



NEWS



News Headlines 08/27/2021

- Firefighters make progress on South fire burning in Lytle Creek; containment at 10%
- South Fire burning near Fontana shows California's wildfire dangers may be spreading south
- South Fire Burns At Least 4 Homes In Lytle Creek, Hundreds Evacuated
- South fire in Lytle Creek a reminder of the danger that residents live with
- CAL FIRE California Statewide Fire Summary for August 26, 2021

Firefighters make progress on South fire burning in Lytle Creek; containment at 10%

Brian Rokos, Daily Bulletin

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A firefighter pulls a hose line as he prepares to put out hot spots on a property along Lytle Creek Road during the South fire near Lytle Creek on Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

The South fire burning in Lytle Creek grew to 900 acres overnight but for the first time Friday, Aug. 27, fire officials say they have been able to build a portion of a containment.

The fire was 10% contained, the San Bernardino County Fire Department said.

The fire's damage had been reported at 680 acres Thursday night.

"It's pretty calm this morning," said Lisa Cox, a spokeswoman for the San Bernardino National Forest. "There's been no forward spread since (reaching 900 acres) last night."

The area of most concern Friday is along the ridge line where the fire made a run Thursday in grass and chaparral and where the slope heats up in the afternoon. That ridge line is a corridor to the community of Lytle Creek, where many of the area's 1,000 residents live. The flames are a few miles away, Cox said.

The flames are burning into what is mostly federal land, with popular camping spots, Cox said, so a forest order has been issued that restricts access to that area.

Friday's goal is to beef up the containment lines, said Battalion Chief Mike McClintock, a San Bernardino County Fire Department spokesman. High temperatures were expected to keep humidity low, at 10% to 15%. The National Weather Service forecasted winds from the north for Friday.

All evacuations remain in place Friday. The San Bernardino National Forest urged motorists not to drive around road closures.

"Road closed signs and traffic cones are not a suggestion," a statement said

Some 400 firefighters are on the lines.

A water-dropping helicopter attacked the flames overnight as crews on the ground built containment lines.

Earlier Thursday, winds from the south caused spot fires to spread north on Penstock Ridge, putting up a large plume of smoke. Aircraft attacked those spot fires but were limited by the presence of power lines, fire managers said.

Eighteen structures, including several homes, have been destroyed.

Orders for evacuations are in place for residents from Lytle Creek Road north and south of the ranger station, west of Sierra Avenue, north of the 15 Freeway and east of Duncan Canyon Road. That covers 1,000 residents and 600 homes.

Warnings that residents should be prepared to leave are in place for those living north of Glen Helen Parkway, east of Sierra Avenue and Lytle Creek Road, and west of the 15.

<https://www.dailybulletin.com/2021/08/27/firefighters-make-progress-on-south-fire-burning-in-lytle-creek-containment-at-10/>

South Fire burning near Fontana shows California's wildfire dangers may be spreading south

Lauren Lyster, Associated Press

Posted: August 26, 2021

A wildfire that burned several homes in the Lytle Creek area north of Fontana may signal that the region is facing the same dangers that have scorched Northern California.

The fire in San Bernardino County erupted Wednesday afternoon, quickly burned several hundred acres and damaged or destroyed at least a dozen homes and outbuildings in the foothills northeast of Los Angeles, fire officials said. Crews used shovels and bulldozers and mounted an air attack to keep the South Fire from the tiny communities of Lytle Creek and Scotland.

About 600 homes and other buildings were threatened by the blaze along with power transmission lines and 1,000 residents were under evacuation orders

By nightfall, firefighters appeared to have gained the upper hand and few flames were seen. But the blaze was worrying because Southern California's high fire season typically comes later in the year when strong, dry Santa Ana winds blast out of the interior and flow toward the coast.

After a few cooler days, California's southern region was expected to experience a return of hot weather into the weekend that could boost wildfire risks. In addition to dangerously dry conditions, the region faces firefighting staffing that is increasingly stretched thin, said Lyn Sieliet, spokeswoman for the San Bernardino National Forest.

