



NEWS



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CREWS BATTLE TWENTYNINE PALMS STRUCTURE FIRE

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM News

Posted: November 2, 2019



San Bernardino County Fire photo

Friday morning at 9:06 #SBCoFD crews were dispatched to a reported structure fire in the 73500 Block of Raymond Drive in the City of Twentynine Palms. ME44 arrived on-scene in less than six minutes to find a single story, single family home with smoke and fire showing from multiple sides. ME44 initiated a fire attack utilizing a transitional attack, knocking the fire down in approximately 15 minutes. Once crews transitioned inside, they complete a primary search to ensure no victims were inside the structure. Crews limited the fire damage to one room, however multiple rooms received smoke and heat damage.

#SBCoFD responded with (2) Medic Engines, a Battalion Chief & a Fire Investigator. Combat Center Fire Department assisted with (2) Engines and a Chief Officer. The fire's cause and origin is under investigation. Damage estimates were not available at the time of the release, but the home did receive heavy smoke and fire damage. Red Cross was requested to assist one displaced occupancy with temporary housing. One person was transported by Morongo Basin Ambulance to a local hospital, for an unrelated medical issue.

A heat source too close to combustibles is the leading factor contributing to the start of a winter home fire (15 percent). Give space heaters space. Keep all combustible materials away from portable and space heaters. Place all space heaters at least three feet from furniture, walls, curtains or anything else that could catch fire. Turn off space heaters when you leave home or go to bed. (Source FEMA)

<http://z1077fm.com/crews-battle-twentynine-palms-structure-fire-2/>

Off-duty Ontario police officer killed in San Bernardino crash

Emily Rasmussen, Daily Bulletin

Posted: November 2, 2019, 10:31 am



An off-duty Ontario police officer driving an SUV in San Bernardino died after losing control of the vehicle and hitting a tree shortly after midnight,, officials said. (Photo by ONSCENE.TV)

An off-duty Ontario police detective driving an SUV died after he lost control of the vehicle and hit a tree shortly after midnight on Saturday in San Bernardino, officials said.

Joshua Ray Burks, 40, of San Bernardino, was driving north on University Parkway approaching Kendall Drive when he hit the tree in the center median, San Bernardino police said. He was the only person in the car.

Burks was taken to a local hospital, where he died of his injuries.

“Josh Burks was a dedicated 20-year veteran of the Ontario Police Department,” Ontario police Sgt. Bill Russell said. “He really served his city and community very well. My heart goes out to him and his family during this tragic time.”

Burks’ career in law enforcement began in 1997, when he became a police cadet. About two years later, he was hired as a police recruit and rose through the Ontario Police Department’s ranks, according to the department.

San Bernardino police said they were still investigating what led to the crash.

Burks, who appeared to be off-duty at the time of the crash, was driving an unmarked Ontario city vehicle, according to San Bernardino police.

Authorities in San Bernardino were working with the Ontario Police Department in the investigation, officials said.

Anyone with information about the crash was asked to contact Sgt. Equino Thomas or Sgt. Jeff Harvey at 909-384-5792.

<https://www.dailybulletin.com/2019/11/02/off-duty-ontario-police-officer-killed-in-san-bernardino-crash/>

Residences Burn in San Bernardino Fire

Staff Writer, Nature World News

Posted: November 3, 2019



Firefighters direct water on a burning house during wildfires in San Bernardino, California, U. S. October 31, 2019 in this screen grab obtained from social media video. (Photo: 564FIRE via REUTERS)

Flames consumed multiple homes in the San Bernardino area after a brush fire burned on Thursday. It quickly grew to engulf 200 acres, officials said.

Firefighters received reports on the fire near Highway 18 shortly after 1 a.m. and came to discover the blaze threatening several residences. Six homes were burned or destroyed by the fire, which has been named the Hillside fire.

Scott Howes, deputy fire chief for the San Bernardino National Forest, said the firefighters saw a wind-driven, rapid-rate-of-spread fire heading downhill into the City of San Bernardino when they first got on the scene.

