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Rialto man is arrested for allegedly causing death of motorist

Staff Writer, Fontana Herald News

Posted: November 1, 2019, 7:00 am

A Rialto man was arrested on charges of gross vehicular manslaughter and driving under the influence, causing the death of a motorist in Hesperia, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

On Oct. 12 at about 8 p.m., deputies from the Hesperia Police Department, along with **San Bernardino County Fire** Department, responded to the area of Main Street and Mariposa Road in reference to a traffic collision.

Deputies found Marcellino Cabrera III, 46, of Hesperia unresponsive inside his 1994 Honda Accord on Main Street.

A 2002 BMW 325i was found on top of a down palm tree in the In-N-Out parking lot. The driver of the BMW, Ramses Gonzalez, 26, was assisted out of his vehicle and airlifted to Loma Linda Medical Center due to his injuries.

Through investigation, deputies determined that Gonzalez was driving his BMW westbound on Main approaching the intersection with Mariposa when it collided into the Honda traveling northbound on Mariposa and through the intersection.

The driver of the Honda succumbed to his injuries and was pronounced deceased at the scene.

Investigators later found that alcohol, illegal drugs, and speed were factors in this collision. On Oct. 17, a warrant was issued for the arrest of Gonzalez, who was contacted at his home in Rialto and taken into custody. Gonzalez was booked into West Valley Detention Center and is being held with a bail of \$250,000.

https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/inland_empire_news/rialto-man-is-arrested-for-allegedly-causing-death-of-motorist/article_2f8074a2-fcbf-11e9-bf46-cb5f61804129.html

Car crash after high speed police chase sparks wildfire in California burning more than 300 acres

Priyam Chhetri, MEAWW News

Posted: November 1, 2019, 3:26 am



A police chase involving a stolen vehicle reportedly ended in a crash and sparked a massive fire in California's Jurupa Valley on Thursday, October 31.

The chase ended with a car crash that sparked a fire in a field in Riverside County that engulfed nearly 300 acres of land, damaging buildings and leading to evacuations.

This fire in Riverside County was one of the two to erupt on Thursday along with another one named Hillside Fire in San Bernardino County.

Riverside police spotted the vehicle past midnight and pursued the car, Riverside Police Department spokesman Ryan Railsback said.

When they tried to get the vehicle to stop, it fled and they chased it down to the field where it crashed and burst into flames. The car was engulfed in flames within minutes, police officers told Mail Online. Winds were blowing at 25mph on Thursday night and aided the flames, making them spread rapidly.

The fire that had started at around 12:30 am had already eaten away 150 acres by 6 am and 300 acres by 8.25 am, it was reported.

The people who were in the stolen vehicle were taken into custody, reported KTLA, and are suspected of felony evading, car theft, arson, and other charges. They have been identified as Bryan Anguiano, 23, of Jurupa Valley, and Kevin Hidalgo, 28, of Riverside, the outlet reported.

The Hillside fire started at 2 am near Highway 18 and Lower Waterman Canyon on Thursday. It spread to approximately 200 acres within 30 minutes. However, by Thursday afternoon, it was contained by 50 percent.

More than 1,300 people were asked to evacuate. The winds reportedly were strong and went up to 60mph, aiding the fast-moving fire.

The **San Bernardino County Fire** Department said six homes and two outbuildings were damaged in the fire.

The latest reports by CNN said that firefighters have been able to control the fire and weather prediction says that climate less favorable for spreading of wildfires as higher humidity and softer winds are expected across the state till Saturday.

There are currently more than 12 fires burning across California.

