



# NEWS



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## EL Dorado Fire Thursday: Fire Jumps Highway 38; Some Residents Allowed to Return Home

Megan Jamerson, KVCN News

Posted: September 10, 2020



CREDIT TWITTER/SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Windy conditions, low humidity and dry brush accelerated the El Dorado Fire in the San Bernardino Mountains Wednesday night. KVCN's Megan Jamerson reports as of Thursday morning the blaze had burned 12,610 acres and is 23 percent contained.

San Bernardino County Fire officials say four homes have been lost but hundreds more were saved Wednesday evening by firefighting crews. More than 21,000 people have been evacuated so far.

On Wednesday, the fire advanced on the mountain communities of Forest Falls and Mountain Home Village. It then jumped Highway 38 to the north activating new evacuation orders all along the highway up to Onyx Summit.

Along the southern edge, the fire has been less active and holding well. Thursday afternoon, the Yucaipa Police Department announced the lifting of evacuation warnings and orders in Western Yucaipa and Cherry Valley. Some neighborhoods in those areas have been evacuated for five days.

Cal Fire San Bernardino spokesperson Cathey Mattingly:

"As the fire continues to burn actively in the Highway 38 corridor, we do know that we have residents in other areas that are waiting to return home. And we want to encourage them that as that time's coming there is some reference information out there where they can review that and know what to expect when that time comes to return home."

She says they can visit [readyforwildfire.org](https://readyforwildfire.org) and click on the post-wildfire tab for a returning home checklist and other information.

The county has an interactive map where residents can check the status of evacuation orders and warnings for their home address here. **San Bernardino County Fire** will continue to update its Inciweb, Twitter and Facebook pages with the latest information.

<https://www.kvcnnews.org/post/el-dorado-fire-thursday-fire-jumps-highway-38-some-residents-allowed-return-home#stream/0>

## Big Bear, San Bernardino Authorities: Postpone Your Visit Because El Dorado Fire Remains A Threat

Staff Writer, CBSLA

Posted: September 10, 2020



**BIG BEAR LAKE (CBSLA)** — The leaders of the Big Bear Fire Department, **San Bernardino County Fire**, CalFire and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department are urging the visitors to Big Bear Valley to postpone their trips as the El Dorado Fire continues to burn.

The advisory was signed Thursday by Big Bear Fire Chief Jeff Willis, San Bernardino County Fire Chief Dan Munsey, CalFire Deputy Chief Ron Janssen and San Bernardino County Deputy Chief Trevis Newport, and has been issued for Big Bear Lake, Big Bear City, Moonridge, Sugarloaf, Lake Williams, Baldwin Lake, Fawnskin and other neighboring communities.

“The intent of this advisory is to increase awareness of the potential threat to the Big Bear Valley from the El Dorado Fire,” the letter said. “In an effort to minimize the population of Big Bear Valley IF an evacuation ultimately becomes necessary, visitors are encouraged to postpone trips to the Big Bear Valley until the fire threat has passed.”

Some mountain resorts like Big Bear Mountain Resort have also suspended their operations for this weekend because of the firefight.

The El Dorado Fire erupted last Saturday after being sparked by a pyrotechnic device used during a gender reveal party. The blaze has since scorched nearly 13,000 acres.

Highway 38 in both directions at Bryant Street in Yucaipa is closed to all traffic. Advisory points have been set up at Snow Valley Ski Resort on Highway 18 West of Big Bear Valley, and at the Mitsubishi Cement Plant on Highway 18 North of Big Bear Valley. Evacuation orders are in effect for the communities of Angelus Oaks, Seven Oaks, Campgrounds and other residences along Highway 38 up to Onyx Peak.

<https://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2020/09/10/el-dorado-fire-big-bear-san-bernardino/>

## Some El Dorado fire evacuations lifted, allowing some residents to return home

Staff Writer, CBSLA

Posted: September 10, 2020



A Yucaipa resident shows her identification to San Bernardino County Sheriff deputy E. Hernandez Thursday afternoon Sept. 10, 2020 after some of the evacuation orders were lifted in the area due to the El Dorado fire. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

The El Dorado fire burning through thousands of acres in the San Bernardino Mountains has destroyed four homes and damaged two others, officials said Thursday, Sept. 10.