Howes said more than 500 firefighters were battling the blaze. The firemen were making good progress by Thursday afternoon as they contained 50 percent of the fire and had not tremendously spread on the day. However, the fire department said a fireman was taken to a hospital due to smoke inhalation.

Four teams that happened to be in the area because of high winds were dispatched to the Hillside fire. The fire had reached about 200 acres an hour later with steady winds of 20 to 30 mph (48.28 kilometers per hour) that gusted up to 60 mph (96.56 kilometers per hour).

Helicopters and fixed-wing aircrafts were also working to protect homes and get control of the raging blaze.

Wildfires have plagued California for the month of October. The fires, fuelled by rushing winds which pushed flames through the bushes and dry, gusty winds have collectively charred pieces of lands larger than Philadelphia and destroyed hundreds of homes and businesses.

The Hillside fire is being fueled by Santa Ana winds gusting up to 40 miles (64.37 kilometers) an hour as several other fires in Southern California have been this week. Local fire departments have often had to wait for the opportunity to use air firefighters and other firefighting tools that are being used in assisting other government agencies as multiple fires raging up and down the state.

Fire Departments in California "competing" for resources - official
Kathleen Opliger, deputy chief of the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department, said they are "competing for resources" with several other fires in California.

Investigators were able to track down where the fire started but not what caused it. Although there were no power lines in the area, they said.

The reference is to the recent power outages by Southern California Edison, PG&E, and other utilities throughout the state as a move to prevent fires when high winds blow through. Thousands of clients throughout Southern California had power shutoff during Wednesday, including Cal State San Bernardino that was closed on Thursday due to outages.

The winds that sweep through San Bernardino are as familiar as the hillsides that are a backdrop for more than a dozen homes along Viento Way, named after the Spanish word for "wind."

Smoke advisory released

The weather conditions prompted Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare, San Bernardino County health officer, to issue a smoke advisory Thursday afternoon. People with respiratory issues in the region are urged to stay inside their houses and have their windows closed until the condition of the air and the fire situation improves.

Pacific High School in San Bernardino set up an evacuation center for the affected residences. There were 27 residents at the school, according to the staff said during peak fire activity early Thursday. However, no one remained at the evacuation center by 3:30 p.m.

Police officers in San Bernardino patrolled the affected evacuation zones. Spokesperson Cindy Bachman said officers encountered a handful of people who refused to evacuate. "We can't stress enough that the evacuation order is for their safety," she underscored.

<https://www.natureworldnews.com/articles/42467/20191103/residences-burn-san-bernardino-fire.htm>

Latest wildfires in Riverside County now fully contained; Hillside fire in San Bernardino in mop-up

Staff Writer, Daily Bulletin

Posted: November 2, 2019, 10:27 pm

More progress was reported Sunday in containing the largest wildfires that broke out earlier in the week in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

The Cal Fire/Riverside County Fire Department said:

–The 628-acre Hill fire, which broke out Wednesday morning, was 100% contained Saturday evening. The cause for the fire that originated at Granite Hill Drive at Pyrite Street in Jurupa Valley remained under investigation.

–The 46 fire, which broke out Thursday morning in the 5300 block of 46th Street in Jurupa Valley, was declared 100% contained at 4 p.m. Sunday. It had been 95% contained Sunday morning, with a new acreage total of 328, from more accurate mapping. That fire started at the conclusion of a police pursuit when a reported stolen vehicle evading police broke down in a field and its shredded tires ignited the grass, police said.

–The 19-acre Sobrante fire, which broke out Friday, was fully contained that day at 19 acres. The cause remained under investigation.

The Hillside fire which broke out Thursday morning off Highway 18 in San Bernardino, was 95% contained Sunday afternoon and measured 200 acres, with the cause under investigation. Mop-up operations to chase hot spots continued, **San Bernardino County Fire** Department spokesman Ryan Vaccaro said Sunday.

Windy weather that contributed to growth of the fires has subsided, with no National Weather Service watches, warnings or advisories in effect for the region Sunday morning.