<https://meaww.com/car-crash-sparks-wildfire-california-two-new-fires-break-out-24-hours-burning-more-than-300-acres>

Today in Pictures, Nov 1, 2019

Staff Writer, Straits Times Multimedia

Posted: November 1, 2019



Media members report on a burning home as a firefighter douses flames (right) during the Hillside fire in the North Park neighborhood of San Bernardino, California on October 31, 2019. Firefighters battled new wildfires on in California including a fierce blaze in the city of San Bernardino that forced some residents to flee their homes overnight. The Hillside fire broke out after midnight in San Bernardino, a city of more than 200,000 people some 100km east of Los Angeles, the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department said. PHOTO: AFP

<https://www.straitstimes.com/multimedia/photos/today-in-pictures-nov-1-2019>

California endures more wildfires, 1 sparked by a hot car

Brian Melley and Marcio Jose Sanchez, Santa Monica Daily Press

Posted: November 1, 2019, 5:30 am

A stolen car sparked a wildfire in a bone-dry field Thursday as two of Southern California's quintessential themes — car chases and gusty Santa Ana winds — collided with potentially devastating consequences.

The hot car ignited dry grass in a field in the city of Jurupa Valley east of Los Angeles and strong winds that have menaced the region quickly spread the flames, burning homes and forcing residents to flee.

The frightening scenario was among the latest to erupt as exceptionally dry conditions and vicious gusts have contributed to destructive fires that forced tens of thousands of evacuations across the state while other Californians endured dayslong deliberate power outages aimed at preventing electric lines from sparking fires.

Several blazes broke out in the heavily populated inland region east of Los Angeles as the strong, seasonal Santa Ana winds continued to gust up to 60 mph (96 kph) were predicted to last until the evening before they fade away.

Riverside police were chasing suspected car thieves after midnight when the driver tried to shake them by plowing through fields and lots, Riverside Police Officer Ryan Railsback said. The damaged vehicle pulled to a stop in a field in Jurupa Valley, where the driver and passenger bolted.

The two men, both wanted on outstanding warrants, were caught as heat from the vehicle caused grasses to combust. Authorities plan to charge them with arson.

"We put that burden on the crooks," Railsback said, explaining the criminal charge. "They're the ones leading this chase."

The blaze spread to 300 acres (121 hectares) and destroyed three homes and two outbuildings, the Riverside County Fire Department said. Evacuations were ordered.

The fire came as another broke out in neighboring San Bernardino County and the day after several other blazes forced evacuations in the region, including one that circled the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley and another in Jurupa Valley that forced the evacuation of two mobile home parks and a psychiatric nursing care facility.

Elderly patients wearing breathing masks and wrapped in blankets were taken out of the Riverside Heights Healthcare Center in wheelchairs and gurneys as smoke swirled overhead. The blaze grew to 200 acres in size before it was stopped.

"There was one moment when I could see nothing but dark smoke and I was like, 'We're going to die,'" said Qiana McCracken, assistant director of nursing.

California has been under a fire siege for several weeks as strong, dry winds out of the desert have fanned flames at both ends of the state and prompted widespread power outages to prevent electric lines from sparking infernos.

Electrical equipment has caused some of California's worst wildfires, including last year's fire that destroyed the town of Paradise and killed 85 people.

More than 350,000 Californians statewide remained without power as part of an effort by utility companies to prevent trees and vegetation from blowing into powerlines and causing fires.

The waves of dayslong outages have been angrily condemned by state officials and consumers.

In the Northern California city of Novato, at least 20 seniors with wheelchairs and walkers were essentially trapped in the dark in a low-income apartment complex during a two-day power shut-off.

PG&E Corp. CEO Bill Johnson acknowledged hardships but said outages will be necessary in the future as seasonal fire threats increase.

“As long as they remain the best tool that we have to keep people safe, and our communities safe, they’re the tool we will use,” he said.

PG&E equipment that wasn’t de-energized may have ignited a massive blaze in Sonoma County wine country that has destroyed 141 homes. Firefighters reported making significant progress as high winds in that area eased Wednesday and the fire was 60% contained.

Electrical equipment may have also ignited the fire that started early Wednesday in Simi Valley, west of Los Angeles, which prompted evacuation orders for about 30,000 people.

The cause of that fire was not yet determined, but Southern California Edison filed a report required by state regulators to say it began near its power lines. SoCal Edison had not cut power in the area at the time this fire started.

As winds died down in Northern California, the utilities were inspecting power lines and working to restore power following a fire that forced the evacuation of 180,000 but is now mostly contained. Many children fretted as the wildfires threw their trick-or-treating plans into disarray .