Among smaller outbuildings, like garages and sheds, another six were destroyed and four damaged, said Cathey Mattingly, a Cal Fire spokeswoman.

By Thursday afternoon, some residents in Yucaipa and Oak Glen were allowed to return home after officials lifted evacuations. All Riverside County residents previously ordered to leave were also allowed to return.

“Everything’s looking really good there, enough that we’re discussing repopulating some areas,” said Daniel Diaz, a chief for the multi-agency team responding to the fire, in a Facebook Live town hall. The fire line just north of Oak Glen Road as it winds through Potato Canyon had stabilized, he said. That’s why fire officials were allowing residents back into their homes there.

The blaze, which started at El Dorado Ranch Park in Yucaipa on Saturday, ignited by a pyrotechnic device at a gender reveal party, has burned 12,610 with containment now at 23%.

Containment is the line firefighters draw around the perimeter of a fire, where trenches have been dug or where bodies of water prevent the fire from spreading further.

Also Thursday, San Bernardino County health officials urged the elderly, children and others with breathing problems or heart conditions to stay inside and keep doors and windows closed, or seek alternative shelter.

MAP: Where the El Dorado fire is burning in the San Bernardino Mountains

And Big Bear Fire Chief Jeff Willis asked people planning trips to Big Bear and nearby areas to postpone their visits to reduce the number of people who would have to evacuate if such an order is made. The Big Bear area was not under an evacuation order Thursday, but residents of Forest Falls and Mountain Home Village along Highway 38 were told to evacuate through Big Bear.

Firefighters surrounded more of the fire despite Wednesday’s Santa Ana winds picking up and driving flames toward homes tucked into heavily wooded mountain towns in the San Bernardino National Forest.

By late afternoon Wednesday, flames were menacing homes in Forest Falls. Firefighting crews could be seen watering down properties.

Fire crews on the ground had to contend with powerful winds, gusting to 23 and 24 mph, which drove an arm of the fire surging toward Forest Falls in the late afternoon.

Around 1:30 p.m., firefighters watched as the winds drove the flames toward Valley of the Falls Drive and Highway 38. The flames eventually jumped the highway and “made a little run” Mattingly said.

When a fire is burning hot and sending up huge smoke clouds, embers stay lit as they drift into the air. The winds already fueling the fire can then push those embers forward, sometimes hundreds of feet, sometimes miles ahead of the fire. When they land, they can start new, smaller fires. That’s what fire officials call “spotting,” Mattingly explained.

That’s what happened as firefighters were getting ready to defend Forest Falls on Wednesday. Fire crews could be seen hosing down homes and front lawns in anticipation of fires running through the community.

It’s not clear if any of the destroyed buildings were in Forest Falls. Fire officials did not give locations of any of the destroyed homes.

Mattingly said numbers of structures burned usually account for buildings fire inspectors find after a fire has passed, so the numbers released Thursday could account for buildings burned in the last five days.

Still, officials with the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** said firefighters worked through the night to save “hundreds of homes.”

The El Dorado fire, and the Bobcat fire burning north of Azusa, have sent huge plumes of smoke skyward blanketing Southern California with smoke and in many places ash.

A red flag warning issued by the National Weather Service expired at around 8 p.m. on Wednesday. That’s around when winds slowed, Mattingly said.

“Once the wind died down, they were able to get the fire cooled down and slow it down a little bit,” Mattingly said.

On Thursday, winds were not expected to be as strong, so firefighters were hoping to make progress on increasing containment lines, Mattingly said.

Diaz, the joint command chief, said some of the intense work Thursday was occurring on the northwest side of the fire, where firefighters had turned flames back from Forest Falls. By afternoon, the fire was headed north toward Skinner Creek, although Diaz said there were still threats to the surrounding communities there.

Flames were also actively burning in the mountains just south of Mill Creek Canyon Road near Mountain Home, where firefighters were preparing to try to hold back the fire from residences there.

“We’re doing everything we can to get in to that and secure it,” he said, pointing to a stretch of steep slopes near Yucaipa Ridge, “but its been very difficult.”