<https://www.dailybulletin.com/2019/11/02/containment-grows-for-latest-wildfires-in-riverside-county-hillside-fire-in-san-bernardino-in-mop-up/>

Positioning fire crews in high-hazard areas and upping staff is helping to get ahead of wildfires

Brian Rokos, The Press-Enterprise

Posted: November 2, 2019, 9:00 am



Firefighters work to put out a flare up of the Old Water Fire as it made an aggressive afternoon push down to 40th Street in San Bernardino on Thursday, Oct 24, 2019. A heavy aerial attack kept flames from jumping south of 40th Street. Homes along David Way were briefly threatened. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

Agencies that fight wildfires in Southern California are increasingly positioning fire engines in high-hazard areas and increasing staff in anticipation that major conflagrations will break out during red flag warnings.

It's that positioning they say that has helped limit the destructiveness of the wind-driven fires in the past two weeks.

"When you pre-assemble strike teams, they're at a moment's ready to be dispatched," said Cal Fire/Riverside County Fire Department Capt. Fernando Herrera.

The U.S. Forest Service's four Southern California forests — Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres and San Bernardino — are having their firefighters work 24-hour shifts. Those firefighters do not staff fire stations at night when flames tend to spread slowly and an immediate response is not always necessary, San Bernardino National Forest spokesman Zach Behrens said. But now they are on duty after dark. Hotshot crews that battle flames by hand have been moved from the Big Bear area about 22 miles west to Skyforest, closer to where more serious fires could break out, he said.

That meant that on many recent nights, 18 engines, four water tenders, 11 patrols, five chiefs and the hotshot crews were on duty.

The Forest Service also moved more aircraft into San Bernardino and Lancaster after modifying contracts that originally left some aircraft unavailable after September, said Randy Skelton, assistant fire director for the Southern Region.

The **San Bernardino County Fire** Department placed two strike teams — each with five engines staffed with four firefighters — and four hand crews of about 15 firefighters each in Devore about two weeks ago. Some camped out and others stayed in hotels.

Those moves paid off Oct. 24 when the Old Water fire broke out about 2 a.m., and on Oct. 31 when the Hillside fire started about 1:30 a.m., both in the San Bernardino area.

"The Hillside fire pre-positioning was a key component in limiting the damage to what it was," San Bernardino County fire spokesman Eric Sherwin said Friday, during a rare break from the week's fire siege. The fire destroyed eight houses and damaged 18 others, "but the pre-positioning is why we saved 116 homes in the community." Sherwin expressed similar sentiments about the Old Water fire, where no homes burned.

The strike teams were assembled using engines and firefighters from the county as well as municipal agencies that included Redlands, Rialto, Colton, Chino and Barstow. If the strike teams had to be assembled on the fly,

Sherwin said, it would have taken 45 minutes to two hours. Instead, the strike teams responded within minutes.

Grants from the state Office of Emergency Services have made it easier for the Orange County Fire Authority and San Bernardino County Fire Department, among other agencies, to afford to pay the necessary overtime.

“It’s something we just started touching upon last year,” Sherwin said.

“Before, it was on our dime,” said OCFA Chief Brian Fennessy, who also said his agency began the practice last year.

OCFA has been staffing additional helicopters and adding dispatchers when the weather forecast warrants. Fennessy said he recalled all off-duty personnel recently to make strike teams available not only for Orange County responses, but also for mutual aid to other counties. Fennessy placed the majority of the strike teams in south county, where more fires are expected.

The additional staffing paid off on Oct. 24, when about 4 a.m. a speeding car sheared a pole in half at Santiago Canyon Road east of the 241 Freeway, touching off a brush fire as the wind howled.

“We were able to stop the fire at 2 and a half acres,” Fennessy said. “Had it jumped the highway, we would have had 5,000 residences in the path. Certainly, by throwing a robust response, it’s paid off at least two or three times locally where we were able to keep these fires small.”

The Los Angeles County Fire Department pre-positioned strike teams in Sylmar, Canyon Country and Agoura Hills, an engine and water tender in Glendale and added two dispatchers, all in October, in anticipation of high winds in those areas, according to Cal OES news.