Some families who live in and around wine country north of San Francisco have no neighborhood to bring their kids to collect candy because they’re coming home to destruction, are still under evacuation orders or face the lingering power outages.

The Santa Ana winds that blow in fall and winter in Southern California and have fanned the region’s most destructive wildfires prompted quickly spread flames into the northern neighborhoods of the city of San Bernardino.

Six homes and two outbuildings were destroyed or damaged in the 200-acre fire that forced about 1,300 people to evacuate, **San Bernardino County Fire** Department Fire Chief Don Trapp. The cause was under investigation.

Weary firefighters may have some relief on the horizon as the vicious winds were expected to die around sunset. Forecasters do not expect a return of the Santa Anas next week.

“Once we get past that, all bets are off,” weather service meteorologist Kristen Stewart said.

<https://www.smdp.com/california-endures-more-wildfires-1-sparked-by-a-hot-car/182329>

New California wildfire explodes to 8,000 acres

Staff Writer, BREITBART

Posted: November 1, 2019

Oct. 31 (UPI) — California's busy fire season grew worse when a new blaze exploded to more than 8,000 acres in a matter of hours south of Santa Paula and was still spreading, prompting officials to issue mandatory evacuations for 7,500 residents.

The blaze, dubbed the Maria Fire, started at 6:14 p.m. Thursday on South Mountain and quickly spread to 750 acres in less than two hours by strong, east winds, the Ventura County Fire Department said.

By early Friday, it had exploded to 8,300 acres with zero percent contained, according to Ventura County.

More than 400 firefighters were battling the wind-driven brush fire from the air and ground on the upper ridge of the mountain, it said in an update, adding that "additional firefighters have been requested."

The cause of the fire was under investigation.

Ventura County Sheriff Bill Ayub said in an evening press conference that 1,800 structures were under threat of the fire and about 100 deputy sheriffs, with the help of volunteers, were aiding in the evacuations.

He said aerial efforts were impeded by someone using a drone to photograph the fire, causing a dangerous situation.

With the blaze occurring high on the mountain's ridge, the fire department was given the time needed to conduct evacuations, but the location is causing difficulty to hem in its perimeter, said Ventura Fire Assistant Chief John McNeil.

"We got access issues getting to the actual edges of the fire," he said. "So, at this time our efforts are evacuations, getting close into the structures, providing structure defense where we can. Second to that will be perimeter control."

He said "this is not Thomas fire," referring to the state's massive 2017 fire, and that Maria Fire will eventually "run out of fuel."

"We're looking at 12,000 acres at the biggest footprint on this," he said.

Fire Chief Mark Lorenzen said while the fire may look close, they are working to keep it to the north of State Route 118.

"That is our goal and intention is to keep it there," he said. "We are actively engaged in structural protection as well as protecting the agricultural assets there with avocado and citrus orchards that have significant values."

Evacuation orders were ordered for an area within South Mountain Road to the north, Highway 118 to the south, Balcom Canyon to the east and Los Angeles Avenue to the west, the department said.

Ventura County Office of Education announced that most of its public schools and several charter schools would be closed on Friday.

The fire erupted as Ventura County was already busy with Easy Fire near Los Angeles and crews were battling at least 10 wind-stoked blazes statewide, including the Hillside Fire that started earlier Thursday on the northern end of San Bernardino.

Officials said and multiple homes near the Waterman Canyon area caught fire because of Hillside. San Bernardino is about 50 miles due east of Los Angeles.

Mandatory evacuations were in order for 490 homes, affecting some 1,300 people.

As of 6 p.m., firefighters had the Hillside Fire 50 percent contained, the **San Bernardino County Fire** District said. Emergency officials transported one firefighter to a local hospital for smoke inhalation, the department said.

A total of six houses have been destroyed and 18 others have been damaged, San Bernando County Fire said.