<https://www.sbsun.com/2020/09/10/firefighters-ward-off-el-dorado-fire-from-mountain-communities-hundreds-of-homes-saved/>

## Emergency Shipments Continue as California Fires Rage On

Susan Fowler, Direct Relief

Posted: September 10, 2020



A firefighter works to quell the flames of the El Dorado Fire burning in California's San Bernardino mountains on Sept. 10, 2020. Fires are burning across a dozen U.S. states, creating health challenges for residents while the pandemic stretches on. (Photo courtesy of **San Bernardino County Fire Department**)

Direct Relief is responding to the devastation caused by the deadly and destructive wildfires currently raging in California. Over 2.5 million acres have already burned – an all-time record – with some fires scorching over 1,000 acres every 30 minutes. To date, 11 people have been killed, and thousands of buildings have been destroyed. All national forests in California have been temporarily closed by the U.S. Forest Service due to the current spate of fires and the increased potential for new ones.

Governor Gavin Newsom, who has declared a state of emergency, stated that California has been facing extreme weather conditions which have led to “experiencing fires, the likes of which we have never seen in many, many years.” Northern California that has been extremely hard hit with some of the biggest blazes including:

- Creek Fire (Fresno, Madera counties)
- North Complex Fire, includes Bear and Claremont Fires (Plumas, Lassen, Butte & Yuba)
- August Complex Fire (Glenn, Mendocino, Lake, Tehama and Trinity counties)
- LNU Lightning Complex Fire (Napa, Sonoma, Solano, Lake & Yolo counties)
- SCU Lightning Complex Fire (Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, San Joaquin & Stanislaus counties)
- CZU Lightning Complex Fire (Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties)

Direct Relief’s Research and Analysis team has been tracking the wildfires with an eye toward analyzing the populations most at-risk during wildfires, which can seriously exacerbate pre-existing conditions, as well as the health centers and free clinics that serve the most vulnerable patients. Analysis by Direct Relief of coastal communities to the west of the fire perimeters, north of San Francisco – which are in areas of heavy smoke inundation – show 43 Federally Qualified Health Centers. These centers serve 94,000 patients, of which 40,000 live at 200% or more below the poverty line and 2,130 are experiencing homelessness. Thousands of these patients suffer from chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, hypertension, depression, and PTSD. Covid-19 has added another layer of complication to response efforts, increasing dangers for those with co-morbidities as well as creating issues regarding the number of evacuees allowed to shelter in enclosed spaces.

Southern California is also contending with large wildfires including the Lake Fire and the Ranch 2 fires burning in Los Angeles County, the Dome Fire burning in the Mojave National Preserve in San Bernardino County, and the Apple Fire burning in Riverside County.

### POSITIONED TO RESPOND

As a California-based disaster relief and medical assistance organization, Direct Relief has responded to wildfires in California, and throughout the U.S., for decades. The organization is a long-time partner of the



State of California through its Office of Emergency Services, or CalOES, and always coordinates its response to wildfires with state officials. Direct Relief also partners with the State of California Emergency Management Agency, CalEMA, and serves as one of its key Business and Utilities Operations Center, or BUOC, partners to optimize coordination during times of emergencies.

Direct Relief's 155,000-square-foot medical distribution center, equipment, trained staff, and various other capacities are registered with the State of California and available for public health or emergency purposes. Direct Relief created a Wildfire Kit last year, which contains medicines and supplies that have been most requested by healthcare providers in this type of disaster. The kits are designed to enable the treatment of about 250 people for 3 to 5 days.

#### DIRECT RELIEF'S RESPONSE

Direct Relief has been responding to communities impacted by these devastating wildfires, reaching out to dozens of healthcare partners in affected areas to offer assistance, and shipping Wildfire Kits and Emergency Medical Backpacks, as well as additional N95 masks and other personal protective equipment, pharmaceuticals including antibiotics, respiratory drugs, dermatology supplies, IV solutions, first aid supplies, and diagnostic equipment to public health agencies, healthcare facilities, and evacuation centers.

