking her own record for the "most spots occupied at one time by a female musician" on the Streaming Songs chart. Her album "Speak Now, Taylor's Version" became her twelfth number-one album, surpassing Barbra Streisand for that honor. Swift also became the first female artist in Spotify history to reach 100 million monthly listeners.

Viewers learned that those who were not able to attend any of the concerts would get a chance to see a concert film documenting the "Eras Tour" in theaters. When it was revealed that the film would be released on October 13, 2023, the producers of the upcoming film "The Exorcist: Believer" announced that they would release their movie a week early to avoid competing with Swift's "Eras Tour" film, which had originally been scheduled for the same date.

COMMUNITY (continued)

Eyewitness News also covered the El Segundo Little League team's journey to winning the 2023 Little League World Series (LLWS).

In the third quarter of 2023, ten teams from the United States and ten teams from other countries competed in the 76th edition of the LLWS. The El Segundo Little League team had had an impressive run in the West Region Tournament, ultimately securing a spot in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, where the games were played August 16 to August 27, 2023.

It was the first time a team from El Segundo had made it to the LLWS. They had faced off against the team from New Albany, Ohio, in their first game and had emerged victorious. They then played against Rhode Island to stay in the tournament. The team from El Segundo won their game against Rhode Island and advanced to the U.S. Championship game. Next, they competed against a team from Northeast Seattle to secure another win, earning them a spot in the Little League World Series U.S. Championship game. In the U.S. Championship game, they played against a team from Texas and emerged as the champions with a score of six to one. In all, they had won five consecutive elimination games, showing incredible resilience and skill throughout the tournament. Finally, in the World Championship game, the El Segundo team faced off against a team from Willemstad, Curacao, where they won with a walk-off home run by El Segundo player Louis Lappe, securing the title of Little League World Series champions.

ABC7 reported on the great pride the team's victory brought to the community of El Segundo. They had received a hero's welcome upon their return and had been thrown a parade down Main Street in El Segundo, with the community joining in on the celebrations. A player recognition ceremony was held afterward on Stevenson Field, where the players were given keys to the city.

Viewers learned that the team had been honored by both the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Los Angeles Angels. Before the Dodgers game, the team had taken a tour of Dodger Stadium. The Dodgers had also signed the team's mitts and balls and took pictures with the young players. The El Segundo team was later honored on the field. The Angels had also invited the El Segundo team to the game in Anaheim so that they could celebrate the players' big win. For every ticket sold that evening, a five-dollar donation was made to the El Segundo Little League.

The El Segundo Little League team's win was the first championship for a team from California since 2011, and 8th overall, the most of any U.S. state.

WEATHER AND WILDFIRES

Eyewitness News. Air Dates: Jul 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Aug 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Sep 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 30.

Total Coverage: 18 Hours 35 Minutes

ABC7 Eyewitness News devoted a considerable amount of airtime to weather and wildfire danger issues during the third quarter of 2023. Angelenos were seeking information about the arrival of Tropical Storm Hilary to California shores, as well as about the wildfires in Maui, which had some local connections and implications.

Eyewitness News reported on how, in mid-August 2023, Tropical Storm Hilary hit Southern California, bringing heavy rainfall, strong winds, and the potential for flooding and debris flows. The storm was initially a category one hurricane as it approached the coast of Mexico, but it weakened before making landfall. Despite the weakening, Hilary still posed a significant threat to the region. In response to the storm, local and state authorities took several precautionary measures to prepare and protect the communities. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass had declared a local emergency, mobilizing and coordinating resources to ensure the safety of residents. California Governor Gavin Newsom had also declared a state of emergency for much of Southern California, including Los Angeles County.