#HillsideFire (Update): Evacuations are to be lifted tonight at 6pm for residents only. #SBCoFD OFM Damage Assessment Team has done their damage assessment. 140 homes assessed, 6 destroyed, 18 damaged. Edison is aware of power outages in Evac area. No ETA on restoration of power.
pic.twitter.com/NgwT3iQaBw— SB County Fire (@SBCOUNTYFIRE) October 31, 2019

“Crews will remain on-scene throughout the night reinforcing containment lines [with] wind shifts expected,” the department said on Twitter.

Officials were investigating the cause of the fire, which originated in an area with no power lines.

Closer to Los Angeles, firefighters fought Wednesday to protect the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley, Calif., from the Easy Fire, which approached the historical property from a nearby hillside. The fire burned nearly 1,800 acres and was 60 percent contained by Thursday night, Cal Fire said.

Officials said a change in wind speed and direction helped save the library from approaching flames — as well as a herd of goats.

“We actually worked with the Ventura County Fire Department in May and they bring out hundreds of goats to our property,” Melissa Giller, a spokeswoman for the Reagan library, said. “The goats eat all of the brush around the entire property, creating a fire perimeter.”

Water-carrying helicopters also made repeated water drops behind the library, which opened in 1991 and is the resting place for the former president, who died in 2004, as well as former first lady Nancy Reagan, who died in 2016.

The Getty Fire, which began Tuesday on the west side of downtown Los Angeles, has burned nearly 750 acres and was 39 percent contained, the Los Angeles City Fire Department said Thursday.

“The Getty Fire Incident Command continues to monitor the affected fire areas, as well as those areas remaining closed due to critical infrastructure concerns or safety hazards,” the LAFD said.

“The Los Angeles Police Department will have a strong presence in the repopulated and evacuated areas for the next several days to ensure the protection of residents and their property.”

The Kincade Fire in Sonoma County burned more than 77,758 acres and was 65 percent contained as of Thursday morning. The Tick Fire in Los Angeles County grew to 4,615 acres but was 100 percent under control.

<https://www.breitbart.com/news/new-california-wildfire-explodes-to-8000-acres/>

In Southern California, a family escapes wildfires with seconds to spare

Ediz Tiyanan, CGTN America

Posted: October 31, 2019, 8:01 pm



This is what was left of the Valdivia Family's home after a fire that broke out in their neighborhood tore through their house.

"It was pretty scary, I just ran to the room and I was like you guys wake up, the house is going to go on fire. What else could I say, I couldn't like waking up kids take minutes sometimes, the challenge to get them up, and all I could think of was GET UP and LETS GO!" Wendy Valdivia, Hillside Fire Victim said.

Matthew woke up in the middle of the night to the smell of heavy smoke and they only had minutes to escape.

"It happened so fast, we didn't have a chance, we didn't have a chance at all. And it hurts because I have a laptop that has my children pictures in them when they were little. If anything hurts, is that!" Matthew said.

However, the most important thing, they said, is that they are still alive. For the safety of everyone else, the entire neighborhood has since been put under mandatory evacuation.

Emergency teams close monitoring of the situation and swift response on the ground has so far been effective in avoiding any casualties and preventing larger-scale devastation. Even though they're pouring all their resources into this effort, many fires in the region are still far from being contained. Strong gusts of Santa Ana winds have sparked a number of other fires and triggered more evacuations in southern California and officials are warning everyone to remain alert.

"I want to remind people: stay vigilant please. You don't see the wind blowing real hard right now, at least where we're at, but you go up on the side of the hill or up in the foothills area, the winds are very erratic, so please, please, please stay vigilant," Tracey Martinez, **San Bernardino County Fire** Department Public Information Officer said.

It may be too late for Wendy, who was going to celebrate her birthday today.

"I didn't expect this many flames on my cake," she said jokingly, holding up strong despite the tragedy.

"We're a two-income family, so we're like back to back on checks. And a family of six is pretty expensive to feed. We didn't have money stashed around to be able to afford any of this stuff. But we're going to have to make it somehow," she added.

Some things like family pictures can't be replaced. But for items that can be families like the Valdivias are hoping insurance companies will cover their claims without delay.