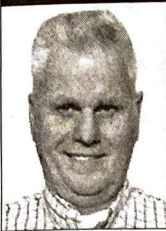
To date, a total of 19 emergency shipments have been delivered with additional donations being packed. Recipient agencies and healthcare facilities include:

Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management  
Santa Rosa Community Health Centers  
San Mateo County Health Services Agency  
Marin County Department of Health and Human Services  
Contra Costa Health Services  
Salud Para La Gente in Watsonville  
Big Sur Health Center

Direct Relief will continue to support California Wildfires Response efforts, as well as expanding outreach to other states experiencing severe wildfires, including Oregon and Washington.

<https://www.directrelief.org/2020/09/emergency-shipments-continue-as-california-fires-rage-on/>





# Mick's View

By Mick Hill

## Do we need to rethink our fire attack system?

I drove by the house I built on Zurich Drive in Crestline the other day – it is only two houses from the one that burned last week – and I looked at the hillside situation there. I am amazed at how the firefighters stopped the fire and that only 14.5 acres were burned. I give a pat on the back to the firefighters from Station 25 in Top Town who were first on the scene. And I think about how valuable the air support was to save our town, again.

I also think about how over the years we have begged for better air support, like the DC-7 four-engine fixed wing airplane and Bell Helicopters that hold 360 gallons such as the Super Hueys and the Bell 412s. Now, many agencies are using the Erickson Air Crane that can hold 2,500 gallons. We saw one flying over the Zurich Fire and refilling from Lake Gregory.

San Bernardino County Fire doesn't have an air arm, unlike Los Angeles Fire Department or Los Angeles County Fire Department. San Bernardino County depends on mutual aid agreements with Cal Fire and the U.S. Forest Service for firefighting air support. We now pay roughly \$27 million a year for fire protection from the county, which is a lot, and I believe it goes in a big way to support unfunded retirement liabilities. Maybe we need to *make some changes*.

After the Old Fire in 2003, our insurance rates skyrocketed. We needed adequate fire control and the ability to get substantial air tanker support in five minutes, instead of 40 minutes. A fire can get severely out of control in 40 minutes. A fire needs to be jumped on immediately and strongly.

So, where do the Forest Service and Cal Fire base their air support operations?

The U.S. Forest Service flies aircraft from its San Bernardino Air Tanker Base at the San Bernardino International Airport and, when asked, can be over our mountains in minutes. During last week's Zurich Fire, as soon as they were asked, they launched fixed wing aircraft and began painting the perimeter around the Zurich Fire with Phos-Chek fire retardant.

The Forest Service also has a heliport at Heaps Peak, and sometimes it keeps a Huey with its 250-gallon bucket there so it can give immediate air support and can put out a small fire. We are trying to find out if it played any role

in the Zurich Fire.

Cal Fire has its main air support operation at Hemet-Ryan Airport in Riverside County. The Hemet-Ryan Air Attack Base is home to Cal Fire's fixed wing and helicopter operations. Along with other aircraft, it keeps a "Super Huey" there along with two Grumman S-2T fixed-wing, two-engine aircraft. It also has the Prado Helitack Base at Chino Airport where it keeps a "Super Huey" Type II helicopter.

Since the Sky Crane, Grummans and Hueys had to fly in from Lake Hemet and Chino, it took a while for them to arrive. After the choppers got here, however, with Lake Gregory so close by to hover and resupply water using snorkels, they could execute precision water drops with short turnaround times.

Because our mountains are in what's designated as a State Responsibility Area (SRA) and we live in and around the San Bernardino National Forest, the mutual aid agreements make sense.

When County Fire is called because of a structure fire in or within a half mile of an SRA, by mutual aid agreement, County Fire automatically notifies the other two agencies that they need to respond, and they did. It is standard practice.

Our newspaper does not have the details yet of how long it took for air support to arrive. We'll try and find out.

With air support arriving simultaneously with the fire trucks, one would think that such joint action should lower both our fire danger level and our Cal Fair fire insurance liability premiums, at least in the millions of dollars each year.

So, my question is this: Is it time for County Fire to have its own air arm? I think we need a committee to seek a new air support solution for our mountain communities, without large tax hikes or changes without the people's consent.

I believe all our local firefighters are doing a fine job, but I also believe the Los Angeles Fire Department model, with its helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, shows that its firefighting system is working for them. Maybe now is the time to re-examine things and see if we can make our fire attack system work better, too. If you have a better idea, write a letter to the editor and we'll print it.

***I am Mick Hill  
and that is my opinion***