"Some of our firefighters that we normally have on our forests are working on fires in Northern California, or Idaho and Washington," Sieliet said. "We don't have the full staff that we normally do."

The largest fires in the state and in the nation were in Northern California, where they have burned down small mountain towns and destroyed huge swaths of tinder-dry forest.

The Caldor Fire has destroyed 500 homes since Aug. 14 in the Sierra Nevada southwest of Lake Tahoe, including much of the tiny hamlet of Grizzly Flats. It was 12% contained and threatened more than 17,000 structures.

Buck Minitch, a firefighter with the Pioneer Fire Protection District, was called to the fire lines last week while his wife fled their Grizzly Flats home with their two daughters, three dogs, a kitten and duffel bag of clothes, the San Jose Mercury News reported.

Hannah Minitch evacuated to her parents' property and the next morning received a text from her husband showing only a chimney where their house once stood. The two wept briefly during a telephone call before he got back to work.

"We've got nothing left here," she recalled him saying. "I've got to go protect what's left for other people."

At times the wind-driven fire was burning 1,000 acres (405 hectares) of land per hour and on Wednesday it was less than two dozen miles (37 kilometers) from Lake Tahoe, an alpine vacation and tourist spot that straddles the California-Nevada state line.

There weren't any evacuations in Tahoe but the fire continued to cast a sickly yellow pall of smoke over the scenic region.

The communities of South Lake Tahoe and Tahoe City on the lake's west shore had the nation's worst air pollution at midmorning Wednesday, according to AirNow, a partnership of federal, state and local air agencies.

Meanwhile, California's Dixie Fire, the second-largest in state history at 1,160 square miles (3,004 square kilometers), was burning only about 65 miles (104 kilometers) to the north. It was 45% contained. Some 700 homes were among nearly 1,300 buildings that have been destroyed.

In the southern Sierra Nevada, there was growing concern as the French Fire expanded near Lake Isabella, a popular fishing and boating destination. About 10 communities were under evacuation orders. The fire has blackened 32 square miles (83 square kilometers) since Aug. 18.

Smoke from the fires had fouled air farther south. The South Coast Air Quality Management District issued an advisory through Thursday morning for large portions of Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Nationally, 92 large fires were burning in 13 mainly Western states, according to the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.

Climate change has made the West warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make the weather more extreme and wildfires more destructive, according to scientists.

<https://ktla.com/news/california/crews-gain-upper-hand-on-south-fire-burning-near-fontana-blaze-shows-states-wildfire-dangers-may-be-spreading-south/>

South Fire Burns At Least 4 Homes In Lytle Creek, Hundreds Evacuated

Staff Writer, CBSLA

Posted: August 26, 2020



FONTANA (CBSLA) — A fast-spreading wildfire that broke out Wednesday afternoon in the Fontana area has damaged at least four homes and forced hundreds of people to flee.

Sonia and Jose Ceja ran for their lives with just one box.

“Wedding photos? baby photos? None of that,” said Jose Ceja, a homeowner. “Just paperwork like passports and birth certificates.

Sonia suffered burns on her arms trying to grab all of their pets as their dream home went up in smoke.

The South Fire was reported as a vegetation fire near Lytle Creek and Duncan roads at 1:36 p.m., according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

As of Thursday morning, the fire had torched 680 acres and had no containment, per CAL Fire. Four homes and 14 outbuildings have been destroyed.

About 600 homes were still threatened and 1,000 residents remained under evacuation orders. At least six homes were damaged or destroyed in the wildfire. The fire was also threatening high voltage transmission lines.

Mandatory evacuations were issued for Lytle Creek Road, south of the Ranger Station, west of Sierra Avenue, north of the 15 Freeway and east of Duncan Canyon to the foothills.

A shelter in place order was issued for residents in all areas north of Lytle Creek Ranger Station on Lytle Creek Road, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department.

An evacuation warning was issued for homes north of Glen Helen, east of Sierra Avenue and Lytle Creek Road, west of the 15 Freeway.

Some neighbors decided to stay behind. One man was seen on the roof of his home with a garden hose trying to save it from fast-moving flames.