Cal Fire/Riverside County Fire Department can draw resources from throughout the state. Cal Fire recently recalled everyone from the rank of firefighter through battalion chief and pre-positioned strike teams at its sprawling Perris headquarters. If necessary, it will open up a base camp to stage resources, said Capt. Fernando Herrera. Those extra resources helped stamp out the Hill fire and the 46 fire, both in Jurupa Valley.

“It makes a big difference,” Herrera said.

<https://www.pe.com/2019/11/02/positioning-of-fire-crews-helping-get-ahead-of-the-wildfires/>

Hillside fire in San Bernardino is 70% contained, remains at 200 acres

Kim Guimarin, Daily Bulletin

Posted: November 1, 2019, 10:07 am



A firefighter rakes the debris at one of two destroyed homes on Viento Way in San Bernardino on Thursday morning Oct. 31, 2019. Six homes have been destroyed by the wind-driven fire which has consumed approximately 200 acres with zero containment. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

The Hillside fire in north San Bernardino was 70% contained Friday morning, Nov. 1, as **San Bernardino County fire** and San Bernardino National Forest crews will continue to focus on mop up throughout the day.

The blaze, which ignited early Thursday morning near Highway 18 and Lower Waterman Canyon, held at 200 acres overnight.

At one point more than 1,300 residents were forced from their homes under evacuation orders as the fire was pushed by strong Santa Ana wind gusts pummeled the region. Residents were allowed to return home about 6 p.m. Thursday.

Eight homes were destroyed and 18 others were damaged in the fire, according to SB County fire officials.

One firefighter was taken to a hospital for smoke inhalation. No other injuries were reported.

The fire was one of several this week that ignited in Southern California under “extreme” fire warnings. The 46 fire in Jurupa Valley, which also started Thursday morning, charred about 300 acres and destroyed several buildings, including the Louis Robidoux Nature Center.

In LA County, the Getty fire started earlier this week near the Getty Center, and forced thousands to flee.

And in Ventura County, the Easy fire, which ignited near an active Southern California Edison power line in Simi Valley, at one point threatened the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum. Containment on that fire has also been increasing as winds have calmed.

This week saw winds gusting up to 76 mph and conditions that have led SCE and other agencies throughout California to shut down power to hundreds of thousands in the state.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2019/11/01/hillside-fire-in-san-bernardino-is-70-contained-remains-at-200-acres/>

Hillside Fire in San Bernardino now 70 percent contained

Alejandro Cano, Redlands Community News

Posted: November 1, 2019



The hillside Fire destroyed six homes and forced the evacuations of about 1,300 residents in north San Bernardino on Thursday, Oct. 31. Redlands Community News Photo by Alejandro Cano

Around 2 a.m. on Thursday, Oct. 31, screams and commotion outside her house woke up the Mazullo family, who reside on the 130 block of Viento Way, in San Bernardino.

A quick peek at the window was enough to realize that immediate evacuation was necessary, as the rapid spreading flames of the Hillside Fire, had engulfed two houses across street.

“It was very scary, all I knew is that we had to leave. I grabbed a few belongings and took off along with my two kids. Huge embers flew everywhere, a palm tree next to my house caught fire, it became extremely dangerous very quickly,” said Mazullo.

When daylight broke, the Mazullos realized how fortunate they were. Their home was intact; however, two houses across street were completely destroyed.

“Everything is gone. A total loss. Luckily, there was nobody at home,” said Ken Defillipis, whose son rents the house located at 134 Viento Way.

In fact, the Hillside Fire, which erupted around 1:40 a.m. near Highway 18 at Lower Waterman Canyon, destroyed six houses and forced the evacuations of about 1,300 residents.

The second house destroyed on Viento Way belonged to Matthew Valdivia, 35, who along with his wife and two daughters, and a family dog, escaped the dangerous flames.

According to the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department, the fire sent at least one firefighter to the hospital for smoke inhalation.

Authorities reported that the approximately 500 homes threatened by the flames were saved thanks in part to the prompt response and the use of heavy equipment, like bulldozers, which are equipped with special tools to penetrate the ground and clear vegetation.

As of Friday, Nov. 1, the fire had consumed about 200 acres and was 70 percent contained. Both directions of Highway 18 were opened to traffic, Caltrans District 8 representatives said.