Eyewitness News covered how, after Hilary passed through the region, the aftermath included significant damage and the need for cleanup and recovery efforts. In the San Bernardino Mountains, rising water from the storm caused destructive debris flows, washing away several homes, roads, and bridges. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department had urged people to be cautious of heavy equipment and obey street closures in the affected areas. The Antelope Valley had also been heavily impacted by the storm, with neighborhoods experiencing major mudflows. Homes and properties were destroyed, and retaining walls collapsed, causing water to enter residential areas. Firefighters had surveyed the damage and assisted the affected residents. In Riverside County, the Coachella Valley had faced significant mud and debris accumulation, leading to road closures and damage to homes and businesses. Cleanup efforts were also challenging due to the extreme heat, with temperatures reaching 115 degrees Fahrenheit. The damage in Riverside County was estimated to be more than \$126 million, and federal assistance was requested to aid in recovery.

Viewers were notified that the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) had reopened its schools after the storm but that some areas had still been experiencing power outages. Repairs continued across the LA area, with tree-related issues, mudflows, and potholes being addressed. The city had encouraged residents to report any storm-related issues to 311.

ABC7 also alerted its audience to the 5.1-magnitude earthquake that struck near Ojai, California, on August 21, 2023, adding to the already chaotic situation caused by the storm. The earthquake was centered near Ojai but was felt across the region. Fortunately, there were no reports of major damage or injuries resulting from the earthquake, but it added to the challenges faced by residents and emergency crews who were already dealing with the aftermath of the storm.

WEATHER AND WILDFIRES (continued)

Eyewitness News also gave extensive coverage to the Maui wildfires, which also occurred in the third quarter of 2023.

ABC7 viewers learned that in early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out on the island of Maui, Hawaii. The fires had been fueled by strong winds and dry conditions, which had led to the destruction of hundreds of buildings and the displacement of hundreds of families. At least ninety-seven people lost their lives in the wildfires.

One of the hardest-hit areas was the historic town of Lahaina, which had been described as being "decimated" by the fires. Witnesses had reported block after block of destruction in the town, with many buildings reduced to ashes. The fires had also caused the 911 service in West Maui to be knocked out, further complicating the emergency response.

KABC anchor David Ono was vacationing with his family in Ka'anapali on the island of Maui when the wildfires started and was able to provide a personal account of the devastation, becoming the first local Los Angeles reporter on the scene. When he learned of the destruction in Lahaina, he immediately packed a backpack and started walking towards the disaster zone for the next seven hours and fourteen miles. He shared images and videos of the burned-out areas, including Lahaina and other parts of the island. He was joined the next day by KABC photographer Brian Dunn, and they provided additional reports. Ono was followed by reporter Josh Haskell, who filed reports working with Dunn.

The federal government had declared a federal disaster and promised a quick response to aid in the recovery efforts. Urban search and rescue teams had been deployed to support the wildfire response. However, the full extent of the devastation is still unknown, and the recovery process is expected to take years.

Eyewitness News reported on how the local Los Angeles community was showing support for the wildfire victims in Maui. The Los Angeles Chargers, along with fellow LA professional sports teams the Dodgers, Galaxy, Kings, LAFC, Lakers, Clippers, Angel City FC, Ducks, Angels, Sparks, and Rams, collectively committed to donating a combined \$450,000 to the American Red Cross' ongoing efforts in Maui. In Santa Monica, the popular neighborhood restaurant Lunetta had hosted a charity dinner to benefit those in Maui's restaurant community affected by the blazes. Tickets to the six-course meal were \$135 each, with 100% of the proceeds going directly to the Kokua Restaurant Hospitality Fund. A Maui native who now lives in Southern California started a charity drive in Orange County for people who lost everything in the Hawaii wildfires. Donations were coming in by the truckloads. Celebrities Oprah Winfrey and Dwayne Johnson launched the People's Fund of Maui to support those who have been impacted by the Maui wildfires. The two stars together donated ten million dollars to get the campaign started and had invited the public to help in the effort. The money will be distributed directly to those impacted by wildfires.

STRIKES AND LABOR RELATIONS

***Eyewitness News*. Air Dates: Jul 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Aug 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Sep 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.**

Total Coverage: 11 Hours 51 Minutes

ABC7 Eyewitness News devoted extensive airtime to strikes and labor relations issues during the third quarter of 2023. With many major strikes ongoing, 2023 had been named the "summer of strikes," which in Los Angeles included not only the writers' and actors' strikes but also a strike among hotel workers as well.