“I came home and got the dogs,” said Laura Mills, a Lytle Creek resident. “Hopefully our house is going to make it.”

“It is quite a shock,” homeowner Christina Hernandez said. “We need to see what comes next. We’re still in the throes of this.”

The fire is not far from the 15 Freeway, which remained open Thursday morning.

About 100 firefighters with SBCFD, Cal Fire and the U.S. Forest Service were battling the blaze with air and ground crews. One firefighter was transported to the hospital with a minor injury, according to Cal Fire.

An evacuation center has been established at the Jesse Turner Center at 15556 Summit Ave. in Fontana. An evacuation center for large animals has been set up at Devore Animal Shelter in the 19000 block of Shelter Way in San Bernardino.

CBSLA reached out to FEMA and the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services to see if victims of the fire were eligible for financial assistance. Both said federal and state aid isn’t available at this time because there has been no local emergency proclamation from San Bernardino County.

<https://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2021/08/26/south-fire-burning-lytle-creek-homes-destroyed-fontana/>

South fire in Lytle Creek a reminder of the danger that residents live with

Bran Rokos & Quinn Wilson & Emily Rasmussen, The Press-Enterprise

Posted: August 26, 2020



A DC-10 tanker makes a fire retardant drop as hand crews watch from below near Lytle Creek on Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021 as fire efforts continue to stop the South fire. 18 structures have been destroyed and 700 acres have burned in the fire which started Wednesday afternoon. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

The 1,000 or so residents of the San Bernardino County town of Lytle Creek, nestled into a brushy canyon with limited escape routes on the eastern edge of the San Gabriel Mountains, live with the threat of a devastating wildfire.

Reminders of that danger now come too frequently for anyone's comfort, including this week's South fire that through Thursday, Aug. 26, had burned 680 acres and 18 structures, including several homes, in the area that features both large, ranch-style houses and tightly clustered residences.

"Every year there are just more and more," said Laura Mills, a 20-year resident who considers herself a newcomer compared to her husband, who has lived in a home off Lytle Creek Road for 64 years. "It used to be back in the day you might have (a large fire) every 15 to 20 years apart."

Their experience reflects what fire officials and scientists say are longer and hotter fire seasons that in recent years have included most of the largest fires in recorded California history.

Mills said the South fire, which started Wednesday, is the worst she has seen since the Grand Prix Fire in 2003, which came right up to the hillside behind their property and burned some trees. Mills was fortunate; her home escaped damage, but one next door did not.

On Thursday afternoon, the flames, which had died down overnight, kicked up again as strong winds from the south pushed the flames toward the most populated area of Lytle Creek at the north end of the canyon. The fire jumped a containment line that was under construction at the north end of the canyon, said Battalion Chief Mike McClintock, a spokesman for the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**. Crews hoped to hold the flames east of Lytle Creek Road.

The weather forecast for Friday was again high temperatures in the 90s but with a reversal in the wind direction, said Philip Gonsalves, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service

There were no new evacuations Thursday, but the orders and warnings issued Wednesday were still in effect.

A few new fires ignited in the area near the 15 Freeway late Thursday afternoon, briefly slowing traffic before they were extinguished.

The containment remained at 0%, partly because of the difficulty of building a line by hand on steep canyon walls covered by thick vegetation, McClintock said.

Some homes along Lytle Creek Road were seemingly untouched by the fire, while others stood with burned front yards.

And others were a complete loss, from the home to all of the structures around the property. The hillsides were charred, and palm trees were partially burned.

Mills said she was getting off of the 15 Freeway on Wednesday afternoon when she noticed smoke and flames in a field southwest of Lytle Creek Road, less than a mile from their property.

“As soon as we see fire, we go into action,” Mills said. “Get your sprinklers on the roof, get the hoses, get the dogs prepared to leave with their leashes. When you live through a big fire before, whenever you see any smoke like that, you just start really getting stressed out because you never know what’s going to happen.”

When fires close in, Mills said, they leave their truck with the engine running in the front yard with their two German shepherds, Caesar and Nugget, “chilling” in the air conditioning.