Investigators determined the area of origin on Thursday evening but had not determined the cause. The fire is still under investigation and authorities have rejected the possibility of power lines being responsible because there are none in the immediate area.

https://www.redlandscommunitynews.com/news/hillside-fire-in-san-bernardino-now-percent-contained/article_44f0bd62-fcf9-11e9-a24a-6f6bd4ca8a09.html

'Get up, the hill's on fire!': Dramatic doorbell camera footage shows a frantic neighbor pounding on a door to warn people inside as raging California wildfires approach their home

Amelia Wynne, Mailonline/Daily Mail.com News

Posted: November 4, 2019

Terrifying footage captured by a doorbell camera in San Bernardino, California, shows the moment a man pounds on his neighbors door to warn him of wildfires approaching his home.

The clip shows the neighbor shouting 'Henry, get up! Henry, the fire, the hill's on fire!' as massive flames rage in the background.

He approaches the front door in a panic and after shouting his warning, disappears again down the drive.

Later the video - taken on Thursday morning - shows the huge wildfire creeping dangerously close to the house with embers from the blaze flying into shot on the porch.

The fire destroyed or damaged six homes and two outbuildings.

San Bernardino County Fire Chief Don Trapp says around 500 homes were evacuated since the fire started in the foothills before dawn on Thursday, when winds caused it to spread.

The 200-acre blaze is one of two new wildfires burning in the inland region east of Los Angeles.

The 200-acre hillside fire that burned several homes early on Thursday in the north end of San Bernardino was 70% contained by Friday.

The latest recurrence of seasonal Santa Ana winds coincided with extremely low relative humidity levels and a prolonged lack of rainfall that has left vegetation tinder-dry in the region.

While all the latest fires remain under investigation, wind-related damage to power lines has been implicated in a number of major California blazes, including the Getty fire.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7646847/Dramatic-doorbell-camera-footage-shows-neighbor-warning-people-California-wildfires.html>

Doorbell camera captures neighbor's warning ahead of wildfire in California

Staff Writer/Associated Press, WXYZ 7 Detroit

Posted: November 1, 2019, 11:42 am

Footage captured by a doorbell camera in San Bernardino, California, shows the panic many in the state endured this week due to the threat of wildfires.

The footage shows a neighbor pounding on a door, warning people inside about an approaching wildfire on Thursday morning.

"Henry, get up! Henry, the fire, the hill's on fire!" the neighbor yells.

Later, the footage captures the wildfire creeping dangerously close to the house. Embers from the blaze fly into the frame and dance on the porch.

The fire destroyed or damaged six homes and two outbuildings.

San Bernardino County Fire Chief Don Trapp says about 500 homes have been evacuated since the fire started in the foothills before dawn Thursday, and winds drove it down into the city.

The 200-acre blaze is one of two new wildfires burning in the inland region east of Los Angeles.

In the nearby city of Jurupa Valley, an early morning blaze has grown to 150 acres. It has destroyed three homes and forced evacuations.

<https://www.wxyz.com/news/national/doorbell-camera-captures-neighbors-warning-ahead-of-wildfire-in-california>

Fires rage as Southern California grapples with 'extreme red flag' weather conditions

Scott Wilson, Kim Bellware, Andrew Freedman and Reis Thebault, The Washington Post/The Philadelphia Inquirer

Posted: November 1, 2019



Firefighters work to control the flames from spreading as the embers blown by the wind threatens to burn other homes in the North Park neighborhood at the Hillside Fire in San Bernardino, Calif., on Oct. 31, 2019.

Several fires burned across Southern California on Thursday and into early Friday morning, forcing evacuations and torching homes, while forecasters warned of more dangerously dry and windy weather.

The Maria Fire started on Thursday evening in Ventura County, California, northwest of Los Angeles, and quickly exploded into a 7,400-acre blaze. The fire began on top of South Mountain near Santa Paula, California, and has moved toward several nearby towns overnight, the Los Angeles Times reported. Authorities have ordered the evacuation of roughly 7,500 residents thus far, the Times reported, as about 400 firefighters battled to contain the damage.