<https://america.cgtn.com/2019/10/31/in-southern-california-a-family-escapes-wildfires-with-seconds-to-spare>

Fires Rage Across Southern California, Driven by Ferocious 50 MPH 'Satan' Winds

Nathan Solis, Courthouse News Service

Posted: October 31, 2019



A firefighter puts out hot spots in a damaged home in San Bernardino, California, on Thursday. Strong winds drove the Hillside Fire through the residential neighborhood. (Nathan Solis / CNS)

(CN) – Wildfires driven by strong Santa Ana winds raged across Southern California for a fourth day, with a new blaze breaking out early Thursday that destroyed several foothill homes in the city of San Bernardino.

Residents fled their homes shortly after 1 a.m. Thursday, as 40-50 mph winds picked up and fanned a wildfire in north San Bernardino, about 60 miles east of Los Angeles. The Hillside Fire destroyed six homes and two more structures in a residential neighborhood, according to fire officials.

Strong winds carried embers throughout the foothill neighborhood off Highway 18, leaving behind telltale scorch marks where they landed.

A two-story home saw the sun rise Thursday while three surrounding homes were badly damaged or destroyed.

Outside his home just down the street from two homes that were gutted by the fire, Harold Montalvo swept leaves and ash from his driveway.

Montalvo woke up to the smell of smoke Wednesday night. Then his neighbors banged on his door to tell him about the fire.

“That’s when I saw the flames on the hillside. We left. It was blazing,” said Montalvo, holding his yorkshire-chihuahua mix, Guy. “It was chaos. We had about 15 minutes to get all out stuff. I got my dogs and parked at a donut shop.”

Montalvo waited about 10 hours before he was allowed back home. He’s grateful the firefighters were able to hold back the fire. He will continue to sweep because he wants to clean the yard, make sure the grass is wet and the leaves are all swept up so they can’t catch fire.

Tracy Martinez with **San Bernardino County Fire** Department said while the winds have died down for the day, strong winds are forecast through the weekend.

“We’re still not out of the danger,” says Martinez.

For Jacque Williams and her brothers-in-law Tim and Jeff Oborny, adrenaline carried them into the afternoon as they ignored evacuation orders to protect their family avocado farm with water hoses and other equipment.

Williams walked along the edge of the grove where several avocado trees were badly burned and a fresh burn scar sliced across the property.

“The grove was badly hurt, but we were able to stop it,” Williams said, choking up. “At this point I’m reluctantly optimistic. We know that winds can pick up at any time. That’s scary. This is better than it was. It was like Armageddon when I got here this morning.”

The family says they used their agricultural water lines to create a defensive perimeter around their home, just like they did in 2003 with the Old Fire which also ripped through San Bernardino.

Jeff Oborny says his brother Tim hasn’t slept much since the Santa Ana winds began to kick up about two weeks ago: Tim walked off a small ledge the other night right into a bush.

“I had to carry him out, because he was so out of it, just watching for the fires,” said Jeff Oborny. “If he wasn’t looking for the fires this morning, we wouldn’t have been able to save the house.”

Tim Oborny said police officers made clear the consequences of refusing to heed the order to flee.

“We were told by the sheriffs that if we stood, we would be on our own,” said Tim Oborny.

Jeff Oborny added, “We understood that. I don’t know if we could do this all over again in another 16 years. We’ll see.”

By afternoon the Hillside Fire was 50% contained at 200 acres and the winds had subsided, but emergency officials said they would still be keeping an eye on the winds. Evacuation orders remain in place for some 1,300 people in nearly 500 homes, while the National Weather Service said an extreme Red Flag Warning will be in effect through Thursday evening.

A fast-moving wildfire on Thursday evening in Santa Paula, California quickly grew to 4,000 acres and prompted evacuations for the immediate area in Ventura County, the second wildfire burning within the region.

The new fire, dubbed the Maria Fire, was first reported shortly after 6 p.m. and is burning on South Mountain above the city of Santa Paula.

Courthouse News correspondent Julianna Krokak said she saw smoke on her drive home and then saw the flames as she approached her home.

“The wind is not blowing as hard as it has been in the last few days. We can’t smell the smoke, but we can clearly see the flames,” Krokak said.