A property next door once owned by Mills’ father-in-law burned Wednesday, which she chalked up to the number of trees he had planted decades earlier.

“It’s a lot of hard work (preparing your home for a fire),” Mills said. “The people who didn’t, guess what? They don’t have anything left.”

Mills and her husband actually did not evacuate. Friends Bubba Russell and Kathleen Coakley, however, did.

Thursday, they enjoyed dinner in the parking lot of the Jessie Turner Community Health and Fitness Center in Fontana where evacuated residents sheltered. It was their second day there. The two had evacuated along with their families with a trailer full of belongings attached to an SUV. They also had four dogs and two cats.

“The most important things are the animals,” Russell said. “I could care less about anything else as long as the animals come.”

On Wednesday, Russell said he was headed down the hill from Lytle Creek for a job interview when he first saw the smoke and fire. He went to the interview, but he was unable to return home, Russell said.

“It was pretty bad,” Russell said. “They told everyone to evacuate.”

The two said their homes were safe from the fire, per the most recent briefing from fire officials Thursday morning.

“The town’s way up in the mountains, so we ain’t got to worry about (the fire),” Russell said.

Orders for immediate evacuations remained in effect Thursday for residents from Lytle Creek Road north and south of the ranger station, west of Sierra Avenue, north of the 15 Freeway and east of Duncan Canyon Road. Warnings that residents should be prepared to leave were in place for those living north of Glen Helen Parkway, east of the intersection of Sierra Avenue and Lytle Creek Road, and west of the 15.

Related: This map shows where the South fire is burning in Lytle Creek

The fire started at around 1:40 p.m. Wednesday on Lytle Creek Road, one mile north of Duncan Canyon Road.

Firefighters arrived to find 2-3 acres burning in light to medium vegetation. But winds pushed the flames up the canyon and along the foothills behind the homes in several directions. Embers blew ahead of the fire, setting new blazes.

“The fire moved quickly. They had a really tough firefight. We did throw everything at it, both in the air and on the ground,” McClintock said.

The fire’s cause remained under investigation Thursday.

<https://www.pe.com/2021/08/26/south-fire-destroys-18-structures-grows-to-700-acres-in-lytle-creek/>

CAL FIRE California Statewide Fire Summary for August 26, 2021

Staff Writer, Sierra Sun Times

Posted: August 26, 2020

August 26, 2021 - Today more than 14,300 firefighters are on the frontlines of 14 major fires and three extended attack fires in California. Firefighters continue to aggressively work to strengthen containment lines on all major fires, in addition to battling 34 new initial wildfires yesterday. Due to drought conditions, two of those wildfires have grown to large fires in both Calaveras and San Bernardino counties, as well as two new extended attack fires.

Since the beginning of the year, there have been 6,773 new wildfires. During this time-period, these wildfires have burned more than 1.6 million acres. In comparison, in 2020 during the same time-period, there were 7,389 wildfires and approximately 1.6 acres burned.

The weather forecast for this weekend continues to be warm and dry across the state. A Fire Weather Watch is in effect from Friday morning through Saturday morning for portions of the Sacramento Valley and surrounding foothills from Shasta County down to Colusa County. Gusty north to northeast winds of 10 – 20 mph with gusts of 25 – 30 mph will develop Friday morning across northern and central portions of the Sacramento Valley and surrounding foothills and may continue into Saturday morning. Strongest winds are expected midday

Friday. These winds, combined with low humidity and extremely dry fuels, may lead to critical fire weather conditions. In the southern region, starting Sunday into early next week, there will be a heightened risk for new lightning starts, especially with thunderstorms that may form over areas that continue to support critically dry fuels. An excessive heat warning remains in effect until Sunday evening for the southeast part of the state. With extreme fire danger expected to continue, it is critical that all Californians take steps to prevent sparking a wildfire.

CAL FIRE continues to urge all Californians to take steps to prevent sparking a wildfire. To learn more ways to prevent sparking a wildfire, visit www.readyforwildfire.org.

<https://goldrushcam.com/sierrasuntimes/index.php/news/local-news/32710-cal-fire-california-statewide-fire-summary-for-august-26-2021>