Helicopters dropping water on the Maria Fire were briefly hampered by someone flying a drone in the area, KGET reported.

The Hillside Fire broke out early Thursday morning and quickly burned 200 acres as it raced downhill and into neighborhoods of north San Bernardino and west of Highway 18. It spurred the evacuation of 1,300 residents, destroyed at least six homes and damaged 18 others.

As of Thursday afternoon, the fire was 50 percent contained, **San Bernardino County Fire** Department spokesperson Chris Prater told The Washington Post. Evacuations were set to be lifted for residents in the area by 6 p.m. local time on Thursday.

Wind remains a key issue for first responders, with ideal conditions for a fire behavior known as "long-range spotting": when embers from a fire are carried downwind and can potentially spark another blaze.

"We still have a lot of work to do to get rid of the hot spots," Kathleen Opliger, incident commander for the San Bernardino County Fire Department, said during a Thursday news conference. Opliger urged residents to be vigilant, watch the wind and evacuate if ordered to.

"The fire moves so fast and continues to have the potential to move quickly," she said. "If folks don't evacuate when we need them to, it will make it very difficult to get them out."

Opliger acknowledged that the fire hasn't been contained "in any sense of the word," but said she understood that displaced residents were eager to get back home.

To the west, in Ventura County, the Easy Fire in Simi Valley approached the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library's front door Wednesday before firefighters began to get it under control. The fire burned through the night as firefighters struggled to contain a blaze that has already torched 1,700 acres and forced the mandatory evacuation of 30,000 people.

At least three firefighters have been injured while fighting the fire, according to the Ventura County Fire Department. As of Thursday morning, the blaze was 10 percent contained. That afternoon, authorities lifted all evacuation orders.

One resident living west of Simi Valley near State Route 23 described barely evacuating in time as the fire jumped the highway.

"We put everything in the car, and I'm so glad we did," Frank Rahimi of Moorpark, Calif., told CBS News. "By the time it jumped the 23 Freeway, we only had seconds to get out."

The cause of both fires remains under investigation.

A third fire burning just south of San Bernardino is less of a mystery: The 46 Fire in Riverside County was sparked when a late-night police chase ended in a car crash, according to the Los Angeles Times.

The fire doubled in size within two hours Thursday morning and was most recently reported to have grown to 300 acres with just 5 percent containment, according to the Riverside County Fire Department. The rapidly-moving fire forced evacuations in the area and damaged one house and two mobile homes along with two other buildings.

Joyce Russell, a Riverside resident, was still awake at 2:30 a.m. when she smelled smoke but initially mistook it for her neighbor's cigarettes, she told the Times.

A neighbor raced to Russell's door shouting, "You've got a fire in your backyard!"

The paper reported Russell, who has cataracts and was worried about making it out safely, was ultimately able to evacuate with her chihuahua, Sabrina, with the help of a man who offered to drive her and her car to a local evacuation shelter.

Evacuations for the 46 Fire were also lifted Thursday afternoon.

As the Southern California fires burned, a smoky haze draped the Los Angeles skyline. The county government warned residents of unhealthy air and advised them to stay inside and shut their doors and windows.

The National Weather Service in Los Angeles forecast 50 to 70 mph winds for Thursday, with "isolated gusts" up to 80 mph in parts of Los Angeles and Ventura counties. The NWS is still using ominous warning language that it crafted specifically for this event. The so-called "Extreme Red Flag Warning" was issued through 6 p.m. local time Friday due to a combination of high winds up to 60 mph, relative humidity in the low single digits and abundant, extremely dry and combustible vegetation.

However, with slackening winds forecast for Thursday afternoon, the threat of extreme fire behavior with any fires that ignite will lessen somewhat. The department issued the rare "Extreme Red Flag" weather warnings, particularly for the mountainous portions of the south.

Farther south, toward San Diego, the Santa Ana winds are abating faster, with Red Flag warnings expiring Thursday at 6 p.m. local time. However, dry air could still present complications for firefighters combating blazes there.