In 2017, the Thomas Fire burned through multiple counties and was considered one of the largest fires in the state’s history. That wildfire first began north of Santa Paula, but Krokak said the image of the Thomas Fire is still fresh in many people’s minds who live in the area.

“It’s still a major concern for all of us. Many people still have PTSD from that whole episode,” said Krokak, who added that her utility company Southern California Edison has notified customers they may lose power.

Southern California Edison said over 64,000 customers lost electricity as part of its safety power shutoff program. The utility has notified 223,000 customers throughout Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties they may lose power as well.

Throughout Southern California some evacuations were lifted as containment numbers grew for some of the wildfires, but it was still a wait-and-see game for many due to the Santa Ana winds.

In Ventura County, the 1,700-acre Easy Fire has forced 30,000 people out of their homes and 2,000 others have been told to be ready to flee. Containment stands at just 10%.

The Getty Fire in Los Angeles County has burned over 700 acres across the affluent West L.A. neighborhoods of Brentwood and Bel-Air. With containment at 39%, most evacuation orders have been lifted according to the Los Angeles Fire Department. The blaze sparked when a tree branch fell on a power line, causing the line to arc.

In Northern California, with the Kincade Fire has consumed nearly 77,000 acres over eight days in Sonoma County. Improved weather conditions have helped firefighters gain the upper hand, and containment stood at 60% Thursday morning.

Evacuation orders remain in place for some 5,000 residents, however, and police say they have arrested 10 people for illegally entering evacuation zones.

All locations of the Sonoma County Superior Court – except the Juvenile Justice Center – have been closed since Oct. 30 due to the blaze and will remain so until at least Monday, according to the court’s website. Only emergency ex parte applications and emergency requests for restraining orders are being accepted, and only at the Petaluma branch.

Mendocino County Superior Court also experienced closures, but because pre-emptive power shutdowns, not fire. That court reopens Friday.

<https://www.courthousenews.com/santa-ana-winds-drive-wildfires-across-southern-california/>

Hillside fire in north San Bernardino is 50% contained, evacuations lifted

Eric Licas, Richard K. De Atley, Alma Fausto, Jeong Park, and Brooke Staggs, Orange County Register/Redlands Daily Facts

Posted: October 31, 2019, 2:53 pm



A firefighter works to extinguish flames at a home on Saturn Ct. in San Bernardino on Thursday, 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 that broke out early Thursday, Oct. 31, in north San Bernardino has charred 200 acres, destroyed eight homes and damaged 18 others near Highway 18 and Lower Waterman Canyon.

Crews continued to battle flames and hotspots into the evening, but **San Bernardino County Fire** officials said the blaze was holding at 50% containment and hadn't grown in size since midday Thursday.

With winds dying down, fire officials said some 1,300 residents who had been evacuated from neighborhoods north of San Bernardino since before dawn Thursday were allowed back home at 6 p.m.

Power was still out in the area, with no estimate for when it would be restored.

Hundreds of families that expected to spend Thursday evening hitting the streets for trick or treating were instead coming back to smoky, ash-covered neighborhoods to see if their homes were still standing.

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

Don Silver's home on Saturn Court, in the North Park neighborhood, was spared from the fire, although two houses at the end of the neighborhood were burned.

One of them was the home of his neighbor across the nearby intersection with Lupin Lane. As his neighbor's home burned, the man ran to alert Silver and his wife, Barbara, who were asleep.

"His house was burning and he came running over here because he knows my wife and I are both elderly," Silver said.

"Sometimes you just have nice neighbors, and you don't know it. He came running over to tell us and he's lost everything," Silver said standing outside his two-story home.

Matthew Valdivia, 35, lost his home on Viento Way in the North Park neighborhood. He, his wife and their two daughters along with the family dog escaped safely. It was their first home, he said while walking through its ruins.

It started when Valdivia awoke to the smell of smoke then looked through the French doors of the back bedroom.

"I saw the glow coming our way," he said. "I told my wife, 'Listen, get up, get the kids ready, get our folders of whatever we have ... I'm going to go outside and let the neighbors know.'"