Eyewitness News had considerable coverage of the labor dispute between the union representing thousands of Hollywood writers of film and television—the Writers Guild of America (WGA)—and the trade association that represents the major Hollywood studios—the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP). After 148 days, the WGA union leadership finally approved a contract agreement with studios and declared the strike over. Eligible voters will be able to vote to ratify the agreement between October 2 and October 9, 2023.

ABC7 viewers learned that the agreement included stepped increases in minimum salaries, which will jump by 5% upon ratification, 4% in May 2024, and 3.5% in May 2025. There were also increases in health and pension contributions. The proposed contract also contained restrictions on studios' use of artificial intelligence, barring AI from writing or rewriting literary material and preventing AI-generated material from being considered source material, meaning it cannot "undermine a writer's credit." Also included were increases in pay for writers employed on television series, along with employment guarantees for set numbers of writers on series based on the number of episodes being produced.

Hollywood actors, who are a part of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Radio and Television Artists (SAG-AFTRA) and seek many of the same demands as WGA members, have been on strike since July 14, 2023. Not only did they remain on the picket lines, but striking actors had also voted to expand their walkout to include the lucrative video game market, a step that could put new pressure on Hollywood studios to make a deal with the performers who provide voices and stunts for games.

SAG-AFTRA had said that 98% of its members voted to go on strike against video game companies if ongoing negotiations were not successful. Acting in video games can include a variety of roles, from voice performances to motion-capture work as well as stunts. Video-game actors went on strike in 2016 in a work stoppage that lasted nearly a year.

Some of the same issues are at play in the video game negotiations as in the broader actors' strike that has shut down Hollywood for months, including wages, safety measures, and protections on the use of artificial intelligence. The companies involved included gaming giants Activision, Electronic Arts, Epic Games, and Take 2 Productions, as well as Disney and Warner Bros. video game divisions. The threat of a video game strike emerged as Hollywood writers were on the verge of getting back to work after months on the picket lines.

With the writers' strike concluded, SAG-AFTRA and the AMPTP have agreed to resume negotiations for a new TV/theatrical contract on Monday, October 2, 2023.

STRIKES AND LABOR RELATIONS (continued)

ABC7 viewers were also updated on the hotel workers' strike and its effect on Southern California and the local economy.

Eyewitness News covered how Los Angeles and Orange County hotel workers had been on strike since July 2, 2023, demanding higher pay and improvements in health care and retirement benefits. UNITE HERE Local 11, which represents over 32,000 workers employed in hotels, restaurants, airports, sports arenas, and convention centers throughout Southern California and Arizona, had been picketing outside various hotels, including the Hilton, Hyatt, and Marriott chains, off and on for almost three months. Their labor contract had expired at the end of June 2023, and since then, they have been pushing for better working conditions and wages that can keep up with the rising cost of living.

The union had asked for an immediate five-dollar-an-hour raise, as well as an additional three-dollar-an-hour boost each subsequent year of the three-year contract, for a total raise of eleven dollars. They had also been seeking improvements in health care, retirement benefits, and a workforce housing fund. In contrast, the hotel bargaining group had offered a two-dollar and fifty-cent per hour increase in the first year and a 6.25% increase over four years.

Throughout the rolling strikes, the workers had organized marches and rallies to raise awareness and gain support for their cause, and they had urged others to boycott LA and move conventions to other cities. They had even called on celebrities like Taylor Swift to support their fight for better pay and benefits. The union had also filed a federal unfair labor practice charge against the hotel industry's bargaining group, alleging interference with their right to organize.

On September 29, 2023, progress was made as UNITE HERE Local 11 and the Millennium Biltmore Hotel reached a tentative contract agreement that would affect 300 workers. Once the contract is ratified, the workers will see unprecedented wage increases that keep pace with the soaring cost of housing. The agreement also includes improved healthcare, more robust staffing, pension increases, and more inclusive hiring procedures for formerly incarcerated individuals and unauthorized immigrants. This agreement marks the second deal struck by the union, with the first one being with the Westin Bonaventure on June 29, 2023, just as that agreement was set to expire two days later.