The ongoing Santa Ana winds event has transported cold air westward from the Great Basin region, with freeze warnings in effect for inland areas of Southern California.

An unusually cold air mass with Arctic high pressure is sitting over the Rockies and into the Great Basin region, which has set up a strong temperature and air pressure gradient with the air over, and just off, the coast of California; this gradient helps power the Santa Ana winds.

But even though this is a cold Santa Ana, and hot weather is typically associated with wildfires, the air is extremely dry, as is the vegetation or "fuel" for the fires. Therefore, the wildfire danger is extremely high right now, despite the gradually cooler temperatures.

As Californians in the south faced another day of adverse weather and quickly spreading fires, their neighbors to the north are contending with a different set of factors from blazes like the Kincade Fire in Sonoma County. Since the Kincade Fire sparked in Sonoma wine country last week, it has consumed 76,825 acres, an area more than five times the size of Manhattan, and is now 60 percent contained.

But as the fire is contained in Sonoma, San Francisco Bay area residents are slowly emerging from days of planned power outages enacted to prevent further fire-starting conditions amid high winds and low humidity. At their peak, more than half a million residents around the Bay Area were affected.

<https://www.inquirer.com/news/nation-world/southern-california-fires-evacuations-red-flag-weather-20191101.html>

Easing winds give firefighters a break in California wildfire battle

Staff Writer, Channel News Asia

Posted: November 1, 2019



A house burns during wildfires in San Bernardino, California, U.S. October 31, 2019 in this screen grab obtained from a social media video. 564FIRE via REUTERS

LOS ANGELES: Fierce, dry Santa Ana winds off the Southern California mountains eased early on Friday (Nov 1), helping firefighters make progress in corralling major wildfires that have displaced thousands of residents.

A fresh spate of wildfires had roared to life on Thursday in hilly neighbourhoods outside Los Angeles, destroying homes and forcing yet more evacuations before the Santa Ana winds lost their punch overnight.

The Maria Fire swelled to torch more than 8,000 acres (3,240 hectares) of Ventura County after igniting on Thursday evening, threatening some 1,800 homes and other structures, according to the county fire department. About 7,500 residents were ordered to find lodgings elsewhere for Halloween night, and dozens of schools were closed on Friday.

East of Los Angeles, the Hillside Fire scorched more than 200 acres (80 hectares) of the San Bernardino National Forest, burning residential areas in the north end of the city of San Bernardino, destroying at least six homes on Thursday, the **county's fire department** said.

Crews managed to carve containment lines around 50 per cent of the fire's perimeter. No injuries were reported.

The dry Santa Ana winds that howl down from the mountains every autumn in Southern California were forecast to abate on Friday, although there could still be fire-fuelling gusts of 15 to 20 miles per hour (25 to 32 km per hour), the National Weather Service said.

A fire that erupted early on Monday near the famed Getty Center art museum in west Los Angeles threatened thousands of homes in some of the city's wealthiest neighbourhoods but was largely suppressed, with containment listed at 40 per cent.

Residents were allowed to return to most of the 10,000 homes that had been ordered evacuated. The museum emerged unscathed, but about a dozen dwellings were lost in the 745-acre (301-hectare) Getty fire and two firefighters were injured.

About 30 miles (50km) to the northwest, a fire raged to the edge of the hilltop Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum in Ventura County's Simi Valley on Wednesday, threatening thousands of homes, but was 60 percent contained early on Friday. Firefighters doused flames before they could reach the library.

Pacific Gas and Electric Co acknowledged last week that the Kincade Fire, a blaze that charred 77,000 acres (31,160 hectares) of Sonoma County wine country north of San Francisco, started last week near a damaged PG&E transmission tower at about the time a high-voltage line on that tower malfunctioned.

That blaze has burned more than 77,700 acres and destroyed at least 349 homes and other structures but was listed as 65 per cent contained on Thursday evening.

PG&E, which over this past weekend began shutting off power to 940,000 California customers to guard against the risk of an electrical mishap sparking a blaze, said late on Thursday it had restored electricity to virtually all customers.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/easing-winds-give-firefighters-a-break-in-california-wildfire-12055426>