After waking neighbors in two homes with the “ridiculously fast” fire approaching, it was time for his family to go.

He took one car, his wife took a second and they chose to leave the third. It burned.

“Then I remembered my dog was in the garage, so I came back and picked him up,” Valdivia said. “By that time the fire was really close. There was nothing else I could get.”

Fire officials believe the blaze broke out in the hills above San Bernardino at around 1:38 a.m. Investigators have pinned down where the fire started but not what caused it, though they said there aren’t any power lines in the area.

The reference is to the recent power outages by Southern California Edison and other utilities throughout the state as a preemptive move to prevent fires when high winds blow through. Thousands throughout Southern California had power shutdown Wednesday, including Cal State San Bernardino that was closed again Thursday due to outages.

Four strike teams that were already in position because of high winds were dispatched to the Hillside fire. When they arrived at 2:10 a.m., crews found two to three acres of vegetation on fire with a rapid rate of spread. An hour later, with steady winds of 20 to 30 mph and gusts up to 60 mph, the Hillside fire had reached about 200 acres.

Fire crews launched an air attack and issued mandatory evacuations, as some 500 personnel fought to save homes and keep the fire west of the 18 freeway, which was closed as smoke, ash and embers filled the skies above.

Marlene Martinez-Simmons, 25, her wife, Amaris Simmons, and their roommate were sound asleep in their home on 52nd Street when their neighbor started calling just after 2 a.m. to tell her there was a fire behind their house.

“It looked like hellfire,” Martinez-Simmons said of her view as she ran to look from her backyard.

They started frantically gathering up their two dogs and two cats, some clothing and important paperwork. In the 20 minutes it took to pack, Martinez-Simmons said the fire had traveled from the top of the hill to just a few streets away.

“People were trying to get out,” she said, with backup on the street as ash rained down. “It was chaos.”

They saw fire engulfing one nearby home as they fled the neighborhood to be with family in Rialto. From there, Martinez-Simmons said they anxiously watched news coverage all morning, trying to spot their home on aerial shots to see if it had been spared. When they saw embers being driven by the winds, she said, “We really thought we were going to lose everything.”

They were flooded with relief when they drove back into their neighborhood at around 12:30 p.m. and saw their home was still standing. The smell of smoke was thick and they had no power, so Martinez-Simmons said they left again to spend Halloween night with family.

The conditions prompted Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare, health officer for San Bernardino County, to issue a smoke advisory Thursday afternoon. Children, elderly adults and people with respiratory issues in the area are advised to stay indoors with windows closed until the situation improves.

An evacuation center opened at Pacific High School in San Bernardino. During peak fire activity early Thursday, staff said there were 27 residents at the school. But by 3:30 p.m., no one remained at the evacuation center.

San Bernardino police officers patrolled the affected evacuation zones. Department spokesman 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 said.

Rochelle Holguin, 36, and Raudel Torralba, 35, had “less than five minutes” around 2:30 a.m. to leave their home off Pinehurst Court, just a block south of where three homes burned down.

Holguin was getting ready to leave with her son, Rylan Evans, and their pet dog and gecko.

“We got what we can hold in our hands and went,” Holguin said. “The fire was too full blown to do anything.”

But Torralba had other plans: He would stay on the roof of their home with a garden hose, trying to wait out the fire amid wind gusts of 50 to 55 mph, with smoke blocking visibility just two or so feet away.

“You’re crazy,” Holguin recalled telling Torralba.

As Torralba stood on the roof, feeling the heat and trying to fight off the coming embers, he heard a boom, then another one, then another one.

It was the sound of appliances and utilities exploding in those burned homes, Torralba said.

“I was scared,” he said. “It sounded like a grenade going off.”

Torralba and his family’s home survived intact. But they were getting ready to leave their home again around 3 p.m. because of power shutoffs in the area.

Evans was holding a white mask to wear for Halloween.

Hopefully, Holguin said, everything would soon go back to normal.

<https://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com/2019/10/31/new-wildfire-starts-in-area-of-highway-18-and-lower-waterman-canyon-in-san-bernardino/>